



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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AMELIA ABOFF, *VICE CHAIR*
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MICHAEL MCNELEY
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LUC SCHUSTER, *ALTERNATE*

May 5, 2025

The Honorable City Council
City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Honorable City Council:

In keeping with its lawful responsibilities, the Somerville Planning Board submits to your Honorable Council its recommendations on the following proposed amendments to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. On April 17, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. the Planning Board and Land Use Committee of the City Council held a duly advertised virtual joint public hearing. The purpose of the hearing was to solicit public comments on the proposed amendments to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance and to evaluate the proposals in the context of testimony received and the findings and analysis of the Staff to the Planning Board. On May 1, 2025, the Board convened their regularly scheduled meeting and discussed the following agenda items:

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS

1. 15 registered voters requesting a Zoning Text Amendment to amend the Zoning Ordinance sections 3.1.8c, 3.1.9c, 3.1.10c, 3.1.13k, 3.1.13l, 3.2.12l. and 3.2.12m (File # [25-0200](#)).

The Board deliberated and solicited input from staff and made the following specific recommendations. Following due consideration, Chair Michael Capuano made a motion to make **a neutral recommendation** on the proposed amendment to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Amelia Aboff, and passed by the Board, **5-0-1** (Luc Schuster voting present), with the following discussion:

- The Planning Board is supportive of increased flexibility in dormer regulations, but would like to see: (1) additional study of whether the amendment would create more housing units or only increase living space; (2) a process to engage with impacted stakeholders; and (3) a better understanding of the repercussions for urban design.

2. Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Articles 2-5 and 10 of the Zoning Ordinance to remove conflicts with the State Building Code (File # [25-0457](#))

The Board deliberated and solicited input from staff and made the following specific recommendations. Following due consideration, Chair Michael Capuano made a motion to recommend that the proposed amendment to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance **be approved** by the City Council. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Amelia Aboff, and unanimously passed by the Board, **6-0**, with the following discussion:

- The Planning Board noted that more density is inherently more environmentally friendly, and that the City should be also be using density bonuses to achieve other goals, such as affordable housing.

3. Requesting ordainment of an amendment to Article 2 of the Zoning Ordinance to allow the Building Official to waive certain dimensional standards for means of egress (File # [25-0590](#)).

The Board deliberated and solicited input from staff and made the following specific recommendations. Following due consideration, Chair Michael Capuano made a motion to recommend that the proposed amendment to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance **be approved** by the City Council. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Amelia Aboff and unanimously passed by the Board, **6-0**, without discussion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Capuano', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael A. Capuano
Chair of the Planning Board