



SomerSuppers Summary

This document summarizes the feedback staff received from the 23 different SomerSuppers that were hosted by SomerVision Committee members and other community members in March and April of 2019 as part of the SomerVision 2040 process. Overall, these 23 events included 203 participants who met in a variety of different formats including everything from a pre-existing neighborhood brunch to drinks after a committee meeting to repurposing existing community meetings and many more. Participants were invited to SomerSuppers through pre-existing groups, informal social networks at home and at work, boards of directors, and email lists. The meetings took place in nine different neighborhoods, and the best-represented neighborhoods were Davis Square, Union Square, and East Somerville.

In order to ensure the usefulness of this report SomerVision staff adjust the information we received in the following ways: editing for clarity, removing suggestions that were not clear enough to understand, moving feedback from one portion of the report to another., and when multiple reports suggested the same thing or were included in multiple sections, we tallied the mentions in parentheses. This document is organized into the following sections:

- **Process Takeaways:** From staff and attendee perspectives, what worked well about SomerSuppers, what could have been improved... (p.1)
- **Problems, Barriers, and Challenges:** Organized by topic, the problem areas SomerSuppers attendees identified that SomerVision 2040 could address... (p.2)
- **Solutions and Improvements:** Organized by topic, what ideas did the SomerSuppers attendees generate for consideration in SomerVision 2040...(p.9)
- **Lessons Learned:** What the SomerSupper groups learn that surprised them... (p.17)
- **Messages for the SomerVision Committee:** What the SomerSuppers attendees would like the SomerVision Committee members to consider in their work... (p.19)

Process Takeaways

According to the notes submitted, many people were able to meet for the first time through the SomerSuppers. Many participants reported in the “lessons learned” section that they learned about new organizations, City services, and initiatives as a result of these meetings, that they were interested in engaging in community issues in the future, and that they enjoyed the format of the SomerSuppers. In these regards, we think the SomerSuppers were a success.

However, all of the SomerSuppers were in English except one in Spanish. Staff was hoping for more language diversity in the SomerSuppers, but will continue to work with City and community partners to plan additional forums, SomerSuppers, and opportunities for engagement to ensure the broadest and most diverse representation of Somerville possible.

Problems, Barriers, and Challenges

- **Artists and the Arts**
 - Housing insecurity, with many artists still living with roommates. One artist had to choose between necessary equipment in her apartment and having roommates, but was able to use work connections for printing press.
 - Housing costs pressure people to move out, but Somerville is still the best place to live due to proximity to universities and Boston, where much of the arts community is and therefore the support network to be able to get work.
 - Lack of cars lead artists to rely on public transit and rideshare companies (e.g. Lyft, Uber)s to get around
 - Several had gone through the artist certification process, but felt it was onerous and getting on affordable housing lists was also onerous. As working artists, the affordable rents were largely not considered affordable anyway.
 - The process for accessing resources for working artists does not feel accessible presently.
 - Some artists felt that the Somerville Arts Council wasn't very accessible for new ideas and other artists hadn't thought of approaching the Arts Council as a resource.

- **Climate and Sustainability**
 - No municipal composting program
 - A lack of public recycling outside of main squares
 - Lack of education around recycling and communication on recycling changes and impacts, although there are conversations around what is happening in China and how that might be impacting Somerville

- **Commercial Development, Jobs, and Business**
 - Local businesses are facing a threat of displacement.
 - The establishment of the casino and development of Somerville has led to an increase in taxes and cost of living in Somerville, but salaries for jobs in these developments are not increasing enough to compensate for the increase in cost of living.

- **Community and Governance**
 - Language barriers for non-native English speakers prevent access city programming and events and a connection to the broader community.
 - Families and children
 - Somerville is losing families with children.
 - Families do not feel engaged or welcome within the community. New development is interested in attracting younger professionals, not families.
 - Seniors feel isolated from their neighbors.
 - Potential loss of diversity
 - Many long-time residents praised the city's past accessibility to residents of various socioeconomic backgrounds and worried that the loss in diversity that

resulted from rising rates would lead to a less inclusive and enjoyable place to live.

- The diversity that members worried about losing included communities of different immigrant and ethnic backgrounds, people with varied professions, including those with lower wages such as artists, musicians, and teachers, and also people in different stages of their lives, including families and the elderly.
- Turnover is a barrier to maintaining a sense of community (2).
 - Market forces, increased turnover of buildings with rental units, and spiraling rents to cover higher purchase prices and to earn investors more money are accelerating displacement and renter turnover. Look down your street and the neighbors you knew are gone. You attend a HS graduation party and so many families have moved out of town. There's constant turnover among young adult tenants; the only ones who can stay and set down roots are those with high-paying tech jobs.
 - It's hard enough to grow a community in a transient neighborhood, and it's tough to see our networks disrupted when people leave. Networks can handle some of that, but if there's too much disruption the community breaks down.
- **Housing**
 - Rising housing costs are a major threat, forcing people to move out of the city (7)
 - Especially families with young children (2)
 - Especially for minorities (3)
 - Some lived with numerous roommates to afford to stay in the city. Others mentioned long-time residents who were struggling to stay in their homes because rents were raised past what they could afford. One member was intimately familiar with the plight of residents who became homeless because of the rising costs.
 - A key threat for artists as well
 - Housing discrimination (2):
 - Incidents of being discriminated against in the search for rentable housing because they were pregnant or had young children
 - One of the issues is that landlords choose not to rent to families with children, especially if there are children under 6 years old. Part of the reason is the lead paint liability.
 - Remaining a home owner in Somerville.
 - One resident who owns property in Somerville worried that the rising property taxes and costs of utilities would also burden long-time residents and push them out of the city faster.
 - At times excessive regulatory burden on house modifications (e.g., screw inspection)
 - Attaining homeownership (2)
 - Increasing costs mean many will not be able to purchase in Somerville.

- The availability of houses for sale is so limited and competition so stiff that many couldn't find homes that met their criteria.
 - Even when someone did find a home in their price range, they found it nearly impossible to actually buy the house because they were being outbid, often before the official date by investors who could buy with cash, without inspection.
 - The opportunity that families once had to save for a down payment while they live in rental housing no longer exists. Instead, renters are exhausting all their income on rent. If they want to save for purchase, they need to move somewhere else. People are paying more for rent than they would for a mortgage.
- Subpar conditions (3)
 - Many live in cheaper units that are in subpar condition
 - Landlords exploit the immigration status of tenants to coerce them to remain quiet about poor living conditions.
 - Landlords may promise repairs or fixes to pest problems, but fail to deliver.
 - Landlords are not being held accountable for lowered living standards and living conditions.
 - Developers (and longer term owners) disregard regulatory framework, so redevelopment is shoddy and in some cases unsafe (e.g., electric).
 - Illegal apartments, overcrowding.
 - Renters have limited ability to get their landlords to opt-in to incentive programs like MassSaves because of the work involved and that they don't see the benefit of energy savings, even if their tenants feel like it's much better for the environment and are willing to take this on.
 - The City doesn't have enough inspectors to catch all the violations, and people don't want to "rat" on their neighbors.
- Housing for middle-income households:
 - There ends up being competing interests for housing. As inclusionary policy is targeted on delivering affordable units, the high cost of building these tends to make the market-rate units more expensive, potentially leaving behind a middle-ground.
 - There are many people who are too "rich" to qualify for an affordable unit who desperately need one; conversely, there are many people who are too poor to afford even the subsidized rent charged by "affordable" housing developments.
- Housing for low-income households
 - Almost no chance of moving here, regardless of connections to Somerville.
 - One participant told a story of a close friend who had lived in Somerville but left due to cost. She tried moving back but couldn't afford anything here. Later she tried getting low-income housing in Somerville, but because she didn't live here, she couldn't get on the wait list. Ultimately that person moved to a housing program in Western Mass.

- Low-income housing is good, but there's nowhere near enough of it, so it's kind of like a lottery ticket -- some people get extremely lucky while most don't get anything.
 - There are limited section 8 housing options, and long lists and wait times.
 - What little affordable housing exists is packed; long wait lists, overcrowding in the units, poor sanitary conditions in state- and federally-owned units, are common.
- Limited or homogeneous housing stock
 - Impersonal housing stock
 - Insufficient supply of 3+ bedroom units for families with children contributes to out-migration of this demographic
 - Not having a diverse housing stock that can serve diverse socioeconomic groups means that the city will lose out on many types of diversity: ethnic, artistic, socioeconomic, etc. that made Somerville an attractive city in the first place. Somerville is fortunate to have so many things going for it, but this will lead to a bland, generic future not really reminiscent of what made Somerville attractive.
 - Everyone who loses their housing in Somerville, at virtually any income level below affluent, will be unable to afford to stay here, i.e., find new housing here that they can afford.
 - Tufts is a very destabilizing force due to their housing practices; in effect, the rest of Somerville is subsidizing Tufts' bottom line by not forcing Tufts to assume the full cost of housing their students.
 - Worries about the physical character of Somerville. One member expressed a view that was echoed by others, that they wanted to raise a family here and they imagined living in a house with a yard - not a condo or large scale apartment building.
 - Concerns over the condo-ization of the housing stock and its implications on the rental stock and families' desire to stay in the city as their families grew and kids grew bigger.
- Housing rights and resources
 - Little to no dissemination of information and other resources regarding housing and funding aid to underserved, marginalized communities in Somerville.
 - Tenants do not know their rights and the laws around housing and eviction information.
- Other thoughts:
 - Housing problems become problems in other aspects of community life. The anxiety of this situation is felt at all levels of the family; kids feel their parents anxiety, and communicate this to school, behavior, friendships, etc.
 - There is no housing stability if you aren't lucky enough to own your own home (and bought it before prices went through the roof) or live in a deed-restricted rental unit.

- The market doesn't provide affordable housing, and the federal government, which has the most resources to address the problem has gotten out of the business: Democrats and Republicans. Focus on tax credits and public/private partnership. As housing prices increase but funding is stagnant, fewer vouchers can be issued.
 - Is there really space to add additional housing in what is already a dense environment?
- **Public Space and The Natural Environment**
 - Where you live in Somerville impacts your experience with sustainability/green space.
 - Magoun was noted as especially "soul crushing" in lack of greenery and one of the participants recently moved out of Magoun (and Somerville) because of it.
 - Many people who lived near Ball Square/West Somerville loved how green it was, with opportunities for enjoyment of passive green space.
 - Those who lived close to Beacon St, for example, said it felt very concrete and overly urban.
 - Trees
 - Insufficient attention given to street trees
 - Trees, trees, trees! So important.
 - When City or MBTA cuts down trees and allows developers to cut down trees with little or no penalty, it sets a horrible example: why should private property owners be subject to fines when they cut down their trees if much larger-scale violators go scot free?
 - So much land is owned by DCR which is very political and under-resourced
 - Some green spaces are public but you feel like you are sitting in someone's backyard and are not welcome.
 - Finding open space in a congested city.
 - There is a lack of open space
 - But there is also a trade-off between green space and other priorities
 - Need to make better use of existing parks and non-natural open spaces
 - Maintaining existing green spaces is difficult. For example Foss Park and 7 Hills Park, where grass can get ripped up by events and turn the fields into mud for the rest of the season.
 - More open space is essential to living densely in smaller units, so any push for density must have a related push for more open space.
 - Open space outside of the city
 - People love their little patch of green but do often get out of the city when they want to be with nature, which was the main reason that many in one group owned or borrowed cars.
 - At least one person felt that it was a fine tradeoff to have to leave the city if you wanted to find nature and natural areas.

- **Transportation and Infrastructure**

- Accessibility & Affordability

- Accessibility issues with the GLX, especially Union Square.
 - People want free T passes.
 - People are angry about fare increases.
 - Improper snow removal and trash barrels blocking sidewalks are physical obstacles for those with disabilities.

- Cars

- People, mainly cars, are not obeying traffic laws. As a result, other modes feel unsafe, especially when cars are speeding.
 - Ride-hailing services are convenient but add more cars to the road.

- Bike

- It's not safe enough to travel by bike (4).
 - Cars don't stop at stop lines, which are usually placed correctly in front of crosswalks, and instead they stop wherever they want. This usually means the car blocks the crosswalk, and sometimes enters at a dangerous speed. This is especially a problem with the new cycle track on Beacon, as cars don't stop until 15-20 feet after the crosswalk so they are still going 15+ mph when they cross it. This also especially a problem in areas where buildings are built on the property lines, as sight distance is reduced.
 - The state of the road repair makes travel dangerous for cyclists.

- Public Transit

- Buses are slow, unreliable, infrequent, or inefficient (5)
 - Some mentioned that UberPool was more reliable and not that much more expensive right now.
 - The variability was the true barrier for some—missing a bus might mean you're waiting for a long time.
 - Congestion is gridlocking the city, which makes it even worse for buses.
 - The 80 route in the morning is a specific example; buses are full in the morning.
 - Bus routes don't always feel optimal, involving many transfers to reach a final destination. Routes to Boston were one example.
 - Red Line is generally pretty reliable and fast, and the Green Line is a welcome addition, but hopefully the Green Line won't have reliability issues.
 - In general, feels like transit cannot be relied on to get to work on time or for any significant events.
 - Alternative transportation options have to be as reliable as their alternative.

- Pedestrian

- Intersections that have "Don't Walk" signs that rely on a button mean a lot of waiting for pedestrians or jaywalking.
 - Davis Square has recently changed so that most of the crosswalks have walk signs with parallel traffic – this seems to be what Cambridge and

Boston do, and it's a great improvement. We should implement the way Cambridge does, where pedestrians get a head start.

- McGrath Highway is too wide and a huge physical barrier for getting to and from East Somerville.
- Narrow sidewalks or intersections that are too slow to give a signal
- Some areas of Somerville don't feel particularly walkable. Examples: East of Union Square towards Inner Belt, the Stretch of Somerville Ave. between Porter Square and Conway Park.
- Runners felt that most of their running routes were designed to take them out of the city as quickly as possible.
- Stormwater Management
 - Industrialized areas desperately need green and better infrastructure.
 - Basements flooding (2), including near Inman Square
 - The love of street parking and the fact that maintenance of pavement is easier than bioswales for DPW. DPW may not have training or time to deal with low-impact development.
 - Need for less pavement, which would help with flooding.
- Miscellaneous
 - There are big challenges in places where drivers and pedestrians can't predict what others will do. For example: Powderhouse Rotary has some crosswalks with walk signs, but some without, which means pedestrians may think drivers should yield regardless of which crosswalk they're in. Meanwhile, drivers may not notice the difference.
 - There aren't enough cross city, North/South access including Union Square, Assembly Square, Gilman Square (2)
 - Not enough homes near enough jobs, which means people's destinations are rarely within walking distance. (2)
 - Somerville has reasonably good access to downtown, but mediocre access to secondary job centers like Kendall Square or Longwood.
 - nicer weather would help! Absent the control of the elements, accommodations to support alternative modes would make a difference. Plowed bike lanes, sheltered bus stops, heating solutions for the cold days? Water 'mist' for the hot days?
 - Ensure walkability without any major physical blockades.
 - People are upset about the signalization in Union Square.
- **Youth and Education**
 - Families seem to be leaving Somerville, possibly because they wanted more space or a small yard because of a lack of quality open space in Somerville.

Solutions and Improvements

- **Climate and Sustainability**
 - Waste management
 - Explore a municipal composting program (2) or subsidized private compost services
 - Force restaurants and other businesses to report on waste practices
 - Encourage public conversations around waste management
 - Move away from single stream recycling
 - Improved education and communication from the City on how we can help improve recycling
 - City policy aimed at curbing food waste
 - Ban junk mail, or at least make it recyclable
 - Add more recycle bins
 - Ban packaging materials that are bad for the environment
 - Implement pay-to-dump programs or fines for contaminated recycling.
 - Offer incentives for residents to reduce household waste.
 - Electric vehicles
 - Zoning requirements for electric vehicle plug-ins for all structured and surface parking.
 - Increase the number of charging stations.
 - All City vehicles should be electric.
 - Green infrastructure
 - Train DPW on maintaining bioswales and rain gardens.
 - Work on issues like urban heat islands and flooding (even if framing so as not to include climate change in order to make progress)
 - Energy efficiency and renewable energy
 - Empower tenants to help with enacting energy and water savings programs beyond MassSaves audits.
 - Encourage residents to use clothes lines rather than electric dryers.
 - Find ways to improve City's use of renewable energy.
 - Explore rocket mass heaters which could let residents use superefficient wood heat for their existing homes.
 - Legalize the wofati, which is an earth-integrated structure that can be built for about \$500 in materials.
 - Require commercial buildings to put solar on roofs.
 - Explore white roof programs like the one in NYC, where City provides white latex paint to paint over black heat-absorbing roofs, and thereby encourage energy savings.

- **Commercial Development, Jobs, and Business**
 - Office space should be concentrated in areas served by transit, with only limited parking available for workers.

- Support commercial and residential development along the Green Line to reduce the bottleneck on Red and Orange Lines.
- Encourage commercial and light industrial development. In part, this involves not replacing commercial buildings with housing.
- **Community and Governance**
 - Community engagement could be fostered through such avenues as public libraries and daycares/preschools given appropriate support from the city
 - Is the city being too cautious/ too deliberative in its decision-making? The world is changing rapidly around us, and it's imperative to keep up.
 - City government should not take any land for governmental functions.
 - Create a department for immigrant rights that can disseminate information regarding housing, immigrant rights, and potentially offer legal services for tenants that need additional resources.
 - Increase community programming that brings people together across social and economic barriers with better communication/messaging.
 - Second language should be considered an asset to the community, and community members with second languages should be given a sense of pride of their cultural heritage and opportunities to teach their language and culture or share it with the community.
 - Ensure City retirement funds are in socially responsible investments and not in banks or securities that support weapons, fossil fuels, or private prisons.
- **Housing**
 - Increase housing supply
 - We should try to focus housing development on affordable only, with less emphasis on market-rate.
 - Increase housing supply to prevent continued, rapid escalation of housing costs.
 - Somerville needs to add new housing supply itself, but needs to work with a broad coalition of surrounding communities to share the load of meeting high housing demand. No drastic measures that would be necessary for Somerville to meet increased demand by itself.
 - Create more 3+ bedroom units
 - Prioritize dense housing (3)
 - especially around transit stations (2)
 - if land area is not getting larger, we need to build higher
 - especially for affordable housing
 - with care to get the surrounding neighborhood on board and preserve character appropriately (3)
 - support mid-rise construction, 5-6 stories and higher in some places, but with an understanding of trade-offs (increased noise, for example)
 - Regulate short-term rentals

- With a moderate policy that would allow occupants to offer short-term rentals for a limited portion of the year (less than thirty days, for example), but would prevent people from taking some of the city’s housing supply to be used solely for visitors.
 - Even if short-term rentals only have a small impact on prices, they remove units from the traditional rental market and should be prohibited for whole units.
 - Regulations and permitting
 - Find a way to hire more inspectors to enforce regulatory requirements to ensure safe and high quality buildings.
 - Figure out how to create a culture in which neighbors feel safe to report non-compliant practices.
 - Consider what to do about “illegal” third units that are affordable, but substandard. If they had to come up to code, they probably wouldn’t be affordable anymore.
 - Explore how to expedite permitting of housing. Within a discretionary zoning and permitting environment, how can it become as-of-right when the stakes are high and the need is real?
 - Several members of the group reported hearing from developers that Somerville was not friendly towards residential development and they worried about the effect that reputation could have on stymying larger residential projects. While other members worried about unchecked development, much of the group agreed in the need for thoughtful, transparent guidelines that would give developers the information they need to plan projects.
 - Find a way to hold landlords accountable for repair and upkeep of their properties (2).
 - Encourage deed restrictions (2)
 - Consider using City funds to purchase deed restriction on willing owners of privately-owned properties (could provide low/no interest or forgivable rehab loans in exchange for deed restrictions, find a way to help someone buy a three-family and ensure the two rental units will be affordable).
 - Rent control
 - Explore it (3)
 - Implement it (3)
 - Explore rent stabilization
 - Disseminate information about tenant’s rights (2)
 - The next time the economy declines, if owners are facing foreclosures they will need to know their rights and make sure that foreclosing banks have chain of title.
 - Tenant protections
 - Implement stronger tenant protections like right to counsel and just cause eviction.
 - Tenant organizing

- Create a safer climate for immigrants so they are not afraid to report code violations or seek help in eviction cases.
 - Give tenants or non-profit designees who can preserve affordability a meaningful right of first refusal (through a Home Rule Petition)
 - Provide necessary resources to the new Office of Housing Stability.
 - Prevent rental applicants from having to list children under six on their applications or leases to make it harder to discriminate against families with children.
- Benevolent landlord policies
 - Revisit the benevolent landlord proposal discussed by Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group, which was too unfocused and too expensive to implement. There may be a more targeted, scaled-down version, like find a way to reduce tax assessment of deed-restricted properties that are sold or rented at affordable rates (currently pay the same taxes as if they were market priced).
 - Provide a property tax cut to landlords who rent to families with children.
 - Property tax incentives for landlords who provide quality housing to artists.
- Inclusionary zoning
 - Increase inclusionary requirements.
 - Study the effectiveness of inclusionary housing policy to address middle class housing needs.
- Tweak or pass current policies and programs
 - Discourage condo conversions to prevent the erosion of rental stock in the city.
 - Increase linkage requirements.
 - Implement direct funding sources for affordable housing like the transfer fee (2)
 - Expand on 100 Homes to remove housing from speculative market.
 - Set a SomerVision target of 30% of all units in the City being affordable.
 - Increase assistance for first-time homebuyers.
 - Explore how to support the Somerville Community Land Trust efforts (2)
- New housing models
 - Explore co-housing, maybe with both youth and elderly living together.
 - Explore new models like social housing and solidarity housing where the City makes long-term investments (like For the new high school) on housing that is intended For wider groups and thus can be self-supporting (e.g. like the housing in Vienna)
- A high tax on unoccupied luxury units to discourage the purchase of such units for purely investment purposes.
- Property tax forgiveness for the elderly
- Invest in subsidized housing, not just “affordable” housing to ensure the city can remain a home for truly low income residents, not just the middle class.
- Push Tufts University to house most of their students or consider programs supporting intergenerational housing.

- Ensure affordable housing is accessible at a much wider range of incomes (both lower incomes and upper incomes).
 - Eliminate the cliff effects that dis-incentivize people to get better jobs that would pay them more money and make them ineligible for current housing.
 - Expropriate land from corporate landlords (currently an initiative in Berlin)
 - % of housing for artists or artist-developed housing
 - Change laws to encourage households of unrelated adults i.e. more than three unrelated adults tone considered a household rather than a rooming house.
- **Public Space and The Natural Environment**
 - Gardening and community gardening
 - Consider term limits. There are so many people that want to garden but no one bothers to get on the waitlist, if they are even aware there is one, because it's so long.
 - One participant gardens on raised beds in an auto repair parking lot. They have an agreement with the property owner.
 - People were enthused to encourage more guerrilla gardening that makes areas more beautiful, even knowing that much of the soil is contaminated.
 - Community gardens are privileged places that could be opened up through art interventions.
 - Increase community gardens to reduce wait list.
 - Small green spaces add up (2)
 - Less enthusiasm for big “destination” projects that are inaccessible for much of Somerville like the Art Farm and more green space near Assembly Square and the edges of Somerville.
 - Intersections and squares could be better utilized as green space and pocket parks.
 - Vegetated road medians
 - There is value to the little tiny green spaces that are publically owned, so create more of those even if they require hard land use choices.
 - We should be creative in using rooftops to create green play-spaces.
 - Put electric lines underground (2)
 - to reduce the need for tree pruning
 - require this from developers
 - Trees
 - Pay more attention to trees along the street, not just focusing on parks and open space.
 - More trees! (2)
 - Bike lanes with trees as protection and shade
 - Fines, reparations, and overall requirements with respect to tree-cutting should be scaled according to the scale of the misdeed and should be higher for developers than small property owners.

- Replacement and maintenance after planting should be an essential obligation once trees are cut down, but obviously people with diseased, dangerous trees need to be able to cut them down.
 - Regulate tree-cutting on private property, especially developers clear-cutting lots to build bigger properties or to reduce their construction costs and earn higher profits. Set up a tree planting and maintenance program in every ward. Replant trees that the City (and MBTA) have cut down.
 - Good that the City has a second arborist, but two people aren't enough to cover the entire city. Create an intern/forestry program to supplement the City's capacity to monitor trees (maybe partner with Groundworks Somerville): if there aren't enough inspectors to monitor compliance with housing regulations, how could we expect inspectors to monitor trees
 - Improve existing public spaces
 - Seating in public spaces.
 - There is a desire for more alternative spaces, like the High Line in NYC, except that they should feel special and unique to Somerville.
 - Consider bringing businesses to the bike trail, like coffee shops or bike, small kiosks or food trucks.
 - Investigate how to make the Mystic river a better community space, similar to the Esplanade
 - Increase open space by building over railroad right-of-ways. Developers that can't provide quality open space onsite should be assessed fees that will contribute to cost of creating plazas, walkways, playfields, etc. over right-of-ways.
 - Change how people can be public performers to limit the same person from playing every single day
 - Add more vegetation in existing spaces (2)
 - Use planters for greenery on cement or polluted soil.
 - Use buildings
 - Fees for tree damage:
 - Especially with regard to developers: otherwise, fines are a small cost of doing business.
- **Transportation and Infrastructure**
 - Bikes
 - Prioritize bike lanes over “sharrows,” especially along strong commercial corridors that do not need parking.
 - More separated bike lanes (6)
 - Really separate bikes from the road. Move the parking out and put the bikes on the sidewalk. One thought was to add a 3in height for bike lane, to get it above the road (similar to what is done in copenhagen and the Netherlands).

- Community Path
 - The Community Path Extension, together with the Grand Junction Path, will make biking on off-street paths possible for far more people.
 - Extend the community path.
- Buses
 - More separated bus lanes (3)
 - Improve bus service, particular on the 89 route.
 - Traffic priority to buses
 - Provide more bus shelters (2)
 - More frequent bus service during rush hour. Express buses that skip every other stop.
 - Extend the 85 route up Winter Hill and/or improve the frequency and access of CT2.
 - Improve bus speed, comfort, and predictability.
 - Provide more information about when buses will arrive, through phones and/or mounted to bus stops.
- Street design
 - A road diet was recommended by 1 person for Washington/Cambridge street in East Somerville and another on Broadway between Teele and Powderhouse.
 - There are a lot of dead end streets that used to connect that do not anymore, walking access in these locations would allow people to get to locations quicker.
 - Davis Square has recently changed so that most of the crosswalks have walk signs with parallel traffic – this seems to be what Cambridge and Boston do, and it’s a great improvement. We should implement the way Cambridge does, where pedestrians get a head start.
 - Road diet for McGrath—take two lanes away and put trees and green to encourage people to walk across.
- Parking
 - Parking permits should be neighborhood-specific and limited per household.
 - A parking ban on Medford Street between School and Pearl (where the new Gilman Square station will be is supported).
 - We need to better manage our on-street parking, perhaps with zoned permits, or by adjusting prices to match availability.
 - Remove parking on major routes during rush hour to create dedicated lane for bus and bikes
- Cars
 - Plan for the arrival of autonomous vehicles
 - We would support a congestion charge for people traveling through Somerville from outside the area (i.e., no charge for residents of cambridge, somerville or boston) that went to improving public infrastructure.
- Public transportation

- Advocating for additional transportation lines (like the Green Line Extension and future projects) will bring more areas of the Boston Metro Area into easy reach.
 - Make T passes free
 - North/South bus routes, like Assembly and Gilman or Union and Harvard. (2)
 - Install light rail or trolley service along Broadway
- Walkability
 - Increase the appeal of walking with lighting and public art
 - Designate several major streets like Elm and Highland pedestrian pathways, shaping the sidewalks and traffic patterns to encourage walking along them and fostering ground-level businesses that would make them more interesting to walk down.
 - Wider sidewalks for stores to put seating and make it easier for walkers.
- Snow management
 - Improved snow management - one attendee preferred to get around by walking, pushing a stroller, but when the sidewalks weren't plowed adequately, he was forced to drive instead.
 - The city should plow sidewalks, instead of relying on each property owner. Curb ramps at crosswalks are often uncleared, and when a sidewalk is cleared, it's often just one shovel-width.
 - The City should do a better job of enforcing the snow removal laws especially on the streets with hills or provide salt in areas that get dangerous.
- Municipalize the electric grid and take profit incentive out of power.
- Fully commit to Vision Zero. Take action, finish the plan, hire for vacancies, and get City agencies on board. Lots of people felt safety issues were often lip service with little action, especially with enforcing speeding and other traffic laws.
- Explore micro-mobility. There were several calls for experimenting with micro-mobility in the city. Some people really enjoyed the use of electric scooters and thought they were a great way to quickly get around, essentially expanding access to dense business and restaurant areas like Union Square.
- Explore ways to provide transportation from Somerville into communities in more rural areas to help the economic development of the rural communities and provide additional access to green space for Somerville residents.
- Somerville needs an overall mobility plan. Instead of waiting for a street to be repaved, or worse yet, waiting for somebody to be killed or seriously injured on our streets, we should proactively figure out what we need to have a safe network of protected bike lanes, traffic calmed streets, and an efficient bus network.
- Prioritize Ride share, bus routes and bikes over vehicle commuters
- Focus traffic enforcement on illegal parking and cars loitering bike lanes.
- We need more lights around Gilman square the ones that have light pollution protection and look nice and inviting.

- **Youth and Education**

- A new Boys and Girls club, or equivalent, i.e. supervised indoor and outdoor recreational space for children and teens.
- Paid City internships for teens in the Summer
- Ensure quality education to keep families in the city
- **Miscellaneous**
 - Regional Perspective
 - Somerville can only do so much as its own community. Leaders in the community must influence neighbors in Medford and beyond to take responsibility for contributing to solutions for shared regional challenges.
 - Somerville leaders should advocate at the state level for increases in gas and excise taxes.
 - Somerville leaders should work with state leaders to move the needle on regional issues.
 - Increasing access and affordability to housing in Somerville transcends Somerville itself.
 - Establish more community buildings.

Lessons Learned

- There does not need to be a conflict between housing and open space.
- Residential development contributes very poorly to the tax base versus commercial development. Commercial development is key to the future, but a need to translate that into residential tax/rental stability as well as more community services/benefits.
- One participant worked exclusively with elderly residents in the Greater Boston region and came out strongly against the "aging in place" mantra, which surprised the SomerSupper group. She prefers the term and the strategy of "aging in community" which means redirecting seniors from their (larger than needed and most often difficult to navigate and maintain) homes to new models of senior communities that are not cost prohibitive. We need a new model that expands access to housing for seniors of moderate incomes who cannot apply for HUD housing.
- The population of Somerville was much higher 70 years ago, and that we hit the bottom around 2010, when most of us lived here already. There was much interest in discussing how families used to be much larger and in the same spaces that smaller families inhabit today.
- Folks were interested in the conserve / enhance / transform aspect of Somervision 2030, though most really didn't know all that much about the comprehensive plan and would like to know more.
- According to one SomerSupper reporter who had a meeting with mostly minorities, their participants hadn't known their tenant rights and were afraid to say anything to their landlords about problems for fear they would call ICE.
- The group was surprised that even though we are some of the most privileged renters in Somerville (by education and access to power, if not income) we are still very concerned about the future. We know that none of us would possibly ever be able to afford a home here. We

focused on the power dynamics of landlords and tenants and how landlords can do things like prevent you from putting signs for political candidates or other political expression in your home, how they can hold the market prices over your head. We talked about the sadness of feeling like the city is being built for people a long time from now cutting down old trees, planting new ones that won't be full until we are old and feeling like it is intended for the biotech workers who will move here over the next 10 years rather than for us and for the people we displaced. The city decided a long time ago on these developments and the city gave away so much to the developers already, we don't have that much leverage.

- We were surprised by how widespread the problem is, at all levels of income and walks of life. One person shared the story of a doctor, making a good salary at the local hospital, who could not find an affordable place to live in Somerville!
- We learned about some of the challenges in trying to rent with children. We learned about the 24 unit apartment that was mass-evicted on Orchard and Day.
- There was an in-depth conversation about artists as gentrifiers and artists vs hobbyists and artists vs the "creative class" (there was an engineer/artist who brought up his annoyance with creativity being conflated with the arts). Artists can have a role in this, both positive and negative.
- Lots of disagreement about how to best regulate for parking as density increases.
- A component of our group had worked as architects delivering housing in Seattle before moving to Somerville. They were surprised of the similarities between the processes amidst what are similar rallying cries for more housing. It seemed odd that as united on the issues as the two progressive communities seem to be - it was equally difficult to gain permissions, whether on account of strict land use restrictions and/or local opposition.
- That this was a very educated and involved group in environmental issues throughout the state, but they found it difficult to get involved in Somerville sustainability (the process to get involved with the plan was through selection on committees, which no one knew about or was selected from) or even to know what was going on with programs like the MVP program locally. There seems to be a disconnect where people are told to just read a plan instead of how to get involved.
- Members of the group who had been separating their recycling for years learned that Somerville had single stream recycling.
- We learned what a parklet is.
- On the whole, while people were really motivated to move out of Somerville largely due to affordable housing, where they were thinking about moving to was in search of more green without giving up accessibility to public transit. Malden came up because it's more affordable, accessible and has trees.
- Even though most of our miles are covered as pedestrians, the group was understanding that some areas will need to be designed for cars. We landed on the idea that proactive choices need to be made on what a space is designed for--for example, the proposed Davis Square plan shows a design that impedes cars to make it safer for pedestrians and create more public space, which perhaps means Powderhouse Circle needs to be redesigned to allow more cars through it. That's

also OK - our biggest issue seemed to be areas now where both groups try to coexist in unpredictable ways.

- Almost everyone would take a bike more if they felt safe, currently do not because the streets are prioritized for cars and parking.
- Everyone supported making driving more difficult (even those with cars). With the closing of the Broadway Bridge, traffic is noticeably better on Medford Street in the mornings and the bus is on time more.
- People were surprised that with increase in T service that often increases car ownership. People were really concerned with more cars being on streets.

What the SomerVision Committee Should Know

- Parking is a huge problem in East Somerville. With all the new development coming attracting more upscale businesses it will be important to find ways to keep important services within the community such as laundromats, dry cleaners, shoe repair, etc.
- We need to do more to repopulate residents with kids and families. Seen as a very important priority that does not seem to be addressed in SomerVision 2030.
- Continue to reach out to young people, especially groups such as the Young Somerville Advisory Group, and use them to bring more people to the table for these discussions. Millennial and Gen Z voices are critical in planning for the future of the city, especially given how the needs of these generations differ from those generally served by city planning in general.
- SomerSuppers were a great idea, and participants appreciated the opportunity to engage (3)
 - It was a great opportunity for us to connect with neighbors and discuss topics that are really important to us. We learned a lot from each other and we're optimistic about the results of this planning process.
- Somerville has a reputation as a progressive city but if people are still being displaced and rent-burdened at the rates they are, what does it matter? Everything the city talks about feels like just a drop in the bucket, conceding the overall picture that displacement is going to continue. The people who work in development and argue for more development seem to just be content to ignore this fact, see it as “yeah, it’s really too bad.” If the city really wants to be serious about this the first thing is to be honest and say how bad it is and what are the real choices that are being made. We are encouraging this development because we need a larger tax base (because of ____ projects we already decided on and now have huge mortgages on) and that means that property values in the area will likely rise by ____ much which means expecting to displace ____ proportion of existing renters. And then it’s at least clear whose interests are coming first and who is being left by the wayside to move farther and farther out and take the bus into the “transformative areas” early in the morning to work minimum wage jobs in food service for the wealthy workers on their lunch breaks.
- Affordable housing has to be actually affordable on a single-parent income.
- Preventing the loss of housing (i.e., homelessness prevention) should be a major priority.
- Elected and city officials should go and see and actually stay in some of the various types of housing we're asking folks to live in.

- We should aggressively push up the inclusionary zoning percentage, and have an absolute ban on developers being able to pay their way out of building their share of inclusionary units.
- Davis Square has a lot of small infrastructural issues that need to be fixed - potholes, missing bricks, places where people trip and fall. Davis Square is dangerous place to walk and bike because of the 5 way intersection.
- Deep appreciation for Somerville's culture, festivals, local holidays, community engagement.
- Somerville needs to bring in more high-paying jobs. More than that, the city needs to have an understanding of what its competitive advantages are, and what is its vision of the future. Leveraging proximity to Harvard and MIT and public transit options (Red Line and GLX), some options that we have discussed include: A biotech cluster; Next-Gen manufacturing (robotics, metallurgy)
- A pairing with Somerville High school may be established to channel some of its graduate into further vocational training followed by highly-skilled manufacturing employment
- That passive green spaces are extremely valuable for the environment and quality of life, even over gardens, playgrounds and playing fields. That the "weird nubbins" of green spaces like on medians can greatly improve the quality of life in Somerville. That there is political will to remove parking spaces to have more green space and if people were given a more clear choice (say a photo of a parking spot or a garden/pocket park), then there might be even more people who would like to make the choice for more green/natural areas.
- Maxwell green dog park is not a park
- A lot of the roads in Somerville are in terrible condition
- A discussion of public art came up and no one in the room seemed to know how to do/propose public art in Somerville and many felt the Somerville Arts Council vision wasn't very flexible/adaptable/responsive to the needs of the community, especially in relation to newer artists that want to propose public art. There was also a discussion about public art doesn't have to be a mural and that it can enrich and engage public spaces.
- One attendee who went to the Somervision kickoff, but is not on the Steering Committee, was concerned that the process had relatively opaque. They had wanted to continue being involved in the process, but didn't know how and didn't know when the next public engagement would be.