

<b>Candidate name (first and last):</b>	Kristen Strezo
<b>Office the candidate is seeking:</b>	At-large City Councilor
<b>1. How do you see transportation, housing, and climate issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit]</b>	Transportation, housing, and climate issues are extremely interconnected. When looking at how we can create a more equitable city, a comprehensive approach must be taken to ensure that we can move towards a greener and more accessible city without displacing residents. As City Councilor, I have fought to prevent MBTA service cuts and have advocated for affordable housing near rail and bus stops. Additionally, I have pushed for sound barriers along I-93 as air quality along I-93 is terrible and some of our lowest income residents live along this part of the city.
<b>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]</b>	As City Councilor, I have built relationships with members and activists in the community and know to whom I should turn to gather support for transportation issues. As the only incumbent running, these resources and connections I have built will be invaluable as a new administration takes over. In my current term, I have supported collaborative, community-based approaches on how to keep Somerville safe, such as Shared Streets, and have continued communication with our pedestrian, bike, and mobility commissions. I have also introduced a resolution condemning the recent MBTA transit cuts which went to the Governor and the director of the MBTA and have supported and will continue to support and work with the Mobility Division to increase bike and bus lanes in Somerville. The work I have done in my current term and connections I have made with neighborhood residents will allow me to continue to be a strong advocate and leader on transportation issues as we work to ensure that Somerville is accessible and safe for all residents.
<b>1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Somerville? (Check the top 3.)</b>	Car, Subway, Walking
<b>1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.)</b>	Over-six-unit apartment building, As a renter, Housing insecure, Urban
<b>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]</b>	As City Councilor, I have continually supported increasing bike lanes in Somerville, working closely with the Mobility Division. I have pushed for state funding to expand bike lanes and safe community paths as well as have continued a community dialogue on where and how a safe bicycle network plan can be implemented. My work with respect to increasing bike infrastructure in my current term has allowed me to build connections and relationships with community members and gain the support of strong advocates of bike infrastructure. Now that the urgency of the COVID pandemic has subsided, I am interested in focusing on the pressing issues within transportation, particularly bike infrastructure and am grateful to have the support of Great Neighborhoods Network and Vision Zero Coalition as we advocate for equitable and sustainable transportation networks.
<b>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]</b>	I am committed to guaranteeing accessibility and safety for our pedestrians. I have and will continue to push for safe pedestrian pathways and state funding to make this possible. Senior and accessibility advocacy resonates with me personally. In caring for my grandmother who is well into her nineties, I have learned first-hand that many services are not readily accessible to seniors, including our pedestrian infrastructure. There is a large subset of Somerville residents with ADA needs. We must bear these needs in mind and have an ongoing community dialogue to understand and address these needs in working towards an equitable and accessible city.
<b>3. SomerVision 2040 mobility goals include reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled (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]</b>	I have continuously pushed for safer streets for pedestrians and cyclists and advocated for expanded transit access. I have put forward board orders such as monitoring the speed limits for our city's fleet; advocated for protected bike lanes; fought against MBTA cuts all the way up to the Governor's office; put forward orders requesting that the city investigate speed monitoring devices installed in our municipal vehicle fleets; submitted numerous orders for more traffic patrol for bus lanes, to deter cars and protect cyclists; and have continuously worked with the MBTA to enhance bus and train service. I also recognize that we have residents with ADA needs that require other transportation beyond bikes, and we must bear these needs in mind. Seniors do not always have the ability to ride bikes and must rely on their cars. I am working closely with residents in the community to hear their needs and ensure that all residents have access to affordable, safe, and reliable transportation.
<b>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]</b>	Some dangerous roads in Somerville, including McGrath Highway have caused the deaths of many Somerville residents and decreased the living standards of communities around the roads, particularly low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. To make these roads safer for pedestrians, bikers, and residents, I will advocate for protected bike lanes and the construction of community paths. A community path will create a safer environment for those who live in the area, pedestrians, and bikers. As City Councilor, I am in full support of Vision Zero and its goal of eliminating deaths and serious injuries in Somerville. For roads such as the McGrath Highway, I would love to see a community path in place of the overpass to connect East and West Somerville. I have built relationships with state agencies and advocates to push to improve safety. For these projects to be successful, there must be many discussions with community members and residents who will be directly impacted. If re-elected, I will continue to push for a community path, talk with community members and state agencies, and set a deadline as soon as possible for projects that improve safety along busy corridors.
<b>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]</b>	I recognize the crucial role that the MBTA bus service serves for Somerville residents. I have put forward numerous orders for more traffic patrol for bus lanes to deter cars, protect cyclists, and accelerate the bus service. I have also requested more communication between Tufts University and the Mobility Division so that when new Tufts students arrive to live in our city, they are briefed on Somerville's rules for bus lanes. Additionally, I believe that Somerville and the City Council should advocate for free MBTA bus service similar to Michelle Wu's proposition. I am working with the MBTA to enhance bus service and am working with the Mobility Division to increase bus lanes. With the addition of new bus lanes, I am also mindful about marking and maintaining our ADA accessible parking spots around Somerville to ensure that all residents, including those who must drive due to ADA or senior needs, have access to necessary transportation resources.
<b>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]</b>	I support increasing bus services and am working with the MBTA and Mobility Division to increase bus lanes in Somerville. I do recognize that we absolutely need to have community input in the process and listen to neighborhood residents. Listening to the voices and concerns of citizens is a crucial part in creating these lanes and other improvements to the city. I routinely hold community office hours both in-person and over zoom to ensure that all residents have an opportunity to provide feedback and have their needs heard through the process, and I make myself available to my constituents by offering them my personal phone number and email address.
<b>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]</b>	I think one of the most pressing climate, public health, and transportation issues is the need for infrastructure that mitigates and addresses the effects of high traffic roadways (such as I-93) on communities and Somerville residents. It is crucial that we add sound barriers along I-93 particularly in Wards 1 and 4 of Somerville. Air quality in this region is terrible. Many of our residents of color live in the region that is most affected by I-93, and it is a gross injustice that Massachusetts has not yet released the funding to put up sound barriers on this stretch of Somerville. Sound barriers would help shield residents from PCBs and are necessary to mitigate noise and air pollution. As City Councilor, I was part of the Somerville Transportation Equity Partners environmental/air quality study to collect data on air quality from residents who reside alongside I-93. I was also a proud co-sponsor to a recent order with Councilor McLaughlin exploring if we can create an ordinance requiring a CBA for developers to help fund the sound barriers. This is a climate change, public health, transportation, and racial justice issue that must be addressed.
<b>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]</b>	I would use these board meetings to continue building support for crucial Somerville issues that affect all residents. Currently, I am working with the MBTA to enhance bus and train service and have therefore pre-established relationships, a working history, and connections with the MBTA that with the addition of a new dedicated governance board would be instrumental in passing policy. I also have fought to prevent MBTA service cuts through introducing Board Resolutions that speak out against cuts and their adverse effect on our riders and believe that we need to have additional reserved seats near the exits for pregnant women and parents of small children in addition to the reserved seats for seniors and those with mobility issues on MBTA cars and buses. I would work with the new dedicated governance board for the MBTA on each of these issues and towards a more equitable and accessible city and Commonwealth.

<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>I would prioritize spending those funds in housing, transportation, and business development. I would advocate that some of the spending goes into an economic plan that better supports the Somerville community. I recently introduced a proclamation for Women's Advancement, Equity, and Opportunity that was unanimously passed by the City Council. The proclamation expands childcare, job mentorship programs, and support for women and minority-owned businesses. We urgently need more deliberate support not only with businesses but also more support for families in housing and transportation. I live in affordable housing and am aware of the housing discrimination that exists. I know firsthand the struggles that families face in affordable housing; how hard it is to find an affordable unit that fits the needs of children, families, and residents with disabilities; and the difficult decisions that many families make in our community to avoid displacement and these difficulties have only been further exacerbated by the pandemic. Not only are families getting priced out of our city but there is insufficient transportation into Somerville for members who work but not live in Somerville. We need to increase affordable housing and transportation opportunities to ensure that all residents and members of the Somerville community have accessibility to affordable housing and transit options.</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 appreciate how Somerville makes an effort to build affordability into their development projects. The Green Line Extension will aggravate displacement and many residents will be priced-out of Somerville as higher-income families move to Somerville and commute to Boston. The \$30M community contribution that is being returned is a perfect opportunity to redistribute the extra money towards affordable housing and food security programs to combat the consequential displacement from the Green Line Extension. It is important that as we increase our transit access, we still ensure that the city is affordable and accessible for all residents which includes increasing the affordable housing stock throughout Somerville and specifically in areas that are close to or disrupted by new MBTA infrastructure.</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>In anticipation of the GLX, it is important to concentrate affordable housing in neighborhoods close to or disrupted by new MBTA infrastructure. However, it is crucial that we not only increase the affordable housing stock in such areas but that we also maintain the existing affordable housing infrastructure. As City Councilor, I am a fierce advocate of the 100 Homes Project that works to combat the displacement of specifically low-income residents. I also helped expand the 100 Homes Project to 2,000 homes in the 2021 proposal and am working with the Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) to discuss what maintenance could look like in the years ahead. Further, as Chair of the Housing and Community Development Committee, I have in conjunction with the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, been discussing how to best support the SCC and the 100 Homes Program in the future to ensure our existing housing infrastructure is well maintained and accessible.</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>I am open to expanding these services into any and all neighborhoods in Somerville, but definitely would prioritize several in particular. As I mentioned previously with the Green Line Extension, it is important to concentrate affordable housing in neighborhoods close to or disrupted by new MBTA infrastructure. In regards to parking, it is important to find a delicate balance between accessibility for employees who commute into the area -- like public school teachers -- and congestion. I also would like to center affordable housing in higher income neighborhoods so that residents will be able to access public schools that historically have greater resources. I am proud of how the City of Somerville has made efforts to ensure that our updated zoning code is transparent and includes input from constituents. In general, I would adopt the same approach so that these developments were community efforts tailored for the wants and needs of each distinct neighborhood and Ward.</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>I live in affordable housing, and it is therefore an issue that is very personal to me. From my personal experience, I have learned that the actual number of units that are accessible is particularly important as opposed to the size of the building. When I first moved into affordable housing, I had two kids under the age of five and also lived with my 94 year old grandmother so that I could take care of her. It took my intergenerational family YEARS to find an affordable and accessible unit. In general, there was an insufficient number of affordable housing units but there were even less units that were ADA accessible and large enough for a family. As City Councilor, one of my focuses is not only pushing to expand affordable housing but specifically working to increase the number of large units for families, units for families with small children, Section 8 stock, and ADA accessible and senior units.</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>Somerville adopted a new zoning code in 2019 and the changes made were critical to expanding affordable housing, climate action, safe streets for pedestrians, and accessibility in our city. Enough time has passed since the 2019 zoning amendments to hear feedback from homeowners and small businesses. The updates on the zoning code must focus on equity. Since 2019, the new mid-rise and high-rise zoned areas are concentrated in East Somerville, with very little additional density in West Somerville. Future amendments must increase density and affordable housing in West Somerville. Additionally, I think we can be increasingly bold with our climate justice vision by adding more metrics of sustainability and also incentivizing compliance to climate goals. I am excited about the goal of a carbon neutral city by 2050 and would like to explore proposals for offset programs, like more green spaces. I am proud of how Somerville has made efforts to ensure that our update zoning code is transparent and includes input from constituents, and I would adopt the same approach to address pushback in density goals.</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>I believe that zoning is one of the most useful tools that fall under existing municipal powers to help prevent displacement and ensure that we have accessibility mandates in our city codes. As City Councilor, affordable housing and cost of living has been a priority for me. This also includes controlling real estate development/infrastructure projects to project low-income communities. I plan to increase affordable housing and make sure zoning policies mandate a certain amount of affordable housing infrastructure. As I mentioned in the previous question, based on the zoning codes in 2019 and the impact they have had on East Somerville, I believe future amendments must update the zoning map and consider increasing density and affordable housing in West Somerville. I have also advocated for and will continue advocating to increase the allocation of municipal funds and expand the number of staff for the Office and Housing Stability to ensure that residents have access to the necessary resources. Finally, I believe that we must prioritize maintaining our existing affordable housing infrastructure in addition to increasing our housing stock.</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>Somewhat Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I am in support of considering other plans that reduce police involvement in place of other programs that help keep community members safe. I support and am focusing on de-escalating traffic enforcement and ensuring that traffic enforcement officers are not armed.</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>Somewhat Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</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 &amp; towns to opt-in to a speed or red-light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool?</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>

<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	I support policies that promote equity and take a cross-cultural approach. I am committed to serving our Somerville BIPOC communities and believe the automated enforcement legislation is vital to reducing racial bias in traffic enforcement in Somerville.
<b>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.</b>	Strongly Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	As City Councilor, I would continue to ensure the crucial equity and data provisions are included in the petition by speaking with advocates and community members in our neighborhoods as to the best way to advocate for this legislation.
<b>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?</b>	Somewhat Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	It is important to take steps to prevent injuries and save lives from traffic crashes that occur on our Somerville streets. SomerVision is taking great steps to lower transportation injuries and deaths and Somerville and therefore has recommendations on best steps for traffic calming.
<b>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?</b>	Strongly Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	I believe reducing traffic can be possible by expanding bike lanes and paths such as making the McCarthy Overpass/McGrath Highway area more safe for pedestrians, bikers, and residences. Reducing vehicular traffic will also reduce air pollution in the city, especially residents who live by I-93.
<b>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?</b>	Somewhat Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	While our goal is to be as walkable and bike-able as possible, some people will always have to drive into Somerville. We need to have resident waivers for teachers to accommodate their needs and expand affordable housing options for teachers and Paras so that walking/biking to work is an option.
<b>8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?</b>	Strongly Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	I strongly support free bus service on the MBTA and a low income fare option for other public transit options. Free bus service will allow everyone in Somerville access to the whole city. It will expand job access and access to everyday services such as grocery shopping and doctors visits.
<b>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?</b>	Strongly Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	As City Councilor I have put forward board orders such as monitoring the speed limits for our city's fleet. I have put forward safer streets initiatives and advocated for protected bike lanes all the way to the Governor's Office.
<b>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?</b>	Strongly Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	With the success of eliminating minimums near MBTA train stops in 2019, I support continuing the elimination of parking minimums city wide. By not requiring parking minimums, Somerville is able to focus the resources on local transportation and sustainability.
<b>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?</b>	Strongly Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	I will continue to push for affordability. The next steps are expanding affordable opportunities, housing stock, and incentives for benevolent landlords. In my next term, I also want to boost the goals of the 100 homes program to expand low income homeownership opportunities.
<b>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?</b>	Strongly Support
<b>Please explain. [300 character limit]</b>	I firmly believe that a percentage of new developments should be designated as affordable housing. However, the extent to which new developments should be designated as affordable versus building a greater total volume of housing is highly dependent on the current demographics in Somerville.