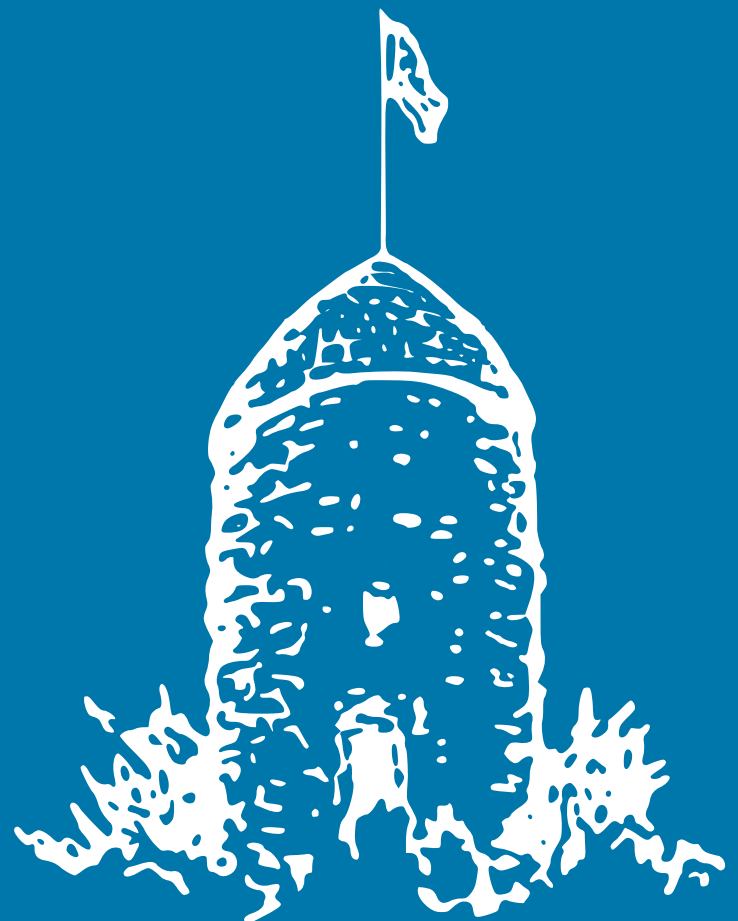


City of Somerville

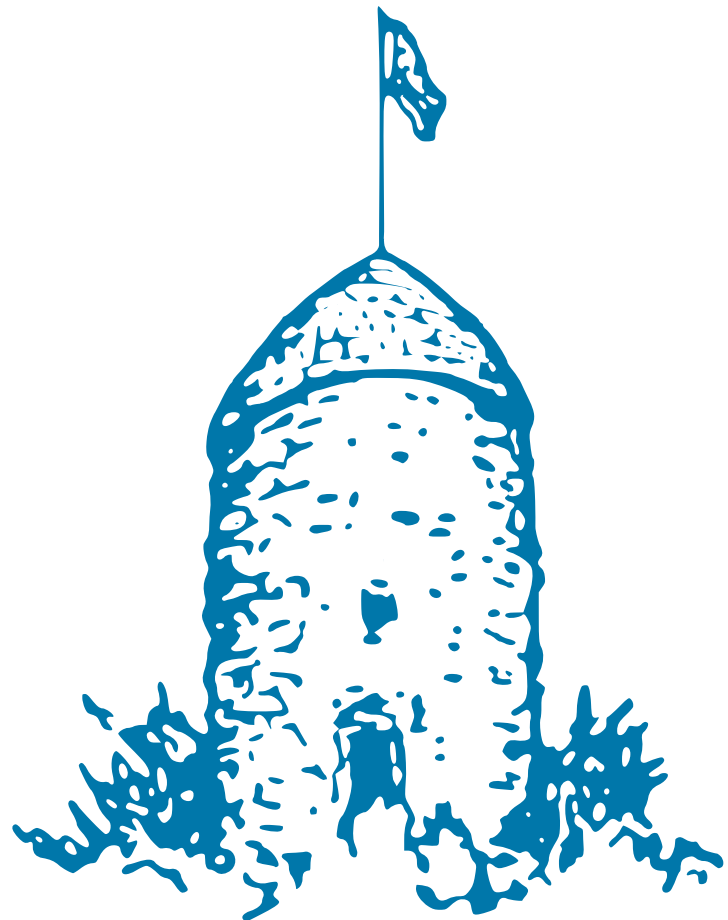
Wilson Mayoral Transition 2025 Report



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Letter from Mayor Wilson

From the very beginning of this transition, my goal was to set a clear standard for how we govern: with openness, accountability, and deep respect for the people who live, work, and play in Somerville.. I believe government works best when it pays attention, fixes what's broken, and steadily improves the systems that serve our community. That is what I ran on, and that is what I intend to deliver.

This transition was rooted in that belief. I am deeply grateful for the extraordinary work of our Transition Team, whose members brought together lived experience, professional expertise, and a shared commitment to Somerville's future. Community leaders, labor representatives, small business owners, policy experts, City staff, and constituents from every corner of our city stepped forward to help shape this moment. Their willingness to engage honestly – sometimes in agreement, sometimes in disagreement – made this process stronger and more grounded.

By design, this transition welcomed a wide range of perspectives. We asked hard questions about how City Hall can better serve constituents, how we deliver reliable core services,

and how we move forward on the issues that most affect constituents' daily life: housing affordability, public safety in our streets and public spaces, and care for our most vulnerable neighbors.

The work ahead is significant, and I know we cannot do it alone. I am profoundly thankful to the many City staffers and constituents who shared their time, ideas, and trust during this transition. This report reflects that collective effort and provides a roadmap to help our administration hit the ground running while staying focused on real, measurable progress.

Somerville is a city that never settles for "good enough." We expect our government to be accessible, responsive, and effective, and we hold ourselves to those same standards. As Mayor, my door is open and my commitment is to keep listening, keep improving, and keep delivering a city government that works for its constituents.

I am honored to serve as your Mayor, and I look forward to doing this work together.



Jake Wilson
Mayor, City of Somerville



Joe Curtatone

Chair, Wilson Transition Committee



Matt McLaughlin

Vice Chair, Wilson Transition Committee



Dear Steering Committee, Volunteers, and Constituents,

Thank you for the extraordinary work that made this report possible. From assessing the state of departments and programs to shaping policy recommendations, you provided the insight, candor, and pragmatism a new administration needs to start strong. You took this on at the toughest time of year and still brought the generosity and grit that define Somerville.

The report gives the Administration a durable roadmap. Most importantly, the recommendations are grounded in lived experience, from small businesses and seniors to youth, immigrants, and unhoused neighbors, so solutions match what people actually need. That alignment between values and execution is the legacy of your work and the process each person participated in.

I want to extend special appreciation to everyone who kept this effort organized and moving, and to the many community partners who shared data, stories, and on-the-ground expertise. This report is not an endpoint; it's a foundation we will build on together.

On behalf of Mayor Jake Wilson and our constituents, thank you for your time, your judgment, and your devotion to Somerville. You helped us begin the right way.

With deep appreciation,
Joe Curtatone and Matt McLaughlin

Executive Summary

02

Executive Summary

Immediately after being elected, Mayor-elect Jake Wilson assembled a Transition Team of highly experienced leaders from government, business, labor, philanthropy and the nonprofit sector to help his incoming Administration get started on the work on day one. In November, the Wilson Transition Team launched a thorough plan to engage stakeholders, experts, and community members across Somerville to assess what was working well, what required improvement, and how the incoming administration could hit the ground running on January 2, 2026. Mayor-elect Wilson and his Transition Team sought input from internal and external stakeholders to build a comprehensive picture of the current state of city operations and opportunities for the new Administration.

Internal

The Transition Team requested briefings from each department, outlining ongoing projects, immediate priorities, pending personnel matters, collaboration efforts, channels of communication, and overall strengths and areas of growth. The Transition Team then met with departments and divisions to discuss their responses and understand how they may need support through the transition of administrations. Topline themes and priorities are summarized below.

External

- The Transition Team engaged over 160 members of the public across 18 Policy Committees. Members were invited for both their subject-matter expertise and wide-ranging lived experience. They brought diverse perspectives to the work, yet were aligned in their commitment to the city and its constituents. These Policy Committees were tasked with meeting and engaging in robust discussions and generating a summary of findings, including what's working, what needs improvement, and opportunities for the Wilson Administration to expand services and policy development.
- Each Policy Committee had a chair (or, in some cases, co-chairs) and members, all of whom were supported by Wilson Transition Team staff and interns, who helped compile the wide-ranging feedback members shared.
- To ensure members of the public beyond Policy Committees are given opportunity to provide feedback, insights, and experiences, the Transition Team developed and circulated a Community Engagement Survey in multiple languages. This survey received over 700 responses, which were summarized on a weekly basis and shared with Policy Committee members to inform their deliberations.

Executive Summary Cont.

02

Executive Summary

By engaging with internal City staff and department heads, as well as active community members and subject matter professionals, the Wilson Transition Team sought to generate a clear and well-founded understanding of the status of city operations, services, and community engagement.

The findings from each Policy Committee are summarized in this report. In addition to those findings, the following topline themes emerged across department briefings and discussions as recommended priorities for the Wilson Administration.

- ***Strengthened coordination and collaboration across City government to enhance operational cohesion.*** Departments emphasized the need for intentional cross-departmental engagement, shared strategic planning, and mechanisms that reduce siloed work—ultimately enabling more seamless execution of shared priorities and consistent service delivery.
- ***Strategic investment in staffing and resources, coupled with creative approaches to service delivery.*** With a projected budget shortfall and understaffing across several departments, staff members stressed the need for innovative and efficient approaches that maintain service quality while addressing capacity constraints.
- ***Clear communication of vision from the executive office, in tandem with active and engaging direction-setting, to ensure interdepartmental alignment of priorities.*** Department heads called for empowerment and definition around channels of decision-making to drive forward coordinated action in alignment with established goals, objectives, and vision.
- ***Cultivation of a culture of performance management, creativity, and innovation through an expanded and empowered SomerStat function.*** Departments expressed interest in leveraging SomerStat more fully as a driver of continuous improvement, data-informed decision-making, and strategic insight—supporting innovation, measuring performance against goals, and reinforcing accountability across the organization.

Taken together, these themes point toward a shared mandate: to run the government with clarity, coordination, and direction. The Wilson Administration inherits a city rich with talent, knowledge, and community commitment, yet constrained by fragmented systems and limited resources. By strengthening alignment across departments, investing strategically in people and tools, and grounding decision-making in data and lived experience, the Administration has the opportunity to rebuild connective tissue within government and deepen trust outside of it.

The early days of the Wilson Administration must both manage operations and restore momentum: to deliver services reliably, make progress visible, and ensure Somerville constituents feel the presence and effectiveness of their local government every day.

Community Engagement Summary

03

Community Engagement Summary

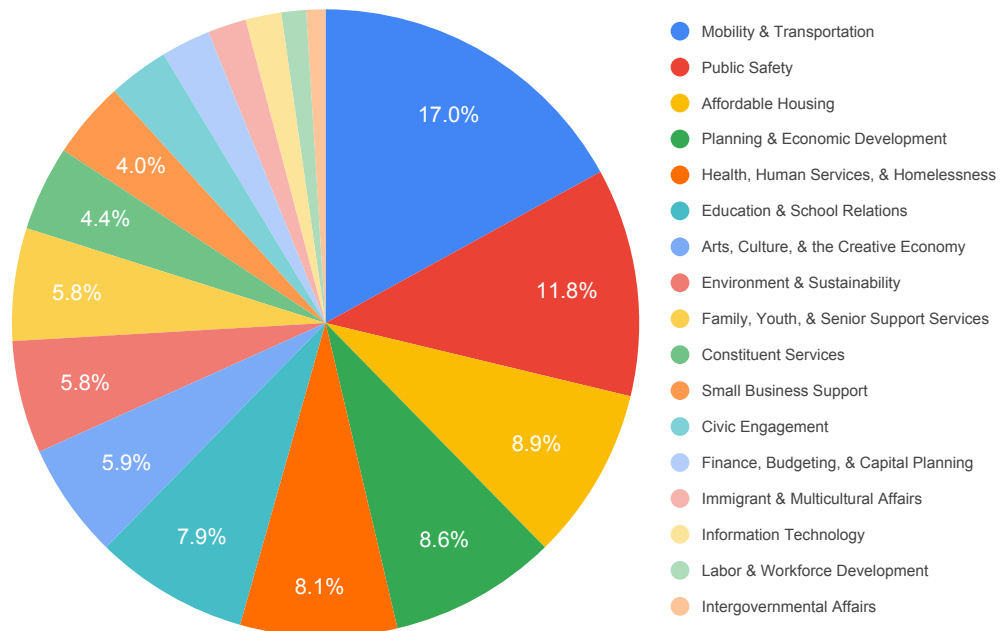
We received **723** total survey responses from community members sharing their perspectives on policy topics

The survey was released in **3** languages - *English, Spanish, and Portuguese*

The survey was distributed to **106** community partners

Responses were distributed to **18** Policy Committees.

Which Policy Committees did Community Members most direct their responses to?



Community Engagement Summary

03

Community Engagement Summary

What are your Neighbors Saying?

"Create creativity zones. Protect old buildings, especially transit-adjacent spaces."

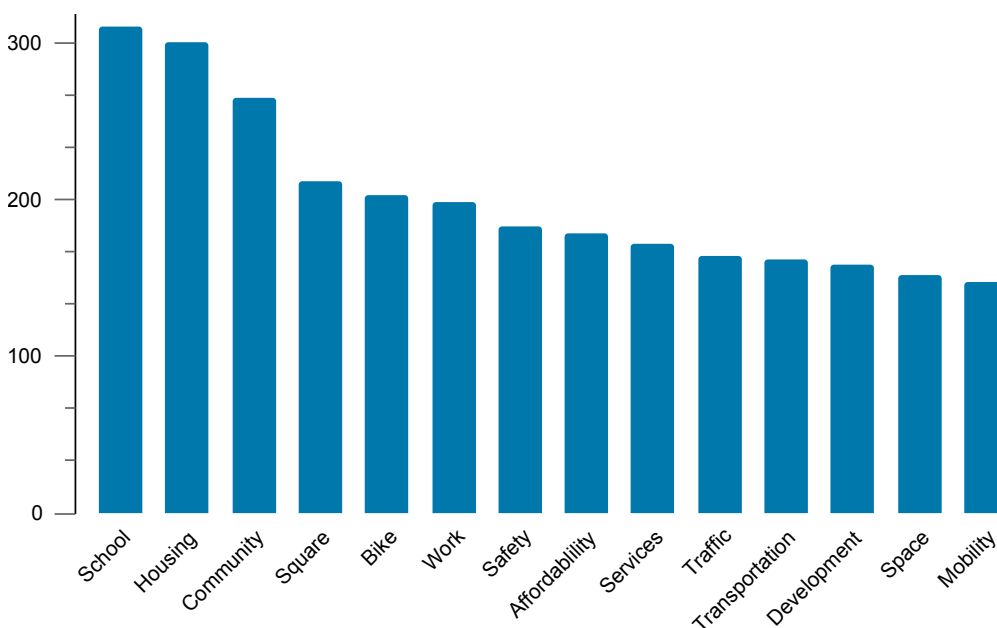
"The taxi rides to medical appointments are great!"

"I would like increased focus on pedestrian safety, especially adding crosswalks in places where there are gaps and people then tend to jaywalk"

"Do whatever you can to support small businesses that directly serve the public."

"I know that the mayor is very vocal about having weekly open-door office hours, which is great! However, please consider also holding some virtual office hours for those of us who cannot attend in person but might wish to speak to the mayor"

Which Topics Came up the Most?



Recommendations

Policy Committee Reports

- 4.01 Affordable Housing
- 4.02 Arts, Culture, & the Creative Economy
- 4.03 Charter Implementation
- 4.04 Civic Engagement
- 4.05 Constituent Services
- 4.06 Education & School Relations
- 4.07 Environment & Sustainability
- 4.08 Family, Youth, & Senior Support Services
- 4.09 Finance, Budgeting, & Capital Planning
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- 4.18 Small Business Support

This report reflects the insights, experiences, and perspectives of community members who participated in the Wilson Transition Policy Committees. We are deeply grateful to these individuals for contributing their time to help ground Mayor-elect Wilson and his incoming Administration in community-informed perspectives on key issues.

Through 18 Policy Committees, participants engaged in robust discussions to identify primary challenges, highlight what is working well, and surface key themes and opportunities across a range of topic areas. These efforts resulted in extensive and thoughtful findings, which will be made publicly available at wilsontransition.com.

The summaries included in this report are intended to provide a high-level overview of those findings and to highlight the perspectives shared by community members. They do not represent official positions, commitments, or policy decisions of the Wilson Administration. Rather, they are offered as a snapshot of community-informed input gathered during the transition period to support a strong start on day one.

The preparers of this report assume no responsibility for its contents. The findings herein are provided by individuals and their subcommittees.

Transition Team

Steering Committee

Joe Curtatone, Chair

Councilor Matt McLaughlin, Vice Chair

Brenna Broderick, Chief of Staff

Natasha Perez, Communications Consultant

Jay Ash, Tom Bent, Kerry Bowie, Janice Delory, Douglas Foy, Jillian Harvey, Denise Lauers, Stacy Richardson, Samantha Silverberg, Anne Tate, Rand Wilson

Transition Interns

Estelle Anderson, Andrew Finberg, Asaf Grofman, Sam Jackman, Spencer Kluger, Timothy Le, Shayna Levy, Maya Lunia, Anand Patil, Grant Pinsley, Madison Rossi, David Seaton, Samantha Shaw

Policy Committee Members

Affordable Housing

Ben Baldwin, Bonnie Bastian, Shannon Bennett, Fred Berman, Drew Colbert, Diane Cohen, Beatriz Gomez-Mouakad, David Gibbs, Daniel Jacobson, Todd Kaplan, Cory Mian, Adam Portney, Gonzalo Puigbo, Councilor Kristen Strezo, Joyce Tavon, Samantha Wolfe

Arts, Culture, & the Creative Economy

Emily Beattie, Ami Bennitt, Susan Berstler, Becky Donner, Ethan Dussault, Jenn Harrington, David Jubinsky, David London, Annis Sengupta, Ajda Snyder

Charter Implementation

Councilor Lance Davis, Jess Lieberman, Jack Perenick, Kat Rutkin, Bev Schwartz, Bill White

Civic Engagement

Elaine Almquist, Kenzie Ballard, Louisa Bissett, Chris Devers, Corey Donahue, Chris Dwan, Michèle Hansen, Ron Newman, Blair Read, Matthias Rudolf

Constituent Services

Steven Craig, Austin Faison, Bob McWatters

Education & School Relations

Amara Anosike, Tom Bent, Julia Dahlin, Andre Green, Sarah Phillips, Ruth Santos, Dayshawn Simmons, Ryan Williams

Environment & Sustainability

Tori Antonino, Jacob Bloom, Jennifer Clifford, Meredith Elbaum, Laura Kiesel, Courtney Koslow, Leah McCarthy, Amy Mertl, Leigh Meunier, Stephen Moore, Claire O'Neill, Renee Scott, Kira Tipton, Mary Vriniotis, Brian Matthew Walsh, Larry Yu

Family, Youth, & Senior Support Services

Scott Benjamin, Aliya Ewing, Eliza Johnston, Dorinda Jaquith, Linda Kelley, Lee-Anne King, Elaine Koury, Danny McLaughlin, Sarah Phillip, Kristen Strezo, MaryLou Carey-Sturniolo

Finance, Budgeting, & Capital Planning

Joe Curtatone, Janice Delory, Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen, Douglas Foy, Andrew Maylor, Samantha Silverberg, Bill Valletta

Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

Regina Bertholdo, Kate Byrne, Rev. Jordan Harris, Serena Hollmeyer Taylor, Mike Libby, Melissa McWhinney, Jay Nothoff, Hannah O'Halloran

Intergovernmental Affairs

Omar Boukili, Rocco DiRico, Senator Pat Jehlen, Natasha Perez, Samantha Silverberg, Tim Snyder

Immigrant & Multicultural Affairs

Ivan Abarca-Torres, Sonia Conde, Pilar Galvez, Sara Kirubi, Father Alejandro Lopez, Paula Magnelli, Alex Pirie, Aaron Soroa

Information Technology

Scott Brook, Councilor Jesse Clingan, Bruce Desmond, Rodney Marabel, Blair Read, Sukhminder Singh Sukhi, Gordon Wong

Labor & Workforce

Rod Badaro, Tom Bent, Payton Corbett, Alex Galimberti, Marcy Goldstein-Gelb, Kristen McKenna, Guy Rossmann, Korynn Stoyanoff, Marianne Walles, Rand Wilson

Planning & Economic Development

Amelia Aboff, Jeff Byrnes, Michael Capuano, Christine Stone, Bill Shelton, Anne Tate, Aaron Weber, W. Gavin Robb

Public Safety

Joe Curtatone, Brenna Broderick, Anand Patil

Small Business Support

Lindsay Allen, Zach Baum, Sheila Borges-Foley, Wendy Dalwin, Jessica Eshleman, Bill Galatis, Joe Lynch, Andrea Shapiro, Jess Willis



4.01

Affordable Housing

Affordable Housing

Key Themes

Somerville's housing challenge is two-sided: preserving stability for existing renters and voucher holders while expanding the supply of deeply affordable housing. The City has meaningful tools in place, especially through the Office of Housing Stability and key nonprofit partners but rising costs, displacement pressure, and complex market dynamics require stronger guardrails, clearer coordination, and a sharper focus on the most vulnerable households

At the same time, federal policy and funding volatility creates urgent risk for public housing, vouchers, and permanent supportive housing. Somerville should proactively prepare for circumstances in which regulations change, funding is delayed, or programs are reduced—especially in cases involving immigration-related eligibility, data sharing, and disability recertification requirements that could jeopardize housing stability for families. In implementing all strategies, the City should adopt both protective and catalytic roles: coordinating support services, upholding standards, and actively guiding the development pipeline for affordable and supportive housing.

What's Working Well

Somerville has a robust tenant stability system compared to similar cities. The Office of Housing Stability and nonprofit partners offer eviction prevention, emergency aid, housing search support, tenant education, and flexible rental help. Programs like the Municipal Voucher Program and emergency stabilization tools protect against displacement and homelessness.

Somerville benefits from experienced local housing organizations and legal partners who bring deep subject-matter expertise and are positioned to scale if funding and coordination are strengthened.



4.01

Affordable Housing

Potential Actions

Protect and Stabilize Tenancies

- Maintain and, where feasible, expand Office of Housing Stability services and contracted partner supports
- Support and enforce tenant protections in condominium conversions, including notice, rent protections during notice periods, relocation support, and purchase rights where applicable
- Expand tenant education, outreach, and organizing supports, including multilingual rights education and benefit navigation

Strengthen enforcement and cross-department coordination

- Deepen coordination between housing stability services and inspectional enforcement to ensure timely responses to unsafe conditions
- Proactively enforce short-term rental rules to prevent illegal removal of units from the long-term rental stock
- Ensure appropriate temporary relocation obligations are met when units are condemned or deemed uninhabitable

Prepare for federal policy and funding shocks

- Partner with the Somerville Housing Authority and providers to scenario-plan for HUD funding delays, voucher shortfalls, and eligibility rule changes
- Plan for disability recertification churn by coordinating navigation support, including technology assistance where needed
- Support regional and state advocacy to protect public housing, vouchers, Continuum of Care funding, and permanent supportive housing

Grow deeply affordable and supportive housing

- Take a leadership role in advancing permanent supportive housing, including identifying viable City or donated sites and issuing solicitations to gauge developer and operator interest
- Expand early acquisition capacity and write-down tools to preserve smaller naturally occurring affordable housing where feasible
- Target new production and preservation strategies toward households at or below 50% AMI, with clearer alignment of funding to greatest need
- Review inclusionary zoning performance and refine program design to improve feasibility, tenancing success, and unit mix

Improve process fairness and administrative effectiveness

- Streamline development review and permitting timelines to reduce unnecessary delays and cost escalation
- Strengthen public process balance so impacted tenants are meaningfully informed and able to participate
- Clarify the City's proactive role in soliciting development proposals aligned with identified needs (including supportive housing)



4.02

Arts, Culture, & Creative Economy

Arts, Culture, & the Creative Economy

Key Themes

Artists and cultural workers are vital to Somerville's culture and economy, yet rising rents and redevelopment are causing their rapid displacement. To preserve creativity, the City needs to integrate arts into governance, economic policy, land use, and capital planning with a focus on accountability, authority, and equity.

What's Working Well

Somerville has strong assets to build upon. The Somerville Arts Council demonstrates that targeted investments yield cultural, social, and economic returns. Arts-supportive zoning and the Fabrication District show that proactive policy can protect creative space. Artist-run buildings and DIY spaces provide models of community stewardship and continuity. Signature festivals and public programming reinforce civic pride and local commerce.

The City has also invested in substantial planning and research, creative displacement, cultural capacity, and community space studies that clearly diagnose challenges and outline solutions. Regional collaboration and independent advocacy further strengthen leadership, surface risks early, and help move projects forward when creatives are included before decisions are finalized.

Potential Actions

Embed arts in city governance

- Establish permanent arts representation in planning, economic development, and capital processes
- Create transparent systems to track implementation of cultural policies and report progress publicly

Treat the arts as economic infrastructure

- Strengthen arts-supportive zoning and protections for cultural spaces and reduce regulatory barriers to cultural activity
- Expand grant programs and diversify funding sources
- Convene artists, developers, businesses, and city leadership to align economic development with cultural preservation

Build cultural infrastructure and access

- Expand public art and programming to increase access and participation
- Enable temporary and interim use of vacant spaces while pursuing permanent solutions



4.03

Charter Implementation

Charter Implementation

Key Themes

The original charter review committee conducted extensive public outreach, and public input had already been gathered. This committee's role was therefore focused on three core functions: creating a list of action items for the City, identifying uncontroversial charter corrections, and developing a roadmap for moving positions from the previous charter into the administrative code.

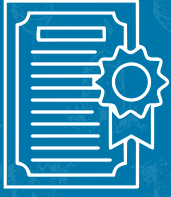
Implementation of the new charter requires both urgency and sequencing. Several items must be addressed in the short term, particularly those tied to state law and required timelines. At the same time, there are outstanding questions—especially related to election timelines, nomination papers, and inconsistencies between the charter and its appendix—that require clarification.

More broadly, the City must balance immediate administrative action with a phased approach to longer-term changes, using this early period to address non-controversial issues while allowing time to assess how the charter functions in practice.

What's Working Well

The City begins with a strong foundation. The original charter review process, including public outreach and prior analysis, provides clear direction for implementation. The new charter also establishes defined processes, timelines, and statutory requirements that guide early action, particularly around committee formation and administrative procedures.

Together, these elements provide structure and clarity for implementation, supported by existing legal frameworks and institutional knowledge.



4.03

Charter Implementation

Potential Actions

Implement required short-term actions

- Establish required committees on public financing, ranked choice voting, and multi-member bodies
- Promulgate an administrative order establishing a selection process for a city attorney
- Set salaries for elected officials and establish City Council meeting schedules by ordinance
- Ensure School Committee procedures for leadership selection are in place
- Notify multi-member bodies of updated quorum definitions

Advance administrative alignment

- Update procedures, calendars, and internal processes to reflect new charter rules
- Develop an administrative code for positions and boards removed from the previous charter
- Create a bid process for an independent auditor

Address gaps and plan for updates

- Resolve outstanding legal and procedural questions, particularly related to elections
- Develop a Home Rule Petition for non-controversial fixes
- Review and align ordinances and administrative code over time, allowing for future adjustments based on implementation experience



4.04

Civic Engagement

Civic Engagement

Key Themes

Effective civic engagement depends on clear goals, accessible communication, and meaningful opportunities for constituents to shape decisions rather than fragmented outreach and ceremonial consultation. Constituents are more likely to trust City processes when they can easily find information, understand how and when their input matters, and see how feedback influences outcomes. Somerville starts from a strong foundation, but current engagement too often stops at informing or consulting rather than involving, collaborating with, or empowering constituents. Lowering barriers to participation, improving transparency, and creating more consistent, multilingual, and accessible engagement practices are essential to building trust in City decision-making.

What's Working Well

Somerville already has many important civic engagement assets. Constituents value the City newsletter, participatory budgeting opportunities, public calendars, and the large volume of information available on City websites. Neighborhood council engagement around major development has also shown the potential of more place-based civic participation. Equity efforts are recognized and appreciated, including translation into multiple languages, tabling at schools and public events, leafleting, and efforts to meet constituents where they are. City staff across departments are making real efforts to include resident voices, ideas, and lived experience in governance, which provides a strong base for future improvement.

Potential Actions

Together, these actions would help Somerville move from a strong but uneven engagement foundation to a more transparent, consistent, and participatory civic culture—one where constituents can more easily understand City processes, see their input reflected in decisions, and experience local government as responsive, inclusive, and accountable.

Strengthen clarity, transparency, and follow-through

- Use the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) participation framework to better match engagement methods to the scale and impact of decisions
- Clearly communicate the purpose of each engagement process, what decisions are open to influence, and how public input will be used
- Provide constituents with visible “yes / no / why” feedback so they understand how their input shaped final outcomes
- Publish project-specific webpages with timelines, updates, and feedback channels, and link them through signage and QR codes at project sites



4.04

Civic Engagement

Centralize and modernize communication

- Create a more unified, up-to-date web presence so constituents can more easily find meetings, projects, and opportunities for input
- Improve discoverability of the event calendar, newsletter sign-up, and project information
- Expand proactive notification tools for construction, outages, closures, and service changes rather than relying only on 311 complaints
- Ensure all communications remain multilingual, mobile-friendly, and accessible

Lower barriers to participation

- Expand in-person, neighborhood-based, and offline outreach so participation does not depend only on digital access or free time
- Consider childcare, physical accessibility, language access, and technology support when designing public meetings
- Explore offline communication tools such as bulletin boards, electronic display boards, flyers, and school-based distribution channels
- Strengthen access to physical community spaces where constituents can gather, learn, and participate more easily

Improve meeting formats and civic education

- Shift community meetings away from one-way presentations and toward dialogue, problem-solving, and shared discussion
- Use pre-recorded or pre-distributed presentations so meeting time can focus on questions and participation
- Launch a “Somerville 101” civic education program to help constituents understand how local government works, how decisions are made, and how to engage effectively
- Ensure virtual meetings support genuine interaction rather than webinar-style observation only

Support neighborhood and commission-based engagement

- Formalize City support for neighborhood councils and expand partnership with existing and emerging councils as outreach and feedback partners
- Empower City commissions with clearer pathways to influence policy, better staff support, and regular reporting opportunities
- Build stronger cross-jurisdictional communication with state agencies so constituents can receive clearer information about projects outside direct City control

Institutionalize civic engagement capacity

- Secure funding for a modernized website and fully staffed Communications Department
- Consider a dedicated Civic Engagement Coordinator to support departments, train staff, evaluate efforts, and track results over time
- Expand participatory budgeting and create public-facing dashboards that show engagement metrics, service outcomes, and implementation status for major initiatives



4.05

Constituent Services

Constituent Services

Key Themes

Effective constituent services require coordinated efforts, integrated systems, and proactive communication rather than disjointed processes and isolated information. It is essential that constituents encounter accessible entry points, receive timely replies, and experience consistent follow-up across all departments. Engaging constituents through both digital platforms and direct community presence is essential to providing a contemporary, resident-focused service delivery model.

What's Working Well

Somerville's 311 program functions as a critical front door for constituents seeking City services and information. It provides a centralized intake point and has helped standardize how issues are reported. The City has also begun developing a Municipal Voice of Customer (MVoC) program, signaling recognition of customer experience, service quality, and follow-through matter across departments.

Potential Actions

Strengthen coordination and visibility

- Review 311 data daily to identify trends, unresolved issues, and hotspots and implement proactive follow-up to confirm resolution and resident satisfaction
- Provide City leadership with clear, real-time visibility into service performance

Expand and modernize 311

- Consolidate departmental service-request systems into a single, unified platform and expand 311's role in coordinating follow-up rather than deferring responsibility entirely to departments
- Pilot mobile and community-based 311 engagement to reach constituents where they already gather

Invest in unified systems

- Implement a modern, citywide Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform
- Standardize workflows, service-level expectations, and performance tracking across departments

Build a customer-service culture

- Provide standardized, ongoing training for all City staff in active listening, empathy, communication, and de-escalation
- Establish consistent expectations for professionalism and responsiveness
- Reinforce constituent experience as a shared organizational value, not a single department's responsibility
- Hold regular, informal neighborhood conversations in accessible locations and increase City presence at community events, schools, and local gatherings



4.06

Education & School Relations

Education & School Relations

Key Themes

High-quality public schools are a core public service, and a student's zip code should never determine educational opportunity or long-term outcomes. Building on the transition memo from Somerville Public Schools (SPS) and the ongoing work of the Superintendent and School Committee, three priorities emerge for the incoming administration: our buildings, what happens inside them, and how we pay for it.

Across all three, the throughline is shared school spaces. Somerville must make better use of existing facilities, build new capacity where needed, ensure spaces are accessible and welcoming, and treat schools as community hubs. Transparent decision-making, clear roles, and a sustained City-SPS partnership are essential to maintaining trust while improving student experience and outcomes.

What's Working Well

Somerville Public Schools are implementing a clear strategic direction through the SPS 2025–2030 Strategic Plan, with a focus on academic excellence, equity and access, wellness and joy, and family and community engagement. The School Committee has aligned goals around whole-child learning, equitable access to programming, workforce diversity, and fair resource allocation.

Career and Technical Education is a standout strength: a majority of Somerville High School students participate in CTE across 14 shops, with strong engagement in SkillsUSA and leadership development. Partnerships with SEU, PTAs, and higher education institutions support inclusion, enrollment reform, sustainability, and critical family support.

Operational collaboration between SPS, DPW, and IAM has improved significantly, demonstrating that coordinated leadership and clear communication can deliver results.



4.06

Education & School Relations

Potential Actions

Buildings

- Integrate all SPS infrastructure needs into the City's Capital Improvement Plan with School Committee engagement
- Publish accessible, building-by-building maintenance plans with regular public updates
- Advance MSBA Accelerated Repair funding and other state resources
- Clarify and communicate long-term plans for SPS-owned buildings no longer used as schools
- Modernize 311 for school facilities with live dashboards and a dedicated "school express lane"

Internal

- Integrate City and school-based services to reduce duplication and strengthen equity
- Expand community access to school facilities during non-school hours with clear roles and staffing models
- Reinvigorate partnerships such as By All Means and explore Full-Service Community Schools and Beacon models
- Repurpose underused school spaces to meet growing program needs
- Expand City partnerships with CTE and SCALE as part of broader workforce and economic development strategies
- Leverage City purchasing power for CTE equipment and maintenance

Funding

- Maximize MSBA and other state funding opportunities, including advocacy for CTE investments
- Communicate multi-year budget forecasts to SPS to support planning
- Engage the community transparently around budget choices, non-negotiable investments, and tradeoffs
- Explore partnership with The Children's Funding Project to better align and leverage funding streams
- Coordinate grant-seeking with SPS and philanthropic partners to expand OST and enrichment opportunities



4.07

*Environment &
Sustainability*

Environment & Sustainability

Key Themes

Somerville's sustainability efforts are ambitious and value-oriented, however there can be disconnection or inconsistency between planning and execution. Environmental decisions should always prioritize equity and justice, considering who benefits, who bears burdens, and who participates. The City could better use interconnected natural systems—like trees, soils, and green infrastructure—to address climate goals and improve public health.

What's Working Well

Somerville possesses a robust framework for climate and sustainability initiatives. Strategic long-term plans and state-recognized designations guide progress and enable access to technical and financial resources, while dedicated sustainability personnel serve as key organizational assets. Community-driven programs focused on food security, environmental stewardship, and social well-being enhance neighborhood resilience and resource availability. The city has established policy infrastructure to support ecological health, including building standards, vegetation requirements, equipment and pollinator regulations, as well as expanded tree-planting campaigns and developing ecological planning capabilities. Notable advancements have been made in building and energy sectors through the adoption of advanced codes, implementation of on-site solar installations, and ongoing decarbonization and geothermal feasibility studies. Water management efforts encompass green stormwater strategies, corridor-wide infrastructure projects, and the introduction of a fee structure intended to encourage on-site water absorption. Waste reduction activities are bolstered by public engagement, clearly defined zero-waste objectives, selective recycling programs, and a composting pilot that signals readiness for broader implementation.



4.07

Environment & Sustainability

Potential Actions

Strengthen governance and center equity

Create a concise, public Sustainability Delivery Roadmap integrating climate, land use, water, and waste plans with assigned clear owners, timelines, budgets, and equity indicators

- Expand inclusive engagement through multilingual, community-based, and youth-focused channels
- Adopt ecological land care as a citywide standard across departments
- Fund training and inspection capacity to support implementation
- Fully implement pollinator and habitat plans and systematize invasive-species management
- Advance non-toxic pest control approaches and strengthen wildlife protections

Expand community access and green jobs

- Increase equitable access to community gardens, food forests, and nature-based programs
- Support tool and seed libraries and school-based garden revitalization
- Build youth green-jobs pathways tied to tree canopy, stormwater infrastructure, and building retrofits

Use capital projects to lead by example

- Deliver a flagship, climate-positive public building that models net-positive energy, healthy materials, and on-site stormwater management
- Publish and fund a comprehensive municipal decarbonization plan covering envelopes, electrification, and grid coordination
- Install solar and storage on all viable municipal roofs and pilot shared energy systems

Advance integrated water management

- Prioritize upstream infiltration in capital and street projects and standardize green stormwater infrastructure as the default approach
- Launch a residential stormwater program offering technical support and incentives
- Accelerate sewer separation where feasible

Move from waste plans to waste results

- Expand citywide curbside composting and staffed drop-off sites
- Add convenient hard-to-recycle and textile collection options including support for repair, reuse, and materials exchange programs
- Embed environmentally preferred purchasing and embodied-carbon criteria in procurement

Measure, publish, and iterate

- Track outcomes such as tree canopy growth, stormwater infiltration, clean energy capacity, waste diversion, and cost savings and publish results regularly and adjust strategies based on performance
- Ensure sustainability progress is visible, equitable, and measurable across all neighborhoods



4.08

Family, Youth, & Senior Support Services

Family, Youth, & Senior Support Services

Key Themes

Somerville serves youth, families, and seniors through a wide range of programs, but access to these programs can be uneven. The central opportunity is to move from disconnected programs to a coordinated, human-centered service system that meets people where they are, makes better use of public assets, and embeds representation into decision-making. When access is predictable, space is welcoming, and feedback visibly shapes outcomes, trust and participation increase across generations.

What's Working Well

Somerville has a strong foundation of programs and partnerships. Youth benefit from robust offerings in athletics, arts, media, leadership, and prevention, with high participation through City programs, schools, nonprofits, and community leagues. Arts and media pathways provide creative on-ramps, and flexible community venues demonstrate the value of predictable space and staffing.

Families are supported by reliable anchors delivering childcare, after-school enrichment, recreation, and food access, with effective interagency collaboration on nutrition and emergency response. Seniors benefit from a strong food access network, libraries, community centers, and faith-based spaces that already function as informal hubs.

Across all age groups, frontline staff and community partners are effectively engaging constituents, demonstrating that when programs are stable, accessible, and well-coordinated, demand is strong and outcomes improve.



4.08

Family, Youth, & Senior Support Services

Potential Actions

Build coordinated access

- Launch a City-led site combining a digital portal with navigator support for youth, family, and senior services
- Unify enrollment and calendars where possible and publish clear, predictable schedules
- Create Family Welcome Center-style hubs that co-locate youth, family, and senior supports

Unlock space and improve mobility

- Expand after-hours use of K-8 schools, high school facilities, libraries, and community spaces through standardized agreements
- Prioritize ADA accessibility and safety in all shared spaces
- Pilot or restore targeted shuttle and partner transportation options to bridge geographic gaps

Formalize resident leadership

- Establish standing advisory bodies representing youth, families, and seniors with clear pathways from input to decisions
- Pilot participatory budgeting and require resident representation on relevant boards and planning processes

Strengthen quality and consistency

- Create shared service standards and continuous quality improvement across providers
- Invest in staff development and cross-sector coordination to reduce fragmentation
- Use space and participation mapping to rebalance programming citywide

Support stability and inclusion

- Expand sustainable food programs and nutrition access across age groups
- Advance affordability, mobility, and accessibility initiatives that reduce isolation and economic stress
- Require impact statements for major policies and capital projects to ensure youth, family, and senior needs are addressed up front



4.09

*Finance,
Budgeting, &
Capital Planning*

Finance, Budgeting, & Capital Planning

Key Themes

In recent years, the City has benefitted from a strong regional economy, substantial public and private investment, and expansion of the tax base, allowing revenue growth beyond statutory limits. This has supported an ambitious program of improvements to government operations, expansion of social services, major infrastructure and school investments, and neighborhood-scale enhancements.

This growth has been managed through a consistent financial strategy: level-service operational budgeting, a disciplined Capital Improvements Plan that remains below debt limits, and aggressive pursuit of external funding and developer contributions. Together, these practices have supported strong financial standing, including a Triple A bond rating.

Looking ahead, economic conditions are shifting. Growth in the tax base is slowing, with limited new commercial development and potential risks to assessed values, while costs for operations, construction, and debt service continue to rise. The City will need to adapt its financial approach—shifting toward performance-based budgeting, more disciplined capital planning, and clearer prioritization—while ensuring transparency and maintaining public trust as fiscal pressures increase.

What's Working Well

The City has a strong financial foundation, supported by disciplined budgeting, conservative capital planning, and effective revenue generation strategies. Established practices have enabled sustained investment while maintaining fiscal stability and strong credit ratings.

At the same time, Finance and Infrastructure divisions are actively advancing system and process improvements to increase efficiency, strengthen data and analysis, and improve coordination and reporting. These efforts provide a solid base for more modern, performance-driven financial management.



4.09

*Finance,
Budgeting, &
Capital Planning*

Potential Actions

Strengthen financial strategy and planning

- Introduce performance-based budgeting to better align spending with outcomes and priorities
- Refine capital planning to focus on high-priority investments and maintain alignment with debt limits
- Update forecasting and financial management practices to reflect changing economic conditions

Manage emerging fiscal pressures

- Closely monitor revenue trends, particularly property tax growth and state aid
- Plan for rising costs, including health insurance, school spending, and capital investments
- Prepare for major borrowing needs, including school construction, and potential debt-exclusion requirements

Enhance revenue and cost management

- Pursue available local option taxes, fees, and user-based revenue increases
- Continue leveraging external funding, grants, and development-related contributions
- Identify opportunities to reduce or phase out lower-impact programs

Improve systems, transparency, and coordination

- Support ongoing upgrades to financial systems, data integration, and reporting
- Strengthen interdepartmental coordination, particularly between City and Schools systems
- Provide clear, transparent communication to constituents about financial conditions, tradeoffs, and decisions



4.10

Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

Key Themes

Somerville achieves its best results through a balanced public–nonprofit model: the City organizes and legitimizes efforts, while community partners contribute expertise, cultural knowledge, and efficiency. This balance is increasingly urgent as homelessness intensifies in scale and complexity and as federal policy shifts heighten the risk of newly unhoused families in the coming years. Coordination across departments and sectors should be standard, supported by regional collaboration that mirrors cross-border service usage. Equity demands integrating disability access, neighborhood geography, and language needs into all decisions, especially since many constituents have disabilities and East Somerville has ongoing service gaps.

What's Working Well

The City's partnerships with homelessness, housing, youth, and immigrant-serving organizations are strong, particularly when municipal capacity is used to unlock funding, align efforts, and remove administrative barriers. Housing stabilization tools such as municipal vouchers and emergency hotel placements are effective buffers against displacement. Community Health Workers embedded with trusted partners help constituents access food, health coverage, and social services. Seasonal warming spaces fill a critical safety gap, and harm-reduction strategies balance compassion with public health and neighborhood safety. Embedded social work in libraries and coordinated outreach in public spaces have improved both service access and shared-space management. Weekly cross-department huddles with operations, health, safety, and outreach teams identify hotspots and enable rapid response—a proven approach worth adopting permanently.



4.10

Health, Human Services, & Homelessness

Potential Actions

Strengthen coordination and equity

- Focus staff time on homelessness strategy, regional alignment, shared data, and funding capture
- Publish a concise, public-facing digest from the weekly community-conditions huddle
- Restore Community Health Worker coverage and clinic access in underserved neighborhoods
- Earmark flexible funds for transportation to substance-use and mental-health treatment

Close critical service gaps

- Finalize and implement the Belongings Protocol across departments and partners
- Accelerate installation of year-round public restrooms and open a seasonal cooling center
- Expand field-based mental-health capacity with psychiatry and social work support
- Improve consistency of treatment access at moments of readiness

Support frontline providers and governance

- Launch centralized, recurring training in de-escalation, trauma-informed care, and emergency response
- Provide respite and peer-support resources to reduce burnout
- Charge the Board of Health with delivering a strategic plan, expand membership, and explore regional governance options

Stabilize housing and plan for growth

- Proactively extend municipal voucher programs and emergency stabilization tools
- Explore innovative housing models that shorten pathways from street to stability
- Build a braided, multi-source funding strategy to reduce reliance on temporary dollars

Improve consistency of treatment access at moments of readiness

- Formalize co-response teams with clear scope, metrics, and shared case management
- Partner regionally on specialized courts and treatment access
- Hold quarterly convenings of City and community partners to review data, surface gaps, and recommend course corrections



4.11

Immigrant & Multicultural Affairs

Immigrant & Multicultural Affairs

Key Themes

Somerville's immigrant neighbors are an integral and vibrant part of our community. While Somerville's commitment to providing services that support, protect and uplift our immigrant communities is clear, the delivery of these services can sometimes be fragmented or inconsistent in practice. Immigrant households rely on trusted, informal networks, such as schools, WhatsApp groups, community organizations, and faith institutions, rather than official channels. Misinformation spreads faster than formal communication, making it essential that innovative modes of outreach are used to convey essential information.

What's Working Well

School liaisons, parent networks, librarians, social workers, faith leaders, and community-based organizations already function as informal navigators and trusted messengers. These relationships provide cultural credibility, language access, and rapid reach. By coordinating resources and leveraging the work of the Office of Immigrant Affairs, the City can build a strong, sustainable system for supporting and protecting immigrants.



4.11

Immigrant & Multicultural Affairs

Potential Actions

Stand up operational sanctuary

- Launch a City-coordinated, multilingual trusted-communications system anchored in WhatsApp and mirrored across school, faith, and community channels
- Deliver real-time alerts, Know-Your-Rights guidance, detention response information, and public-health updates
- Establish a 24/7 immigration hotline with a rapid-response protocol guaranteeing legal triage within 2–3 hours of detention
- Seed a family-stabilization fund to cover immediate needs such as rent, food, childcare, and urgent legal costs

Strengthen school- and community-based access

- Expand school-based, one-stop outreach for health enrollment, workers' rights, and family support
- Normalize help-seeking through trusted institutions to counter misinformation
- Equip librarians, social workers, and school staff with standardized referral tools and legal information

Build permanent municipal infrastructure

- Establish an Immigrant Advisory Council reflecting the City's largest language and cultural communities
- Coordinate legal services, workers' rights, housing stability, education access, and health enrollment under one umbrella

Expand legal protection and coordination

- Stand up a City-backed legal defense and rapid-access attorney panel, including pro bono partners
- Publish plain-language legal education and rights guidance
- Convene a citywide immigrant-services coalition with shared referral pathways and real-time policy updates

Hard-wire stability and belonging

- Integrate housing stability into immigrant support by aligning with housing services and prioritizing mixed-status families
- Institutionalize annual immigrant-centered celebrations, storytelling, and cultural programming



4.12

Information Technology

Information Technology

Key Themes

Somerville maintains a strong IT security perimeter, supported by well structured-networks, active monitoring, and managed external security. However, there are inconsistencies in the implementation of essential controls foundational controls related to identity, access, and governance within the core systems are inconsistent, which introduces internal risk. The City is recognized regionally for its advanced back-end capabilities—including data-driven management, municipally owned fiber infrastructure, and equity-focused digital initiatives. Despite these strengths, fragmentation in resident-facing digital services can occur across departments, resulting in variable quality in mobile design, accessibility, and multilingual support. Strategic transparency also remains limited without clear frameworks to connect daily operations with citywide objectives.

What's Working Well

Somerville operates a cost-efficient municipal network connecting dozens of facilities and supporting resilient public safety communications. Its performance-management platform remains a national model for evidence-based government, and the City has a strong track record of forward-looking technology policy. Digital-equity initiatives and language access investments expand reach and usability for constituents. Internally, perimeter defenses are mature, with modern firewalls, monitoring, a managed security operations center, reliable backups, and inter-site redundancy that provide a solid foundation for resilience.



4.12

Information Technology

Potential Actions

Secure the foundation

- Adopt a recognized cybersecurity framework as the City's operating baseline
- Enforce multi-factor authentication and tighten identity and access controls
- Reduce privileged access and unwind legacy trust relationships
- Validate disaster recovery through regular exercises and timed system restores
- Establish a unified asset and configuration inventory, procurement security gate, and incident response playbook

Strengthen IT governance and capacity

- Centralize municipal IT operations under a single operational umbrella with appropriate public-safety separations
- Create a Center of Excellence to standardize service management, cross-train staff, and strengthen career pathways
- Reduce shadow IT through clear standards, shared tools, and early collaboration with departments

Design for constituents

- Launch a single, branded digital front door for City services
- Conduct usability reviews of high-volume tasks and publish mobile-first, multilingual, and accessible design standards
- Implement a resident dashboard with single sign-on and end-to-end status tracking

Show the work and guide the future

- Deploy a public "North Star" dashboard linking strategic goals to performance metrics and service levels
- Publish an interactive map showing the status, funding, and timelines of capital projects
- Establish clear governance for artificial intelligence, including privacy protections and human oversight

Expand digital inclusion

- Scale digital-literacy programs in partnership with libraries, schools, and community organizations
- Ensure older adults, immigrants, low-income constituents, and people with disabilities can fully access online services



4.13

Intergovernmental Affairs

Intergovernmental Affairs

Key Themes

Somerville's intergovernmental work must function with clear internal coordination, communication, and prioritization. That means naming clear owners, setting fixed cadences, and advancing a short, prioritized list of tasks that partners can understand and act on. All major City initiatives should start with an intergovernmental plan outlining targets, timelines, voting procedures, and funding sources.

Trust and effectiveness depend on resetting norms: clarifying roles, responding quickly, and bringing partners in early to reduce friction and rework. A single front door led by an empowered Intergovernmental Affairs team in the Executive Office can help. The Intergovernmental Affairs team in the Executive Office can coordinate, cultivate and scale those ties. The Transition Steering Committee advanced early hiring and engagement, positioning the administration to begin intergovernmental work on day one with momentum.

What's Working Well

Somerville begins from a strong base. Department heads maintain active relationships across local, state, federal, and regional partners. The City has an Intergovernmental Affairs team, an IGA Director and one liaison with the capacity to coordinate and scale those ties. The transition committee has also advanced early hiring and engagement, positioning the Administration to begin intergovernmental work on day one with momentum.



4.13

Intergovernmental Affairs

Potential Actions

City Council

- Designate a senior Council Liaison to coordinate strategy, pre-briefs, and staff interfaces

School Committee / Somerville Public Schools

- Hold a weekly 30-minute huddle (Mayor, Superintendent, School Committee Chair) with a shared decisions log (owner and due date).
- Publish facilities transparency tools—clear RACI, timelines, and milestone updates for major projects

State Engagement Governor's Office, Secretariats, and Legislature

- Convene quarterly delegation roundtables with agendas, two-page priority memos, and clear "decision/assist" asks; adopt a 48-hour callback norm
- Designate a State House relationship manager; provide 72-hour heads-ups on announcements; include the delegation in press events and site visits
- Minimize stand-alone home-rule petitions by packaging needs into statewide bills backed by urban-core coalitions
- Maintain a top-five capital list (local match, permit path, timeline, benefits), updated twice yearly

Federal Engagement Congressional Delegation, and Agencies

- Hold quarterly syncs aligned to appropriations and earmarks; celebrate wins jointly with the delegation
- Maintain a top-ten earmark list emphasizing quick wins and high impact, with shovel-ready documentation and clear Somerville angles
- Strengthen agency relationships (DOT, EPA, HHS, FEMA, HUD) and submit at least one joint regulatory comment per quarter with delegation co-signs
- Keep a rolling two-year federal calendar (authorizations, rules, grants) reviewed monthly at IGA stand-ups

Regional Collaboration and Anchor Institutions

- Lead Metro Mayors/MMA caucuses around focused two-issue agendas (e.g., transit reliability, CSO mitigation) with joint letters and coordinated advocacy
- Launch a Mystic working group to present unified state and federal asks
- Form an expert "kitchen cabinet" (universities, hospitals, nonprofits) to co-author grants and share data; meet quarterly with defined deliverables
- Appoint a transit/infrastructure lead with DOT and MPO ties to coordinate MWRA/MPO engagement, bus connections, traffic mitigation, and CSO projects, issuing bi-monthly status updates



4.14

Labor & Workforce Development

Labor & Workforce Development

Key Themes

In Somerville, shared prosperity relies on robust worker protections and clear standards for employers and public projects. Currently, limited and fragmented enforcement prevents full implementation of local labor rules. The City can build durable labor infrastructure with clear accountability, routine coordination with workforce partners, and procurement that rewards fair wages, safe worksites, and quality training. As a prominent employer and purchaser, the City should exemplify leadership by updating human resources and safety protocols, aligning recruitment with local talent pipelines, and ensuring that the municipal workforce reflects the community's diversity. Additionally, it is essential to expand and integrate workforce funding so constituents receive not only tuition support, but also comprehensive services that facilitate program completion and successful job placement.

What's Working Well

Core ordinances and existing workforce grants provide a solid foundation. Local training partnerships—spanning public school and other education providers, community organizations, municipal programs, and industry—are in place and can scale pathways into good jobs across sectors such as construction, healthcare, hospitality, clean tech/biotech, and public service. Previous grant cycles have provided valuable insights into designing programs, offering coaching, and engaging with employers.



4.14

Labor & Workforce Development

Potential Actions

Institutionalize coordinated enforcement

- Create a single, clearly defined enforcement process with mapped roles and accountability
- Establish service-level standards for investigations and resolutions
- Audit prior cases to identify gaps and inconsistencies
- Apply proportionate penalties for willful or repeat violations

Create ongoing labor policy coordination

- Establish a standing forum to regularly review and update labor policies
- Coordinate across enforcement, training, and worker-support partners
- Recommend updates to ordinances, purchasing standards, and implementation rules

Modernize public purchasing and development

- Adopt responsible-purchasing criteria that prioritize fair wages, safe worksites, and quality training outcomes.
- Set transparent thresholds that trigger standardized labor expectations on publicly supported projects
- Include neutrality and labor-peace commitments when significant public incentives are provided

Lead by example as an employer

- Publish annual workforce diversity, equity, and safety goals
- Expand prevention-focused safety and workforce training
- Clarify internal career pathways and advancement opportunities
- Integrate labor-rights education into youth employment programs

Expand and align workforce funding

- Pair tuition and training funds with wraparound support services
- Stack competitive state and federal funding streams
- Pilot employer co-funded training cohorts tied to verified job openings

Streamline grantmaking

- Simplify contracting and reporting requirements
- Ensure predictable and timely disbursements
- Publish a clear, annual public grant calendar

Measure and act on outcomes

- Track enrollment, completion, placement, retention, and wage growth
- Use performance data to scale effective programs
- Sunset initiatives that do not demonstrate measurable results



4.15

Mobility & Transportation

Mobility & Transportation

Key Themes

Mobility in Somerville must be shaped by safety, accessibility, and reliable delivery rather than slow implementation, fragmented ownership, and uneven communication. Constituents want safer crossings, calmer streets, accessible sidewalks, and more dependable transit across every neighborhood. It is essential that the City move more quickly on known solutions while maintaining clear, multilingual, and in-person engagement so constituents understand what is happening, when it is happening, and why. Equity must remain central, with future investments prioritizing historically underserved neighborhoods, seniors, people with disabilities, immigrants, and constituents who rely on walking, biking, and transit every day.

What's Working Well

Somerville has a strong foundation for continued progress. The Mobility Division is widely respected for its technical rigor, data-driven decision-making, and commitment to transparency, and it is supported by engaged advisory bodies and advocacy partners that strengthen both accountability and public understanding. The City already has robust plans in place, including the Bicycle Network Plan, Vision Zero Action Plan, Parking & Curb Use Study, and multiple neighborhood streetscape plans, all of which provide clear implementation pathways grounded in community input. Recent corridor redesigns, traffic-calming projects, bike infrastructure investments, and bus-priority improvements have already delivered visible benefits. Strong walking and biking rates, broad public support for multimodal transportation, and alignment with climate goals give Somerville a credible platform for continued investment and successful grant competitiveness.

Potential Actions

Together, these actions would help Somerville move from a strong planning foundation to a more visible, accountable, and equitable mobility system—one that delivers safer streets, more reliable transit, and better access for constituents across all ages, abilities, and neighborhoods.

Recommit to safety and Vision Zero

- Publicly relaunch Vision Zero as a top administrative priority with clear annual goals, focus corridors, and visible mayoral leadership
- Deliver quick-build safety improvements at the highest-risk intersections, crossings, and bike-network gaps
- Update the Vision Zero Action Plan to better integrate equity, accessibility, micromobility, and measurable year-one targets



4.15

Mobility & Transportation

Improve project delivery and transparency

- Publish clear public timelines, status updates, and explanations for delays so constituents understand what is advancing and why
- Expand use of quick-builds, pilots, and phased implementation to show benefits sooner while permanent projects move forward
- Increase staffing and strengthen coordination across Mobility, DPW, ISD, Police, Schools, and Capital Projects to reduce handoff delays

Strengthen accessibility and winter operations

- Prioritize sidewalk repair, curb-ramp upgrades, and accessible walking routes near schools, transit, senior housing, and key destinations
- Expand snow and ice clearance accountability, improve communication with private property owners, and pilot enhanced winter service on priority corridors
- Conduct regular walk audits to identify and fix barriers affecting seniors, people with disabilities, parents, and transit riders

Expand transit reliability and bus priority

- Build on successful bus-priority pilots by adding additional bus lanes, upgraded stops, transit signal priority, and stronger curb enforcement
- Improve station-area access around GLX with better lighting, crossings, wayfinding, snow clearance, and bike connections
- Strengthen coordination with the MBTA and MassDOT to address reliability, corridor projects, and state-controlled barriers such as McGrath

Modernize curb management and enforcement

- Implement priority recommendations from the Parking & Curb Use Study, including loading zones, curb pilots, permit modernization, and better parking management
- Address dangerous driving and curb misuse through focused enforcement, camera-based safety tools where authorized, and clearer rules for blocking intersections, bus stops, and bike lanes
- Treat curb and parking policy as safety, accessibility, and climate tools rather than only convenience issues

Reduce conflict and build shared understanding

- Lead proactively on public education, norms, and signage for walking, biking, micromobility, and shared-path use
- Use multilingual, neighborhood-based engagement to reduce polarization and improve understanding of tradeoffs and benefits
- Ground future decisions in safety data, equity goals, and documented community input, even when debate becomes contentious



4.16

Planning & Economic Development

Planning & Economic Development

Key Themes

Somerville benefits from strong market interest, an innovation-oriented culture, and a clear planning vision, but too often process complexity turns “good intent” into slow, fragmented, and unpredictable execution. Development, permitting, and licensing still operate in silos, making it difficult for constituents and businesses to navigate pathways with confidence. The City should pivot toward interdisciplinary planning and cross-functional delivery teams, pairing clearer rules with a service mindset that defaults to problem-solving and timely decisions. With limited land available, economic development must lean beyond zoning alone, prioritizing small-business vitality, targeted industry support in climate, innovation, and energy, and stronger workforce connections. Success depends on a coordinated front door, predictable and consistent timelines, and decisions that align SomerVision goals with on-the-ground realities.

What’s Working Well

The Somerville Zoning Ordinance provides a strong foundation, now informed by several years of practical application. Planning practice routinely integrates land use, mobility, environment, and housing considerations, reflecting a “live/work/play/sustain” approach. The City has begun aligning zoning and corridor planning with neighboring municipalities, reducing regional friction. The Community Preservation Committee quietly delivers value and could play a larger role in aligning preservation with economic vitality. On the development side, openness to piloting new technologies has helped seed climate, innovation, and energy firms. Internally, skilled staff, accessible office hours, small-business liaison efforts, and hybrid public engagement have improved transparency and participation.



4.16

Planning & Economic Development

Potential Actions

Align zoning intent with outcomes

- Update use tables and special-permit thresholds where impacts are well understood
- Create predictable approval pathways, by-right, administrative, or expedited, in defined growth areas
- Refresh neighborhood plans on a regular cycle to avoid ad hoc zoning changes
- Calibrate affordability and linkage requirements to market conditions, informed by updated housing data
- Pair preservation goals with clear adaptive-reuse guidance
- Require annual training for boards on standards, timelines, and decision boundaries

Elevate economic development as a core function

- Establish economic development with a direct reporting line to the Mayor's Office
- Assign dedicated staff for small businesses, mid-size employers, and innovation sectors
- Launch a true "one front door" business ombuds office with case management and escalation authority

Make it easier to open and operate

- Simplify licensing and permitting for outdoor dining, pop-ups, and short-term activations
- Publish step-by-step, multilingual guides for common business processes
- Coordinate construction, parking, and streets impacts to protect business revenue

Stabilize and grow the local economy

- Pilot targeted, time-limited tax incentives or abatements for mid-size employers
- Explore affordable commercial space strategies where feasible
- Support worker cooperatives and ownership models that anchor businesses locally
- Use the City's role as purchaser and connector to retain growing firms and jobs

**4.17***Public Safety*

Public Safety

Key Themes

Public trust and safety go hand in hand. Accountability must be independent, accessible, multilingual, and involve community input to maintain trust. Civilian oversight should enhance state certification and internal standards by focusing on transparency, learning, and service quality alongside discipline. Community engagement needs to be regular and include constituents who are often left out of public safety decisions. Ensuring excellence requires reliable facilities, strong communication systems, effective hiring and retention, and responsive systems to uphold Somerville's high standards as the city grows.

What's Working Well

Somerville benefits from multiple professional frameworks already in place. Internal investigations are conducted through the Police Department's Professional Standards Division, while the statewide certification body sets and enforces officer standards and publishes status data. Police Department policies are aligned with recognized best practices through state accreditation. City-led public education efforts since 2021 have increased transparency around oversight and accountability. The Fire Department has improved reliability and readiness through automated dispatch, strong response times, collaboration with mobility planning for emergency access, and proactive equipment procurement.



4.17

Public Safety

Potential Actions

Build visible, trusted accountability

- Explore establishing an independent Public Safety Oversight Commission with balanced appointments, professional staff support, and direct access to police data
- Grant clear authority to publish findings and recommendations as part of a continuous improvement framework
- Require recurring, multilingual neighborhood meetings to surface concerns and report progress
- Provide annual training for commissioners on cultural competence, confidentiality, and public safety operations

Make feedback accessible and actionable

- Offer multiple, multilingual complaint and commendation pathways (online, phone, and in person at trusted community sites)
- Launch anonymized public dashboards tracking complaints, commendations, and response timelines
- Pilot voluntary mediation or alternative dispute resolution where appropriate, alongside existing accountability processes.

Institutionalize learning and transparency

- Create a standing cadence for policy and practice reviews with written recommendations to City leadership.
- Require written responses and public posting of outcomes.
- Plan a periodic independent external review to assess impact and refine the model.

Match governance with operational excellence

- Invest in modern, reliable citywide radio communications
- Upgrade traffic signals with emergency preemption to maintain response times as street-calming expands
- Fast-track maintenance of public safety facilities and plan for replacement of aging stations through coordinated capital planning

Strengthen staffing and readiness

- Publish a police hiring and retention plan with clear timelines and diversity goals
- Leverage alternative recruitment pathways and proactive outreach
- Track time-to-hire, academy throughput, and retention metrics
- Pursue time-sensitive grants to support technology, training, and community engagement

**4.18***Small Business Support*

Small Business Support

Key Themes

Small businesses are integral to Somerville's identity, streetscape, and local economy; however, they face significant pressure from fragmented regulatory frameworks, inconsistent public-realm standards, and escalating operational costs. While the specific challenges vary across districts, a common theme emerges: businesses require a more efficient, transparent, multilingual, and coordinated interface with the City. Essential aspects such as clean sidewalks, functioning meters, safe lighting, predictable parking and enforcement, and effective construction mitigation directly influence foot traffic and business revenues, warranting treatment as core economic policies rather than routine maintenance. Additionally, public safety and human services in commercial corridors shape the customer experience. Although dining, nightlife, arts, and events continue to attract regional visitors, these strengths may be compromised in a challenging commercial environment without consistent City collaboration and enhanced marketing initiatives.

What's Working Well

Main Street organizations demonstrate the value of district-based management across organization, promotion, design, and economic vitality. City-hosted office hours are widely cited as a best practice, providing regular, cross-department access with tangible follow-through. Placemaking efforts such as outdoor dining pilots, murals, events, and targeted activations help improve ambiance and increase dwell time. Districts bring distinct strengths, including walkability and transit access, arts and community identity, BID-style management, and emerging commercial corridors with growth potential. The Small Enterprise Anti-Displacement Report offers a strong, actionable foundation for sustaining distinctive, resilient business districts.



4.18

Small Business Support

Potential Actions

Strengthen service and accountability

- Publish a clear “front door” guide for businesses with named contacts, escalation paths, and service timelines
- Actively manage a shared tracker for open applications and unresolved issues
- Establish interdepartmental service-level expectations for business-facing work, with simple public metrics and multilingual standards

Improve permitting, licensing, and service requests

- Consolidate touchpoints and standardize checklists across departments
- Provide case management for complex applications
- Offer proactive pre-filing clinics and recurring cross-department office hours to prevent delays and rework

Upgrade the public realm

- Audit and repair parking meters to ensure reliability, adopt reasonable and holiday-aware enforcement practices, and fast-track fixes for sidewalks, street furniture, and signage to reduce friction for customers and businesses.
- Surge cleaning, lighting, seasonal décor, and other quick-hit maintenance in active commercial areas to signal care, increase dwell time, and strengthen evening safety.
- Require comprehensive construction mitigation plans that include clear wayfinding, designated delivery and pick-up zones, and grace periods to protect business access and revenue.

Build district capacity and visibility

- Expand and sustainably fund Main Street or BID-style programs across commercial areas
- Launch year-round, City-supported marketing and wayfinding, including square-based itineraries and transit and parking guidance

Align costs, tools, and policy

- Conduct a holistic review of fees and fines to remove unintended burdens on small businesses
- Reassess the outdoor dining program to retain what works and simplify what does not
- Explore targeted stabilization tools for locally owned tenants
- Advance anti-displacement strategies and align parking, mobility, construction, public safety, and human-services policies with small-business sustainability

