



# SOMERVISION2040

Sustainability • Diversity • Opportunity • Connectivity • Community

## Older Adults Forum Hosted by the Council on Aging

**Date of the event:** April 11, 2019

**Attendance:** 41

**Target participants:** Older Adults

**Language of forum:** English

**Location:** Council on Aging, Holland St. Center

### What do you love about the Somerville Community? What aspects of Somerville do we want SomerVision 2040 to enhance or preserve?

Love attending senior programming and felt seniors are engaged in the community. Reports Somerville offers comprehensive services and that you can find everything you need within the city. Stated that between Door-to-Door, Somerville Cambridge Elder Services and Veteran's there are many reliable transportation services available for older adults. If you own your home, your home's value has increased.

### What problems and challenges affect the Somerville community? Which are the most important to you personally?

High cost of rent and the high cost of living. Spoke about the high condo conversion rate and what will happen to these condos in 5 or 10 years. With the increased construction of larger condos on lots once occupied by a home they spoke about the loss of front yards/green space and the loss of parking. They would like to see ordinances in place that would restrict how close to the road a person can build. Spoke of the challenge of the raise in real estate tax. Stated that there is a great deal of help for the renter but not for a middle income homeowner. Stated it was a challenge to use public transportation (buses) in the winter because the area/road in front of the bus stop is not plowed so they have to step in snow to get on the bus. Spoke about additional "fees" and "taxes" that they were seeing and would like better communication about. They used the example of a new fee on their water bill.



### What are some ideas you would like the community to explore? These could be solutions to some of the problems we identified or other programs or initiatives?

Limit the amount of condo conversions per developer or overall in the city. Expand proven programs. For example, expand the snow shoveling program to include having high school students' shovel out the bus stops/road in front of the bus stop. Build a new Senior Center with dedicated spaces for eating, exercise, educational groups. Investigate more intergenerational housing.

Davis Square farmer's market is great and should increase the number of vendors and be open another day as well. Outdoor seating is a plus and it was stated that seating can be increased at Foss Park. They would like more space for community gardens.

### What do you want the SomerVision Committee and City staff to know about the experience of older adults?

They would like to see an expansion of senior housing. Spoke about their mobility and the difficulty they have walking on the brick sidewalks, also about the uneven sidewalks due to tree roots. Many older adults have lived in Somerville for their entire lives and are invested and committed to the City. There are many policies that assist in keeping Somerville clean and safe such as trash/mowing the lawn, etc. some of these are hard to keep in compliance with as one grows older.

### What else would you like the SomerVision Committee and City staff to be thinking about?

Senior Housing—safety within the building and ensuring that policies are upheld such as the no-smoking policy. Safety while crossing the street and further discussion surrounding bike safety.

### Areas of consensus or disagreement: Were there discussion points where most people seemed to agree or where there was a definite split in opinion?

#### Areas of consensus

- Concerned regarding the amount of condos being built and the raise in their taxes.

#### Areas of disagreement

- Some people spoke very highly about the farmer's markets and requested expansion. Others felt they were unnecessary or too costly.
- Some people felt that the raise in their home value was a positive because they could sell their home at a much higher cost than what they bought it for. Others felt only that it was a negative because they have no intention to sell and are now paying much higher fees/taxes than they ever imagined/budgeted to pay for when moving to Somerville. Also felt if they did sell they would be unable to afford buying something else.

