

## Fair Housing Questionnaire for Candidates, 2023:

The [Somerville Fair Housing Commission](#), a nonpartisan group of citizens serving the community, asked candidates for Mayor and School Committee a set of questions about Fair Housing in 2021 and again this year, in 2023.

You can see answers for Question 6 from 2021 here: [Question 6](#)

You can see answers from 2023 candidates who did not submit any responses in 2021 **below**. Incumbents seeking reelection have answered follow up questions available [here](#).

**Question 6: What reforms do you see as feasible to ensure that older housing stock is maintained in a manner that supports the health and safety of all residents, including low-income residents?**

William Tauro, Candidate for Mayor

90% of Somerville's housing stock was built from before 1939 to 1979. Some of these units have lead, asbestos, narrow steep stairs and, because we are a city of hills, they have many steps to enter them. The expense of addressing an issue such as de leading (\$8,000 -\$20,000) brings property owners pause, the same with asbestos removal (\$7,500+). One priority is to keep elderly residents in their home and not have them taxed out because they now find themselves in a community desirable to others. Another is to help moderate to low-income property owners with tax credits to help offset the cost of renovations needed for health and safety. Funding incentives for below market rent rates, money to supplement housing vouchers, and helping nonprofits working on fair housing issues are all things I will do when mayor to help both property owners and low-income renters.

---

Matthew Hunt, Candidate for City Council, Ward 1

Because of the age of much of Somerville's housing stock, special care is needed to ensure that the health and safety of residents is being looked after. This disproportionately affects low-income members of our community and those facing mobility challenges. Tenants and buyers should have robust support and advocates to inform them of their rights and protect their interests.

Naima Sait, Candidate for City Council, Ward 5

The Inspectional Services Department is responsible for ensuring the safety and habitability of all buildings in the City, but its current structure is inadequate to that task. ISD needs transformative levels of funding and staffing to move beyond its current, reactive posture and into proactive activity to guarantee that no landlord forgoes necessary maintenance. A public registry of all landlords in the City, with attached records of complaints and enforcement actions,

would let tenants make informed decisions when renting (and let tenants know that they are not alone, a step toward organizing effective tenants' unions); I will advocate for the creation of such a system. I will also advocate for the City to establish a dedicated fund to assist property owners with building updates not just for health and safety but for energy efficiency and fossil fuel removal (with strings attached, such as frozen rents).

---

Jack Connolly, Candidate for City Council, Ward 6

Better communication with the City of Somerville, housing authorities, landlords, and rental agencies is something we need much more of in order to maintain the health and safety of all residents. We need to do more as a community to prevent neglect of housing in our city in order to assure we can live here safely.

---

Wilfred Mbah, Candidate for City Council At Large

Many of the older housing stock apartments are in the public housing programs of the state and federal government. Thus, an important strategy will be to ensure that the flow of funds for maintenance and upgrades is sustained and that other grant monies that become available can be directed toward the improvement of these properties. Another strategy will involve building regional partnerships and working with our neighboring cities to pressure the state.

For buildings and units that are not in the direct funding programs – such as the Mystic area buildings impacted by noise and air pollution for I-93, I would pursue a pilot program to provide low-income residents with a free HEPA indoor filter system. Similarly, we must also continue the programs of toxic paint and lead pipe removal.