

Candidate name (first and last):	Beatriz Gomez Mouakad
Office the candidate is seeking:	Ward 5 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]	An unequitable development is not sustainable. Cities are an eco-system for which we need to promote and ensure equitable and sustainable development. Housing needs to be provided for all regardless of income level or legal status. Live work is not just about white-collar jobs, it is about all jobs in our cities. We need to accommodate all modes of transportation and prioritize those that create the less impact to the environment and promote better health. (walking, biking and public transportation). We need to ensure accessibility, so that all can live in our cities and have equal access.
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]	As a councilor I would promote the rethinking of our urban roads. For too long we have thought of our streets as highways for cut through traffic, which is putting lives at risk and has misguided us to prioritize cars and speed. We need to prioritize human safety in our road design not speed. If we are prioritizing human safety, we should assume that in urban areas we slow-down and priority is given to walking and biking. This will mean making way for bike lanes and removing parking spaces, but these changes should come with improvements to public transportation including increasing bus headways and routes and improvements to our sidewalks to make them more accessible. All changes to our roads should also come with an educational campaign which reinforces the need for greater road safety for saving lives, increasing health and protecting our environment.
1a. Which of the following modes of transportation do you use regularly in Somerville? (Check the top 3.)	Car, Bike (bike-share or personal bicycle), Walking
1b. What types of housing have you lived in or owned throughout your life? (Check all that apply.)	Duplex/Triple-decker, Over-six-unit apartment building. As a renter, Home ownership, Single-family home
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]	One challenge of implementing urban improvements are budget constraints, therefore a bicycle network plan needs to establish priorities and coordinate with street infrastructure projects to consolidate costs. Priorities also need to be established based on need, as high travel roads should be completed first to help encourage bike usage which will then provide further support for later smaller projects. Another challenge is community opposition; therefore, a strong and timely community process will be required to allow buy-in and support of stakeholders to avoid further delays in implementation.
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]	Somerville needs a pedestrian network plan and assessment to help prioritize repairs and improvements to ensure universal accessibility. The city is still riddled with non-compliant sidewalks that include lack of curb cuts and in some instances, what appear to be "compliant curb cuts" are not ADA compliant. With the coming of the Green Line, a study should be made of predominant paths for travel to prioritize these repairs prior to opening. Access to the Red and Orange Line and bus stops as well as access to urban centers should be included in this study. The improvements to pedestrian infrastructure should include design guidelines that ensure durability, for example Cambridge uses only cast-iron tactile strips which can withstand the wear and tear of plows. Somerville appears to be using plastic tactile strips that crumble and become more or a barrier or tripping hazard. All pedestrian infrastructure improvements should include studies and assessment of signaling. Somerville has some aging traffic signaling devices that do not comply with current ADA regulations. Staff that is knowledgeable on accessibility is needed to ensure full compliance of all new improvements.
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 would encourage the city to develop guidelines similar to Boston's Complete Street Guidelines which provide street type principles, sidewalk principles, roadway design principles etc. The ordinance itself is not enough to encourage and guide the construction of complete streets. It does reference the National Association of City Transportation Officials Urban Street Design Guide, but it would help encourage better design if specific Somerville Road typologies are used as examples. Overall I would reconsider the language or omit the section of the ordinance that notes as an exception to compliance "the cost of bikeways and walkways as part of the project would be disproportionate in cost or to anticipated future use." Bike usage is low now and sometimes a road that is "less" traveled could be a critical connector for some users that would encourage them to bike. The overall concept of complete streets is to create a robust pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure for the future and exceptions should be limited as much as possible.
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]	Having worked with DCR recently on a traffic improvement project on one of their roads as mitigation for development I know they are committed to traffic improvements. The key here is to establish communication and collaboration and push for change. The community needs to be engaged in this process as well to make sure their needs are met. With regards to McGrath Highway/Mystic Avenue it is important that we work with State and Federal officials to recognize that the creation of McGrath is the result of the damage created by Urban Renewal. The repair or reconstruction of McGrath Highway is needed as mitigation to the social and environmental damage created on the communities affected by these highways who are mostly marginalized and underserved. Improvements are needed for repairs for past damages. I will urge and push for our State and Federal agencies to make repairs for these past damages, but we need to note that these repairs could cause displacement of the same marginalized communities that have been harmed by these roadways. Any repairs need to include measures and funding to prevent this displacement.
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]	Just like with bike and pedestrian infrastructure the most important piece in accelerating bus service and bus priority infrastructure is by creating a master plan in which you identify priority areas for development/improvement and potential simple interventions. This is needed to allocate funds and be able to implement projects effectively. It is also important to plan a community process in a timely manner as the improvements in Broadway for a dedicated bus lane were met with some significant opposition due to the lack of such a process. A dedicated bus lane should include a pilot program to increase bus headways to see how this would help increase the use of public transport and further reap the benefits of a dedicated bus lane. For this the City will need to work with the MBTA.
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]	Based on my work with Padres Latinos de Somerville, I have learned that the best way to engage direct access of the community is working with trusted leaders and use communication tools used by these leaders to inform those most impacted by bus service for example: WhatsApp groups. Using the schools and religious institutions as link to some of these communities should be considered as it is the are institutions that often have greater access to those community members most in need. Another option is going out to local supermarkets and markets. (Overall strategy go-out directly into the community!) Communications need go out in the predominant language of the community and be culturally appropriate. Incentives for providing feedback should be provided as often those who most need bus services have limited resources and time. This would encourage them to provide feedback
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]	I-93 is the result of the damage created by discriminatory Urban Renewal development strategies which promoted urban exodus at the expense of marginalized and poorer communities. I-93 bisected these communities and destroyed their urban fabric. It is time the State and Federal government provide repairs for this damage that have cause decades of environmental, social and economic harm. I would work with State and Federal elected officials to provide funding for these repairs which should include: additional funding for the repair/improvement of Foss Park, the only large green space next to I-93; improving pedestrian and bicycle access to the Mystic River and surrounding parks plus funding for clean-up and improvements for these areas (i.e. Unsafe roadways and intersection Rt 28 and Mystic for example are creating barriers for access); building sound and noise barriers along I-93 and creating green buffers when possible, and studying origin/destination patterns along I-93 to identify zones areas that could benefit from increased commuter rail or bus access as a means to lower traffic on I-93.
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]	Somerville residents' car ownership is lower than the state average (1 vs 2 cars per household) and more than fifty percent of our residents' commute by sustainable modes (walking, bicycling, and public transit.) On the other hand people who work in Somerville rely heavily on motor vehicles (56% driving alone) and more than 50% of traffic in Somerville is cut through traffic. As Somerville attempts to further promote the use of sustainable modes, reduce traffic and increase street safety, it will need to advocate for the expansion of public transportation at a metropolitan scale to help increase use and hopefully diminish cut through traffic or commutes into Somerville by car. An MBTA governance board would be a good platform to advocate for a long-term vision for public transit in Metro Boston that will further invest in its infrastructure and increase usage throughout the Metro Boston area. This will also be an important platform to advocate for increased bus headways when creating dedicated bus lanes and to increase bus routes for underserved sections of our community.

<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>New stimulus dollars should first and foremost be invested to benefit those sections of the community most adversely impacted by COVID and to remediate the factors that put them at risk. Some of these risk factors include better health care, expanded social services and better access to quality education including employment training for adult populations and increased afterschool which might not directly impact transportation and housing. Yet by providing an opportunity for better employment and quality of life this, might in the long run improve housing conditions.</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>Because poor housing conditions where one of those factors, investment should be made on affordable housing options for those most impacted. Consideration should be given to provide housing close to rapid transit transportation nodes such as the Green Line, Red Line and Orange Line to offset the projected benefit of the Green Line Expansion for more privileged sectors of the population. Housing options for immigrant populations should be closely explored including the development of a community similar to Villa Victoria in the South End.</p> <p>A community center to that would help our poorer communities have a place of gathering, activity and education plus provide better access to community benefits should be considered close to transportation nodes to provide equal access to all who would benefit throughout Somerville.</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>The community contribution of the Green Line extension should be used to improve pedestrian access to all rapid transit nodes (prioritizing Green Line first) and ensure that all major paths of travel are compliant with Mass Access Code/ADA and ensure maximum pedestrian safety. This includes improving signaling, crosswalks, upgrading curb cuts, creating curb cuts when missing in key pedestrian intersections and implement traffic calming in all major intersections leading to rapid transit nodes. Bicycle access should be improved to all transit nodes and protected bike parking provided. If funds allow consideration should be given for affordable or mixed housing developments at these nodes. Funding for sidewalk and storefront improvements to commercial zones impacted by the street and bridge closures of the Green Line Extension, should be considered as a way to improve business and make-up for past losses.</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>As we increase density of units within the City lots and require off-street parking for these units, we are losing green space within private property boundaries. In a dense community like Somerville every inch of green space counts. Pervious pavers are not a 1-1 replacement for green space, therefore careful consideration should be given to the trade-offs off green space for off-street parking space particularly if it includes adding more trees to our urban canopy. Consideration should be given to not providing off-street parking for smaller one-bedroom and studio units. This might make the unit more affordable for a single-income individual wishing to have their own space. In addition, recent housing developments close to public transportation throughout Metro Boston, have shown that car ownership is lower justifying the removal of parking. Information regarding lower car-ownership close to transportation nodes, lower car-ownership in smaller units and trade-offs between preservation/creation of green space should be shared with community members opposing reduction of off-street parking.</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 question is challenging for the following reason as it does not identify the type of affordable unit we are building? 30% Below Median, 60% Below Median etc. Overall I would favor a sixty-unit development as it could produce more affordable units, twelve vs. six, and potentially these units could be for a lower-income bracket as an economy of scale should allow for a more affordable unit to be built for a lower income population. I would still consider the idea of a smaller development which due to the scale and mix of units at a 50%/50% ratio would allow for a greater sense of community within the development should it be able to avoid construction of affordable units that would be above 60% median income. Overall all affordable developments need to take into consideration the affordable units needed in Somerville, since the creation of affordable units for those with extremely low incomes (30% below median) poses a barrier to accessing stable, affordable housing in Somerville.</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>Density is Somerville's strength, but when encouraging density the City needs to make sure it has or is creating the infrastructure to support it and that density is not adversely causing housing cost to escalate by allowing more square footage of development to happen on a site. Densifying existing housing typologies, like the conversion of two-unit homes into three-unit homes, could be potentially pricing out our working-class and middle-class community. Traditionally families owned these homes and rented to family or neighbors for lower than market rate costs making them an affordable option for homeownership and providing affordable rents. By allowing two-family units to be converted to three units we might be allowing quick escalation costs for this housing type and families are no longer able to afford buy and own these homes. This could be making the two-family typology only affordable to investors who rebuild these units and sell at high end prices for a profit. I would support a density in excess of the zoning code that allows for an economy of scale to avoid overinflating property costs and works with the urban character of the neighborhood.</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>The actions that I support to prevent displacement are the Condominium Conversion Ordinance with revisions and policies to further protect tenants of units being converted to condominiums, re-launching of a lead paint program for properties rented to low and middle income residents and the creation and improvement of a rental stabilization program.</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>Neither Support nor Oppose</p>
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	<p>At this moment it is unclear what would be the cost to create such a force that similar to a 911 would need to be active 24-7 with full time employees which could be very costly. It is also unclear what the type of training is provided and how they would be more effective.</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 would support the reduction of police involvement in street related projects particularly for the larger construction. I would favor the use of construction staff from the trades (union) such as laborers who understand construction operations, safety and flows and can be part of the overall team.</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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	The community is demanding more enforcement and too many lives have been lost that could have been prevented by lower speeds. An automated system allows for consistent enforcement which is badly needed as even with the reduction of speed limits we are still experiencing excessive speeding.
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.	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	Concerns for speed and red-light program is ticketing/enforcement without due process particularly if the driver is not the owner of the car, profiling and the use of this system to impose debt based incarceration and suspensions and targeting of immigrants. All need to be addressed.
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	Traffic safety needs to be of outmost priority, and I believe we do need to redesign our streets to meet new traffic demands in which cars can drive faster, larger vehicles are on the road and there is a higher volume of cars on our roads. Saving lives and slowing cars has to be our goal.
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	The shift to non-car modes is not only a traffic safety and environmental need, but also a health need. With projections of Americans being more sedentary and obesity reaching 50% nationwide by the year 2030, we need to find ways to make our communities stay active.
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I would support raising this fee, because cars not only park on our streets but contribute to their wear and tear. I would provide a reprieve to elderly who due to mobility challenges might need to depend on a car and for our low-income residents who are already challenged by rising housing costs
8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I would support a free bus service for the MBTA as a pilot program first to understand the revenue and increase ridership implications. We already have a burdened MBTA system that is struggling financially, I do support 100% a low-income fare option for public transit
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I do want to note that this ordinance does have designated streets or major arteries like Mass. Ave, Cambridge Street identified for improvement. This should be part of the Somerville Ordinance as well as network plan similar to Cambridge's which helps identify target areas for improvement.
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?	Somewhat Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I want to note that I support eliminating parking minimums in a case by case basis, as one needs to note that certain building uses or housing types typically require parking. For example healthcare or housing use will require parking if it is serving an elderly population.
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	Do need a plan. How will funding be appropriated and what are the strategies to increase funding resources? Where will the units be located? Will there be equitable distribution of affordable housing throughout the city? What types of units will we provided? And what is defined as affordable?
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	I support an increase to match the surcharge of neighboring towns such as Cambridge (3%), but I would add legislation to ensure that the increase in surcharge is 100% allocated to affordable housing. I would also provide an exception for elderly and low-income residents.