

<b>Candidate name (first and last):</b>	Ben Ewen-Campen
<b>Office the candidate is seeking:</b>	Ward 3 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>	We need cities where our housing, work, errands, childcare, and fun are all easily accessible via public transit, safe bike routes, walking, or rolling in a wheelchair. Since my election in 2017, I have helped lead aggressively on both major streetscape projects in my Ward (including Spring Hill and Highland Ave redesign, see below), and on citywide zoning and parking policies to allow dense, sustainable housing and commercial building near transit, and to reduce congestion by eliminating parking minimums and the availability of on-street parking permits for new housing units.
<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>	Whenever we are redesigning a street, I believe that the default must be to prioritize MBTA bus improvements, accessible pedestrian routes, and protected bicycle lanes, period - its a matter of life and death. Two recent examples: when the Mayor's office proposed a Highland Ave redesign without bike lanes, I worked closely with advocates (and, directly with Liveable Streets - thanks!) to push for protected bicycle lanes. Ultimately, we succeeded in winning a public commitment from the Mayor to pursue protected bike lanes. Similarly, the Spring Hill Streetscapes redesign that is planned for a large portion of Ward 3 includes several major improvements which require parking reductions, and I have worked hard to build community support and to address concerns that have been brought up, without sacrificing elements of the proposal.  Each time that a plan to replace parking with a better road use is proposed, there is always understandable fear and strong push-back. Yet, once the work is done and the public sees the final outcome, it is nearly always embraced. I believe it is my job to respectfully work through those fears and concerns with neighbors, without sacrificing our values.
<b>1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Somerville? (Check the top 3.)</b>	Car, Bike (bike-share or personal bicycle), Walking
<b>1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.)</b>	Duplex/Triple-decker, 4-to-6-unit building, As a renter, Home ownership, Single-family home, 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>	I was very proud that my Resolution calling for funding a citywide bike network was ultimately funded ( <a href="http://somerillicityma.igq2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?ID=20845">http://somerillicityma.igq2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?ID=20845</a> ), and now that the planning is under way in earnest, I am committed to seeing it through. I am particularly interested in learning what aspects of Cambridge's network implementation Ordinance can be applied to Somerville, and I want to make sure that our bicycle network is also inclusive of our transit infrastructure needs and pedestrian infrastructure.
<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>	The accessibility of Somerville's sidewalk network is atrocious - the result of decades of poor planning and maintenance. On the one hand, I am proud that recent streetscape redesigns have all prioritized accessible sidewalks, ramps, and infrastructure for the visually-impaired. Yet on the other hand, it is clear that effectively the whole city is need of this type of make-over. Given this, I support the City's ongoing efforts to identify and prioritize the most egregious and high-priority sidewalk repairs, and believe that we should increase budgetary support for our in-house ability to repair and replace inaccessible infrastructure. I have also led the charge to implement sidewalk snow-clearing, and I'm proud to say that a pilot program was included in this year's budget under the Department of Public Works ( <a href="http://somerillicityma.igq2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?ID=24501&amp;highlightTerms=sidewalk%20snow">http://somerillicityma.igq2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?ID=24501&amp;highlightTerms=sidewalk%20snow</a> )
<b>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]</b>	In addition to being an outspoken advocate for a Complete Streets approach, even when there is pushback, I am committed to using my leverage on funding requests to ensure that any new street redesigns prioritize MBTA bus infrastructure, walkability, accessibility, and protected bicycle lanes.
<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>	I am honestly floored by the amazing advocacy of the Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets, which has made more progress with MassDOT on improving our "Corridor of Death" on McGrath & Mystic than has been made in decades. I will continue to work closely with this amazing coalition of community members, advocacy groups, and elected officials at all levels to support this work.
<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 believe that improving bus infrastructure is the single most important thing we can do to achieve the "triple win" of environmental justice, good jobs, and racial justice. This is because buses reduce fossil fuel consumption, they create good, unionized jobs and also bring people to and from their jobs, and we know that buses are disproportionately used by people of color and immigrants. I have strongly supported every proposed Bus (and Bus + Bike lane) during my time in office, even when there is pushback, and will continue to do so going forward.
<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 will continue to use my platform to spread awareness of this effort, and will support the efforts of our amazing networks of service providers and community groups who connect so many of our residents and who have redoubled their efforts to organize around transit justice. In particular, shout out to CAAS for becoming a major organizing powerhouse in our community, not just for housing but also for public transit.
<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>	After decades of neglect, it seems that the advocacy from SASS and from my colleagues who represent East Somerville has finally begun to open the door for sound and pollution barriers along I-93, which is the single worst air pollution issue in Somerville. On the Land Use Committee, we are working to leverage development interest along this corridor, in Assembly Square, to fund pollution mitigation and physical protection. And, looking forward, grounding McGrath & right-sizing it as an urban street will be a vast improvement along the 28 corridor.
<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>	As I have so many times before the State Legislature, I will gladly use my platform as an elected official to amplify the most pressing issues identified by our community and our advocacy groups, and to build political pressure on decision makers.
<b>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]</b>	How to spend the enormous infusion of stimulus dollars that is coming to Somerville will be easily most important and challenging series of decisions we make over the coming term. And, we will be doing so with a new Mayor and many new city councilors. It will be essential that we equity to be at the center of this spending, and to me this means the lions' share of this funding must go towards housing justice. Somerville "already" had an urgent displacement crisis, and the pandemic was like a match to gasoline. In addition to direct assistance to make sure our neighbors who have fallen behind on rent are made whole, this is also our opportunity to subsidize the creation of an enormous volume of new permanently affordable housing, primarily on city-owned land adjacent to transit (Union Square, Gilman Square, Winter Hill, 90 Washington.) We can also use this money to grow our 100 Homes Program, to provide legal counsel to tenants in need, and to directly support community-led groups including land trusts and CDCs who build affordable housing. And beyond housing, this funding should be used accelerate local complete-streets projects, which will create good-paying jobs and will make it easier for people to travel to and from their jobs and homes.
<b>10. What do you propose Somerville should do with the \$30M community contribution for Green Line Extension that is being returned? [1200 character limit]</b>	One of the most important things about the GLX contribution being returned it is that it lightens the City's current debt, and thereby makes it easier for us to borrow money for many other crucial investments. In other words, this is even more valuable to our community than just the value of the money being returned - it also means that we can leverage the current bond rates to invest in many other community priorities. Top priorities in Ward 3 include: increasing the amount of affordable housing and green space that can be built on the Homans' building site in Gilman Square, expanding the 100 Homes Program to create permanently affordable housing throughout our neighborhoods, turning the Cummings School & the Walnut St. Rec building into affordable housing home-ownership opportunities, and strategically acquiring vacant buildings such as the church at 125 Highland for adaptive re-use affordable housing developments. There are many, many other investments we need to make, but these are a few of my top priorities in Ward 3.

<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>The simple answer is that we need rent control and just-cause eviction - without these policies in place, lower-income residents don't stand a chance against the tidal wave of displacement. Here in Somerville, I have helped to pass the most ambitious set of housing policies in the State (you can read all the details on my website), but the simple fact is that, without rent control and just-cause eviction, we will always be nibbling around the edges, and there will be no way to stop landlords from simply kicking their tenants out and jacking up the rent. That said, I am deeply committed to doing everything in our power in the current political reality, as well, and I am very proud of our recent accomplishments such as the Affordable Housing Overlay District, re-writing our Condo Conversion Ordinance, regulating AirBNBs, and continuing to build the statewide coalition to pass a transfer fee, eviction sealing, and tenants right to purchase.</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>In our Zoning Overhaul, we approached this issue in two important ways: we removed parking minimums within 1/2 mile (and I believe we should do so citywide), and we made it such that new developments do not qualify for on-street parking permits. Thus, new developments will not create new on-street parking issues. That said, I continue to believe that we are long overdue for a hard look at our existing parking permit policies, and am glad that the city is undertaking a comprehensive citywide parking study and will make recommendations soon.</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 believe that we should continually set the inclusionary percentage as high as possible to allow these units to actually get built. Today, it is abundantly clear that 20% is doable in Somerville - this may not be the case elsewhere, but given how much can be charged for the market units, 20% is doable. And, I have seen no evidence that it is leading to smaller projects - nearly every project that has come across my desk has maxed out the allowable size and unit count under our new zoning. In the coming term, I will be focused on looking at zoning provisions beyond simply the percentage of affordable units that can be used to further our fair housing goals, inspired by the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing work that Boston City Councilor Lydia Edwards led over the past three years.</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>One of the things I love most about Ward 3 is that the overwhelming community input we receive on larger developments is about equity and about building "more" affordable housing, making projects more sustainable, and in fact not about shrinking projects (though of course we do hear that, too.) That said, one of the major reasons that we passed a fundamental overhaul of our Zoning system is because, under the old system, the fate of nearly every single development was effectively up to the discretion of our Planning or Zoning Board, and the people who benefitted under that system were the politically-connected insiders who knew how to work that system. In our new zoning, we intentionally removed that level of discretion, which means that basically, what you see on the zoning map is what you're allowed to build. I do think there is room for improvement on the map itself (i.e. there are areas in West Somerville near transit that should be zoned for more housing), but overall I think the current zoning is a transformative improvement over the previous zoning.</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>We have passed an enormous number of anti-displacement policies with our municipal power: we have created &amp; funded an Office of Housing Stability, who manage hundreds of cases each year, we passed the Housing Notification Act to ensure residents receive notice of their rights &amp; support agencies during an eviction, re-writing our Condo Conversion Ordinance to provide tenants with relocation time &amp; expenses, regulating AirBNBs and other short-term rentals, allowing for accessory dwelling units (though there is room for improvement in our current policy!), passing an Affordable Housing Overlay district, and helping to launch the a Community Land Trust, where I'm a founding Board member. Going forward, I will be working with a diverse task force to find ways to include Fair Housing principles in our zoning policies and procedures, and additionally I hope we will use municipal funds to subsidize Right to Counsel for tenants facing eviction.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Strongly Support</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I don't believe police enforcement works to make streets safer, and police presence works at cross-purposes with many of our other goals, including for example making undocumented people feel safe and welcome.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Strongly Support</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. Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>I voted to support a Resolution in support of these bills.</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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>
<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? Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>Strongly Support</p>

<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>	Strongly Support
<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>	Strongly Support
<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>	Strongly Support
<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>	Strongly Support