



# City Update January 2025 PTAC Meeting



# Agenda

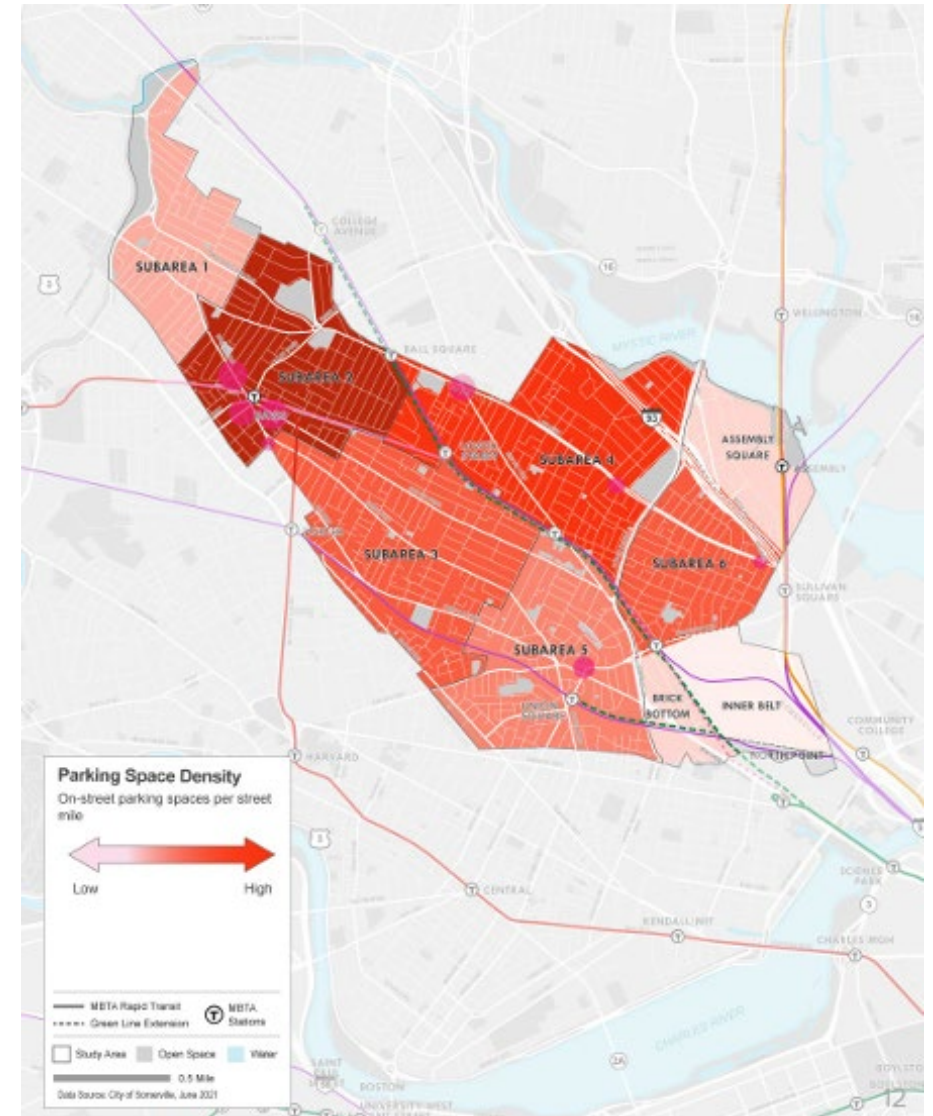
1. Citywide Parking & Curb-Use Brief Background & Update Preview
2. New Parking Minimums Zoning
3. Elm Street Parking Pilot
4. Participatory Budgeting Funded Bus Stop Improvements



New floating bus stop and crosswalk improvements on Washington Street at Tufts Street near East Somerville Station.

# Citywide Parking & Curb-Use Study Background

- From 2021 to 2022, the City worked with a consultant to better understand how our available curb space was being used and explore recommendations to help the City more efficiently manage the dynamics of the curb.
- Our goals for the study included:
  - Maximize curb effectiveness
  - Decrease drive alone mode share and further decarbonization goals
  - Ensure accessibility for all
  - Promote transportation equity and inclusion
  - Improve transparency in decision-making
  - Support local businesses
  - Improve pickup/drop-off safety and efficiency
  - Improve commercial loading availability
  - Expand bike network, improve access and safety
  - Improve transit performance and passenger access
  - Give people more space

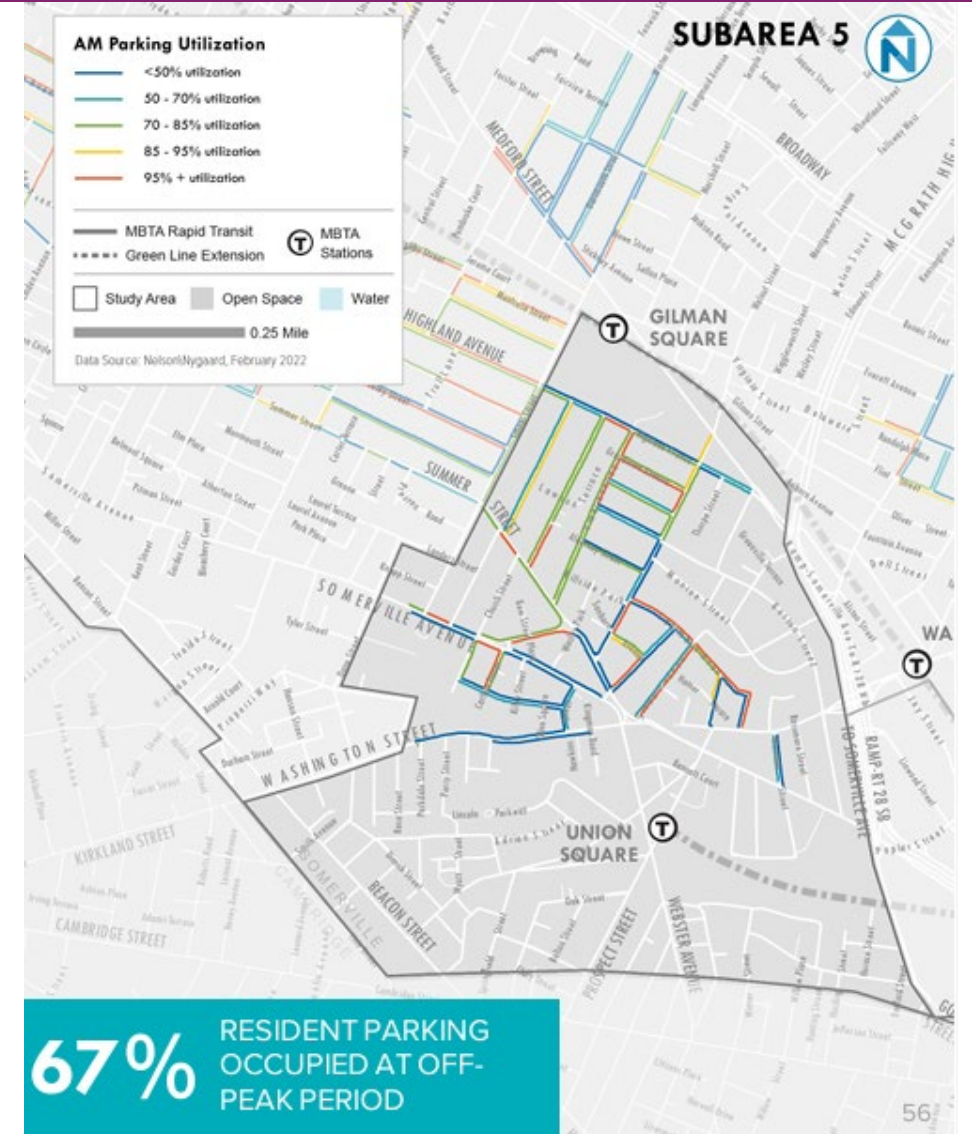


Parking space density map organized by study subareas.



# Citywide Parking & Curb-Use Data Inventory

- As part of the study, consultants created
  - an inventory of regulations for every available curb
  - collected utilization data for subarea core streets organized into a [Somerville Curb Profile](#)
  - and developed recommendations informed by community input and national case studies.
- All study materials can be found at [www.somervillema.gov/parkingstudy](http://www.somervillema.gov/parkingstudy)



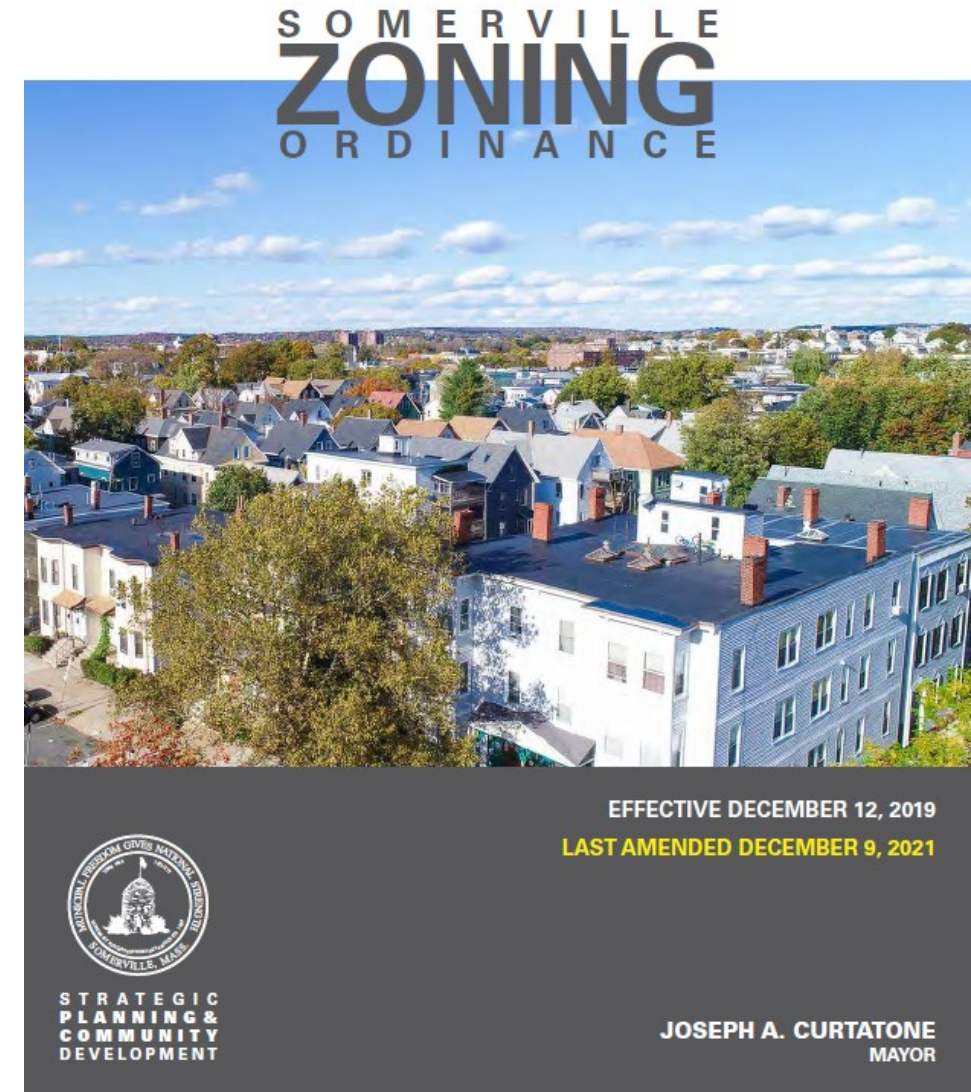
Parking space utilization data captured for Subarea 5.

# Study Recommendations & Updates Highlights

Recommendation	Update
Clarify curb management roles.	New Project Manager position in Parking Department FY24 budget. Role filled October 2023.
Implement a Curb Prioritization Framework to prioritize curb access for the users with the greatest need.	Ongoing. Framework is used in street redesign projects, which include adding more loading zones and handicapped accessible spaces.
Ensure adequate access for commercial and passenger loading activities in key districts.	Ongoing. Incorporated into street redesign projects and in response to small business loading zone requests.
Implement design standards to reduce modal conflicts and integrate curb.	Mobility regularly references NACTO guides for city street design. Critical needs for access are identified during street redesign projects and curb use needs are an important part of all redesign processes. City previously had a curb data platform, but the provider ceased operations. Industry uncertainty and costs means that we are holding off on committing to a new platform for now. Staff collect data and create curb regulation maps using other platforms like GIS during street redesign projects.
Procure management and enforcement technology.	Partnered with SafetyStick to install automated parking enforcement cameras in Davis Square & Magoun Square. Facing significant barriers to implement License Plate Readers. Would require rehaul of all technology and likely creation of enforcement fleet.

# Parking Requirements Zoning - Background

- Somerville's zoning code includes parking requirements such as parking minimums and maximums, which set floors and/or ceilings on the number of off-street parking spaces that can be built as a part of a new development or change of use.
- In 2019, most parking minimums were removed as a part of the zoning overhaul, however, they remained outside of transit areas ½ mile from transit, covering about 30% of parcels in the city.
- City Council passed a resolution in early 2024 requesting that the administration investigate updating parking requirements, including removing the remaining parking minimums, kicking off this process.



# Parking Requirements Zoning - Overview

- OSPCD's Planning Preservation, and Zoning Division partnered with the Mobility Division to introduce a zoning amendment this fall, which was adopted shortly before the end of the year and will go into effect on February 1<sup>st</sup>.
- A summary of the changes includes:
  - Removed all parking minimums, revised all parking maximums in all zoning districts
  - Simplified of the the parking requirement table for all zoning districts - combining land uses into broader categories
  - Re-formatted and standardized all parking ratios (to be per 1,000 square feet)
  - Clarified the definition of a commercial parking facility land use
  - Prohibited motor vehicle parking as a principal use of a lot
  - Required 20% of any parking provided to ADU households as right of first refusal
  - Removed language throughout the code that was no longer needed without minimums (ex. Using shared parking, off-site parking, on-street parking to meet reqs.)

# Parking Requirements Zoning - Myth Busting

## What this amendment **does not** do:

- Remove existing off-street parking or prohibit the creation of new parking.
- Prevent as much parking from being created outside of transit areas
- Require all new developments inside transit areas to be car free.
- Provide no exceptions to the policy.

## What this amendment **does**:

- Removes requirements to build parking and sets reasonable upper limits.
- The previous minimums are the new maximums, allowing the same amount to be built.
- Lowers the maximum amount that can be built in transit areas and allows flexibility to build less.
- Includes a special permit process to request more parking than any maximum.



# Parking Requirements Zoning - Motivations

- Existing parking minimums are largely arbitrary and are an artifact of early 20th century efforts to reduce congestion, which largely backfired. Parking is a traffic generator, and the best way to reduce travel demand by private vehicles is to limit its creation.
- Rigid minimums do not allow for developers to have flexibility to customize their parking provision based on its specific context and needs.
- Two thirds of workers in Somerville get to work without getting in a motor vehicle, and one quarter of households have no vehicle at all. When we require every home to come with a parking space, we force everyone to pay for them even if they will not use them.
- Parking is expensive, non-productive, and takes up a larger amount of space. The existence of parking mandates in Somerville reduces the amount of housing that can be built in a particular location and increases the cost of those homes that are built.

# Parking Requirements Zoning – Follow Up Work

- During public comment, we heard from many people about ensuring new developments are still accessible to those that rely on vehicles, persons with disabilities, visitors, home service providers, deliveries, taxis, etc.
- Mobility is in the process of revising our Transportation Access Guidelines so that new developments will be required to identify how these types of activities will be served in more detail than was previously required.
- We will be ensuring that facilities like new accessible parking spaces could be added close to projects that are proposing to have no vehicular parking on-site should the need arise.
- In addition, we will be ensuring that facilities like zones for passenger and commercial loading exist nearby or could be added.
- For projects that are providing off-street parking, we may require that more spaces be set aside for short term uses like deliveries, visitors, and home service providers.
- Depending on the size and scope of a specific project, and the existing facilities available nearby, we may require some of these facilities to be constructed by project proponents themselves on city streets.

# Elm Street (Day Street to Grove Street) Parking Pilot Background



Teal Metered parking

Purple Loading Zone

Red Bus Stop

Blue Accessible Parking

- Mobility presented pilot proposal to PTAC in June 2024.
- PTAC provided comment letter to the City in July 2024 describing the following recommendations:
  - Clarify the right-of-way to a single (narrow) lane with pavement markings, flex posts, and bump outs
  - Improve signage and educational materials with large signage installations
  - Implement Clear Corners while moving large truck loading zones away from crosswalks and installing bike corrals in clear corners areas
  - Increase the length of the bus stop (grinding out existing markings) and increase visibility of the stop
  - Offer access aisles for ADA parking spots providing extra space to get into and out of vehicles



# Elm Street Parking Pilot Background & Status



- City conducted small business outreach in summer of 2024
- Received wide ranging feedback from Elm Street businesses with some being very supportive of repurposing meters and others strongly opposed to installing more short-term parking.
- Some businesses were concerned about the changing feel of the street and wanted it to be more a place for people to be for longer periods of time rather than encouraging short-term pick up and drop off
- The City felt that a larger public process is necessary to gather more community buy-in and explore larger quick-build changes. Pavement markings and flex posts also requires more funding than just replacing signage.
- Mobility determining 2025 workplan and possible next steps but no updated timeline currently.



# Participatory Budgeting Funded Bus Improvements

- In June 2022, the Mayor proposed—and City Council approved—\$1 million to be allocated for the purpose of having community members propose and vote on projects to improve Somerville. This has been named Participatory Budgeting.
- Winning idea for the first cycle of Participatory Budgeting:
  - **Bus Stop Improvement** - Improve access and condition of areas around bus stops in most heavily used corridors in Somerville
  - **Budget** - \$200,000



Location: Broadway at Illinois, installed 2024

# Participatory Budgeting Funded Bus Improvements

- Four locations were been selected based on usage, crash data, available shelters, accessibility, and MBTA replacement plans.
  - Holland Street @ Cameron Avenue (Stop 2632)
  - Washington St @ Webster Ave (Stop 2613)
  - Washington St @ Beacon St (Stop 2546)
  - Washington St @ Tufts St (Stop 2761)
- Somerville utilized the MBTA's regional procurement process with Tolar, the designer and manufacturer of record for the MBTA, to sign a contract with Tolar last fall and place shelter orders.
- Somerville released *"QUOTE #25-11 Bus Shelter Installation"* for installation services in November, received six bids, and awarded to contract to Dagle Electrical Construction.
- We anticipate that shelters will be delivered in April and installation will take place this spring and summer.
- Although this was an extended process, it will now be easier for Somerville to install bus shelters in the future when we have funding to do so.