



# SOMERVISION2040

Sustainability • Diversity • Opportunity • Connectivity • Community

## Adult ESL Instructors

**Date of the event:** May 31, 2019

**How many people attended this event?** 18

**Target participants:** Somerville adult English as a second language instructors

**In what language was this forum?** English

**Where was this event hosted?** SCALE, 167 Holland Street

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

- Many participants felt Somerville was doing a great job at showcasing our culture and neighborhood pride through local events and civic engagement.
- Some felt the City is thinking outside the box in its programs and initiatives and should continue to do that.
- The community feels like a safe space for immigrants from a cultural and political standpoint.
- Participants spoke well of the city's green space, parks and public schools.
- They love the city's squares, historic building and character.
- Resistat and 311 were mentioned as great initiatives.

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

- City staff is not diverse enough, participation in decision making is still too closed off to immigrants and people of color.
- The City needs to provide more assistance to SCALE and other adult ESL and training programs by encouraging people to volunteer and creating awareness.
- Lack of childcare access is one of the biggest barriers to immigrants in taking English and professional training classes, specially women.
- There is a homelessness issue in our immigrant community.
- Highway traffic pollution is a big problem, so is traffic buildup.
- Street sweeping takes too long, worsening lack of on street parking problem.

- Not enough drug use prevention programs or initiatives.
- Housing is too expensive to buy and rent.
- Retired and elderly homeowners are struggling with property taxes.
- Drop out rate for immigrant teens in high school is too high.
- Too many bicycle riders don't follow the traffic rules and are endangering themselves and drivers.

**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?**

- SCALE needs more volunteers, there are many folks in the community who are immigrants and learned English and could help others. They also need more people with technical expertise willing to volunteer to teach vocational classes to immigrants. They suggested both the city website and meetings like Resistat could encourage people to volunteer.
- A city-wide program where residents donate old electronics so they can be given to newly arrived immigrants. Some of that population lack basic technology like computers and cellphones and would be able to take advantage even of very outdated hardware that people often just throw out.
- Schools should work more closely with SCALE and other adult ESL and professional training programs, since they interact with immigrant parents regularly the parents should receive pamphlets on all their options on how they can educate themselves further as well.
- The City's Economic Development department should work more closely with SCALE and other ESL programs to connect immigrants learning English to employment opportunities ahead of time.
- Foreclosed homes should be acquired by the city or non-profits to be converted into affordable homes rather than sold in the private market.
- The city needs an initiative and more concerted effort to ensure its staff is diverse and includes immigrant voices, not just in entry level positions, but leadership and management roles too.
- The VNA communities should offer childcare too so the elderly can volunteer to help, that would help keep the cost lower while giving the elderly a chance to be around children.
- We should have safe injection sites for opioid addicts.
- We need housing policy to encourage and make more affordable middle-income home ownership for young professionals looking to start families.
- It would be particularly beneficial for our immigrant community to get training in IT, office work, and entry level Healthcare, perhaps we could work on partnerships with local schools to allow all low-income Somerville residents to have cheaper access to those vocational areas.