



SOMERVISION2040

Sustainability • Diversity • Opportunity • Connectivity • Community

Portuguese Speakers Forum

Date of the event: June 6, 2019

How many people attended this event? 10

Target participants: Primarily Portuguese Speaking Immigrants

In what language was this forum? Portuguese

Where was this event hosted? SomerViva Office, City Hall

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

- The city and staff advocate for immigrant rights.
- Sanctuary city policies help the immigrant community feel safer.
- The city keeps improving its resources and looking better.
- The Somerville community usually does a good job at integrating immigrant families.
- The 20% inclusionary zoning program is great and needs to be expanded.
- The city has events that value and showcase immigrant culture, which is important to make immigrant communities feel included.
- SomerViva is very helpful.

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

- Property taxes are too high.
- Rent is too expensive and is forcing immigrants out of the city.
- Traffic is a big challenge.
- Not enough programs subsidizing housing costs.
- We need to encourage non-profit housing development, so we get more housing communities meant for specific underprivileged groups like the elderly, immigrants and people with disabilities. For profit developers don't want to build that.

- There are good immigrant resources like SomerViva, but a lot of times immigrants don't know about them, need to be better marketed.
- As welcoming as Somerville is overall, every person in the room had experienced prejudice for being immigrant and Latino at some point.
- Immigrants need to feel like they can ask the city for help, it's intimidating to approach the city for new arrivals.
- Everyone needs to understand that in the current political climate Latino immigrants in this country just feel generally afraid.
- We can do more to help immigrants stay in the city, access services and understand their rights.
- Buses are unreliable, slow and difficult to use.
- Trees and other plants on or near sidewalks need to be trimmed when they're getting in the way, plants are good but sidewalks need to be walkable.
- People often park in inefficient ways making on-street parking harder, renters tend to be more reliant on on-street parking.
- People with garages and driveways using on-street parking is also a problem.
- Trash collection needs to be done outside of business hours, it worsens traffic.

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?

- We need to better integrate the college students into the Somerville community, perhaps Tufts could partner with the city to share more volunteer opportunities with the students and encourage more civic participation.
- A lot of empty nesters in the city who need company, there could be a program to help place immigrants or students with them where they would help the elderly hosts with everyday tasks but pay a reduced rent.
- We need to educate people to understand that helping immigrants isn't charity, they give it back to the community far more than they receive.
- We need to do a city wide campaign to raise awareness among immigrants about what services are available to them and what their rights are if confronted by xenophobes and federal immigration enforcement.
- We need different housing structures to accommodate lower income folks better. Good quality buildings but with more shared areas for example, like shared kitchens and social areas, can lower cost and build community.
- We need programs to help people with homes in bad shape who cannot afford to fix it up, it's a safety issue and makes streets look ugly.
- We need to paint lines on streets that have on-street parking to help people park more intelligently.
- We need different stickers or some way to encourage people to use their garages and highways.

- The city could have its own shuttles to be less reliant on the MBTA, connecting all the square and main corridors. Could really help traffic.
- Bus and shuttle stops should include signs with a city map and showing the route, they should also include clearer information on what you need to ride the bus.
- Bus stops need to be covered, it would really increase use.
- We need something in between uber and buses, maybe 12 people mini buses that pick people up near their location similar to uber pool.