

Candidate name (first and last):	Willie Burnley Jr
Office the candidate is seeking:	At-large City Councilor
1. How do you see transportation, housing, and climate issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit]	Transportation, housing justice, and the climate justice are all interconnected and must be approached with a holistic and intersectional approach in order to positively reinforce each other. We must build infrastructure for all through universal design that helps facilitate the public good. That public good includes dense, passive housing that does not contribute to the climate crisis, especially along the GLX. We should ensure that transit opportunities are provided affordably and with renewable energy. We have to move to see each of these issues as layering each other rather than separately
2. Often street projects designed to improve safety and public transit involve removing on-street parking or reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes to make space for people walking, biking, and transit infrastructure. With a new mayoral administration taking over next year, how would you be a strong advocate and leader on the council on transportation issues, even amidst pushback? [1200 character limit]	Transforming public safety holistically has been a core theme of my candidacy and my advocacy as a resident. As someone who used to frequently walk through what has been recently dubbed "the corridor of death" to get my groceries when I moved to Somerville, I know that there we need to make structural changes to our streets in order to protect our neighbors. I have had conversations with every major mayoral candidate and they each know that I am deeply committed to my principals. I will make it clear to the incoming administration that moving forward the City Council is a co-equal branch of government, that we were elected on an agenda that included creating infrastructure for all, and that we will be steadfast in our commitment to deliver for the pressing needs of the community. I've spent my life as a Black organizer that has called out institutional and systemic racism. I'm not worried about pushback. My greater concern is losing another neighbor to a traffic fatality.
1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Somerville? (Check the top 3.)	Subway, Bike (bike-share or personal bicycle), Rideshare
1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.)	Duplex/Triple-decker, 4-to-6-unit building, As a renter, Housing insecure
1. Somerville has just initiated a process to create a citywide bicycle network plan which will show how street space will be allocated to create bike infrastructure for people of all ages and abilities. How will you work to ensure that this network will be built in a timely manner? [1200 character limit]	The need to create a comprehensive network of protected bike lanes is evident for cyclists, such as myself, and should be clear to all drivers who fear interacting with bikes in the streets. Currently, our City is currently assessing opportunities to reshape our government processes through charter reform and I hope that this process leads to a more equal distribution of power between the City Council and the Mayor's Administration. Under the current structure of our government, this is an area where the City Council needs to be a check on the Administration's ongoing work. We should be mandating annual reports from the Administration and relevant department heads to update the City on progress or explain lack thereof. Additionally, there is a lot we can learn from our partners to the South. Cambridge has mandated both a timeline for its bike plan and that any streets being rebuilt that along its proposed 20-miles network of separated bike lanes must include those bike changes at that moment. Somerville should pursue both of these opportunities.
2. What strategies do you support to improve accessible pedestrian infrastructure, particularly for those with vision impairments or using mobility assistive devices? [1200 character limit]	I firmly believe that we must make structural changes to our streets to improve safety for our residents, include traffic calming measures like speed bumps. As a resident that has pushed the city council to do better, I know that our budgets are reflections of our values. As a city councilor, I will push the mayoral administration to fund the DPW enough to implement traffic calming measures and accessibility technology, such as walk signals that are audible throughout the city. The fact that Somerville is not ADA compliant should be a shame for everyone living here, particularly those folks without disabilities. Our City should implement and mandate universal design within our development projects in order to ensure that, as Somerville continues to grow, we are not excluding members of our community from public space. This includes ensuring that we have a fair amount of accessible housing, which is currently severely lacking, according to conversations I've had with local leading disability advocates.
3. SomerVision 2040 mobility goals include reducing Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and prioritizing walking, biking, and transit access. How will you continue to implement the City's Complete Streets Ordinance for both short-term and long-term projects? [1200 character limit]	I think we need to move with more expediency on these goals and, quite frankly, improve the Complete Streets Ordinance. There are several spaces and tactics that I think will help us move on these goals. As a city councilor at-large, I will be somewhat uniquely positioned on the council to both work closely with those re-evaluating both Elm Street and Union Square as spaces that can be more pedestrian, cyclist, and public transit-centric. Transformative projects like these will both help us reduce VMT in our city and imagine a future in which cars are not seen as a default. I am also interested in temporal zoning on some roadways to improve VMT. The aforementioned ordinance states "Bicycle, pedestrian, and transit facilities shall be incorporated, when applicable and practical, in all street projects, reconstruction, repaving, and rehabilitation projects" before listing several significant exceptions which can be prohibitive for including separate or protected bike lanes. I would like to supersede some of these exceptions by passing a Cambridge-style ordinance that requires building separated bike lanes whenever roads are being redone.
4. Some of the more dangerous roads in Somerville are owned by state agencies, including McGrath Highway and Mystic Avenue. How will you work with and push state agencies, such as MassDOT and DCR, to make much needed changes to improve safety along busy corridors? [1200 character limit]	Speaking to truth to power is critical as both an organizer and a responsible resident of this planet. I will continue my years of statewide advocacy as a city councilor and use my platform to work alongside, and build up, organizations like SAAS, the Sunrise Movement, and the Somerville Bicycle Safety. In this way, I will encourage our residents to hold their state agencies accountable for the lives lost in our community by ensuring they are making expedient and common sense changes to our streets. We've recently seen how consistent advocacy from a large group of residents can speed these MassDOT changes. Additionally, I will engage our statehouse delegation on these points and let them know, quite frankly, the state should give us our back some of these roads if they are unwilling to do the bare minimum to keep our residents safe.
5. While the MBTA controls bus service, the City of Somerville controls the streets the buses operate on. How would you accelerate bus service and bus priority infrastructure? [1200 character limit]	Accelerating bus service is incredibly important, especially as we prioritize its infrastructure throughout the city. Consistent communication with our Somerville delegation around this will be crucial, to ensure that the MBTA is responsive to our residents who rely on these services. I am intrigued by measures we can implement locally to subsidize or make free at the point of service T-passes for Somerville residents, which I believe will increase ridership and therefore pressure on the state to accelerate service. We also may need more local assessments of how bus lanes are doing to help make the case.
6. Through the Bus Network Redesign process, how would you ensure those who need bus service are able to provide feedback and have their needs heard through the process? [1200 character limit]	I am running to make Somerville more affordable, accessible, and accountable to the needs of its residents. The accessibility and accountability are deeply linked and include being able to have clear pathways for residents voices to be heard. This issue is more complicated as it relates to transparency in state government. However, as a councilor, I look forward to working alongside the Somerville Commission for Persons with Disabilities, the Somerville Council on Aging, SomerViva, and a potential Youth Council to engage those who most rely upon these services to help shape them. Additionally, as a community organizer that has worked within and alongside many different organizations, I hope to engage community groups to ensure that they can inform their members through newsletters, social media, and even phone calls, and texts about the ongoing state-level projects that could impact our community.
7. Living near high traffic roadways causes public health issues, such as increased rates of asthma, due to the pollution caused by vehicle traffic. In Somerville, environmental justice communities experience the burden of bordering I-93. How would you work to mitigate and address issues of health equity in these communities that result from car traffic? [1200 character limit]	When I first moved to Somerville, on Fellsway W, I was very near I-93 and Mystic Ave, which receives the brunt of this environmental racism. The health inequities suffered by BIPOC residents must be dealt with promptly. This is one reason I want to pass a Somerville Green New Deal in order to end environmental racism in our community, retrofit our building stock, implement air cleaning technology in areas that have historically faced the brunt of I-93's pollution, and create good paying jobs for our residents in the process. Those closest to the pain should be receiving pathways to improve both their physical and fiscal health. Part of this has to do with pressuring the state to remedy the harm that they caused by not initially constructing sound and noise barriers along some portions of this highway. Part of it has to do with our local priorities and how hard we are willing to push to ensure that we can have safety for all in our community, which requires combating pollution and the climate crisis.
8. The MA state legislature is considering creating a new dedicated governance board for the MBTA, emulating the Fiscal and Management Control Board (FMCB). Given this, how would you utilize the board meetings to advocate on important issues that might be outside the City's control? [1200 character limit]	In a number of previous questions, I have mentioned various groups that I would engage around transit issues within our city who rely upon buses and the MBTA in general. These board meetings would be a receptacle for our people-powered energy where the voices of our community members could truly ring out and speak truth to power. The aims of these meetings, from an equity perspective, I believe should be reducing costs for riders, accelerating service along particular routes, and advancing climate justice in Somerville.

<p>9. Somerville is expected to get tens of millions of stimulus dollars from the federal government. How would you prioritize spending those funds, and how would housing and transportation priorities fit into that plan? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>The American Jobs Act will send tens of million of dollars to Somerville that is meant to foster innovations in infrastructure and I believe that we should take advantage of this opportunity to create infrastructure for all within Somerville. These funds should be used to finally implement the intersectional goals we have around integrating transportation, housing, and climate justice initiatives.</p>
<p>I'll aim to build a safer and stronger Somerville by repaving the crumbling roads in our neighborhoods, expediting the upgrades to our sewer system, and providing begin to fund social housing in our community. After the catastrophic impacts of this pandemic, I also look forward to exploring infrastructure that allows our residents to become better connected to one another, including establishing accessible community centers and laying the groundwork for municipal broadband so that all of our neighbors have access to affordable, high-speed internet.</p>	
<p>10. What do you propose Somerville should do with the \$30M community contribution for Green Line Extension that is being returned? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>I think it is appropriate to ensure that these funds are used to mitigate the potential displacement along the GLX by creating accessible social housing, improving infrastructure, and investing in a community center where resources and wraparound services can be presented to resident.</p>
<p>11. A recent report from the MBTA found that the Green Line Extension (GLX) project will largely benefit higher-income, white residents, after an initial study 10 years ago determined the project would benefit environmental justice communities slightly more. How would you ensure that lower-income residents continue to benefit from transportation improvements and have access to affordable housing near transportation? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>As a Black resident that has already once been displaced from Somerville and lives near one of the incoming stops, I am deeply concerned about the impact that the GLX may have on displacement, particularly among BIPOC residents. To the rise in rents for both residents and local businesses that may occur due to the GLX's presence and the further commercial development it may incentivize is one of the reasons I got into this race. I've organized alongside members of Union United that have fought for Community Benefit Agreements in order to ensure that our impacted neighbors can put legally-binding requirements onto developers that will serve our community. As a councilor, I will pass a CBA Ordinance that incentivizes CBAs throughout the city so that we have equity in our growth. I've also organized with the Somerville Community Land Trust, which is interested in acquiring and constructing permanently affordable housing to mitigate the impacts of displacement. I'd pursue these effort alongside these groups in addition to building more densely around these areas and subsidizing T-passes for residents.</p>
<p>12. In a new housing development where space is limited, and parking adds substantially to the cost, how would you prioritize space/think about tradeoffs (between more units, parking, open space, etc.)? What would you do in the face of community opposition to developments that seek to balance these priorities? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>These are the real challenges of being a city councilor: the limited resources we have, especially in terms of space and money. There may be situations where creating underground parking, especially for particular constituents, is justified. One example is the new high school, which was proposed with underground parking for teachers. In general, though, I believe that we must move our community in a direction that advances our environmental goals while also reckoning with the real concerns that vulnerable residents and groups - particularly folks with disabilities, elderly residents, and educators - face in terms of parking. We need to distribute what parking resources we have more equitably to ameliorate any current harms and be extremely communicative about that and any further changes with the community, particularly small business owners who see parking as an economic lifeline.</p>
<p>13. Somerville's inclusionary housing program requires that new developments of over 18 units include at least 20% of the new units be affordable and income-restricted. There is conversation about increasing the program's percentage; however, experience and research around the country has shown that setting the percentage too high can actually reduce the total number of new affordable units built. Would you support a new 12 unit building where 50% of the units are affordable over a 60 unit building where 20% of the units are affordable? Why? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>This is a bit of leading question. The latter option has more affordable units in it, even.</p> <p>What I will say is that I am interested in seeing how far we can push the affordability of our city before we truly run into the kind of negative impacts being described in this question. I do not believe we are there yet. Whether that means increasing the percentage of affordable or lowering the amount of units down to 16, I want to ensure that we are making more of our units affordable as well as accessible. With the GLX and the line of commercial development we have in the pipeline for this decade, I am currently less worried about developers not finding Somerville attractive as I am the people who live here currently being displaced because they can neither find housing that is affordable and suitable for them.</p>
<p>14. Increasing density is one of the goals of SomerVision to advance the housing stock and affordability, but Somerville's zoning code restricts how dense housing can be built. There's also pushback because Somerville is already "the densest city in New England" with ~80% of the city made up of two and three family houses. How would you address pushback and ensure that Somerville can meet its density goals set goals in SomerVision 2040? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>Often when municipalities push for more density in their community there are those that come out and argue that adding density will transform the character of our neighborhoods. However, density has long been part of the culture of our city. Not only has it been an aspect of the community that has brought our neighbors together and helped form pride in Somerville, it has also bolstered the historic working-class character of our community. However, in the last decade, and really since the right of rent control was taken away, the working-class residents of our city have been imperiled. So, if I were to address pushback for density advocacy, I would lay out that dynamic and history in order to make it clear that we must have more density in order to ensure that we do not displace those folks that have helped shape this city. Additionally, we still severely lack accessible housing and multi-family units in our city and must fill these gaps in order to have a more inclusive future. We should see density as an opportunity. As a city councilor, I will be consistent in my advocacy, look to where we can upzone, and think holistically and equitably about our housing needs.</p>
<p>15. What actions or policies that fall under existing municipal powers (i.e., do not require a home rule petition) do you support to help prevent displacement? [1200 character limit]</p>	<p>Firstly, extending our eviction moratorium for at least a year after the official emergency - as CAAS has asked our city and the state to do. Our City should also work with the Somerville Community Land Trust, which is hard at work strategizing on how to create permanently affordable and accessible housing. I'm an advocate of CBAs as a means to create development without displacement, as well, and will work with Union United to pass an ordinance that incentivizes them.</p>
<p>1. The Massachusetts Vision Zero Coalition supports the removal of direct policing from Vision Zero goals, citing issues of equity and a lack of effectiveness in improving safety. You can read about these issues in the Vision Zero Somerville 2020 Report Card and the Coalition Statement on Gov. Baker Administration's Road Safety Legislation. Do you support removing police enforcement from Vision Zero?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	
<p>2. Police details are often required for construction projects and open streets events -- it would save money and create jobs if community members were allowed to do this work. Civilian flaggers were first authorized in 2008 to help fill these roles in Massachusetts; nevertheless, these projects and events are still primarily staffed by police on overtime, and detail requests often go unfilled entirely. Do you support reducing police involvement in streets-related projects and events?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I am a founder of Defund SPD and we have always advocated for civilianizing roles that could more efficiently and frugally be done without armed force.</p>
<p>3. One key strategy that has been proven to effectively reduce speeding, improve safety, and remove racial bias in traffic enforcement in other states and countries is automated enforcement (i.e., speed cameras and red-light cameras). The MA Vision Zero Coalition is specifically supportive of the following bills due to their strong protections around equity and data privacy, H.2426, H.2532, S.1545. If the State House passes this automated enforcement legislation and allows cities & towns to opt-in to a speed or red-light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool?</p>	<p>Somewhat Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I am supportive of this and using it as one means to lessen the need for police interactions with the public. We would have to ensure that privacy and surveillance concerns are satisfied, though.</p>
<p>4. Do you support filing a home rule petition for the City of Somerville to implement automated enforcement within the municipality if legislation is not passed at the state level? If you are supportive, please describe how you would ensure the crucial equity and data provisions are included in the petition.</p>	<p>Somewhat Support</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I am supportive, though I am skeptical of the effectiveness of home rule petitions in general.</p>

<p>5. Many injuries from traffic crashes happen on busier arterial roads. Do you support traffic calming for high-crash intersections and roadways of arterials to prevent crashes and save lives, even when it means taking away parking or travel lanes?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>6. Mode shift occurs when people get out of their cars and choose other ways of getting around. Do you support the City's SomerVision 2040 goal of reducing vehicular traffic so that 75% of work commutes are made via non-car mode by 2040?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>7. To achieve many of Somerville's stated goals in Vision Zero and Somervision 2040, additional curb space will need to be reallocated from parking to create safe bike infrastructure, bus lanes, and pedestrian improvements. The current price for residential parking permits in Somerville is approximately \$3.33 a month, while the market rate for off street parking is much higher. Do you support raising the annual fee for residential parking permits?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Somewhat Support</p> <p>I am more inclined to find other ways to pay for this rather than passing these costs off to residents.</p>
<p>8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>9. Are you supportive of an ordinance similar to Cambridge's Cycling Safety Ordinance which would require protected bike lanes designated in the upcoming bike plan to be built on city streets when they are being reconstructed?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Strongly Support
<p>Adding parking to housing developments is expensive and increases the cost of housing. Mandatory parking minimums for new developments near MBTA train stops have been eliminated. Do you support eliminating parking minimums city-wide?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Neither Support nor Oppose
<p>11. Improvements to affordable housing in Somerville requires not only increasing production and allocation, but also increasing the amount of housing that will maintain its affordable status in perpetuity. Do you support the goal of making 20% of Somerville's housing stock affordable in perpetuity by 2040?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p> <p>I support at least this goal, if not a higher percent.</p>
<p>12. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) adds a 1.5% surcharge on net property taxes and qualifies the city to receive matching funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund to help support affordable housing in Somerville. It received a 76% approval as a ballot question in 2015. Do you support increasing this surcharge to further support affordable housing as part of CPA?</p> <p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Somewhat Support</p> <p>I would like to have a plan for what specific projects these funds would go to before raising that charge.</p>