Candidate name (first and last):	Alex Anderson
Office the candidate is seeking:	Ward 7 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]	I'm a systems thinker - which I learn/practice as a health care researcher. I I believe transportation, housing, climate change, and health are all interconnected. We have a system - especially in Ward 7 - that prioritizes private motor vehicle transportation at the expense of public transit, walkability, and bikability. The public space dedicated to cars decreases affordability/limits housing development, increases serious public health concerns (ie. higher rates of chronic disease based on proximity to high density/high volume roads), and makes us less prepare to have a sustainable community
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]	Since I've lived in Somerville, I have been an active advocate for improving safety, public transit, walkability and bikability. I've been a daily bike commuter and recreational bike rider for 10+ years in greater Boston. I ride my bike with my kids. Between 2015-2019 I was an official member of the Somerville Bicycle Committee and worked w the City to advise on safer streets. I've conducted ped/bike counts for the city. I maintained/decorated our Shared Streets Pilot flex post on Simpson Ave. Making our streets safer by prioritizing public transit, walkability and bikability is a primary reason I'm running for office. It's where I've spent my volunteer time for the last 8 years and it's a key responsibility of the Somerville City Council. I think key advocacy requires: engaging the entire community early in the design process of these projects, understand people's values/needs/wants, co-design solutions that are rooted in data (quant and qual) and appreciate the human impact of changes, and take a big picture view of changes.
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, 4-to-6-unit building, Over-six-unit apartment building, As a renter, Single-family home, Urban, Suburban
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]	There are a lot of great people working in the city to advance the bicycle network plan and many volunteers like the folks of the SBC. We should enact standard designs whenever the city conducts infrastructure improvements. There is also a lot of community support for increased safety, walkability, and bikability. Many easy-to-implement improvements/standard maintainence that should be funded and implemented immediately: * reinstating Shared Streets with more standard designs and more flexposts to slow traffic; communicating/educating the public about the purpose of shared streets, * implementing priority bus lanes on Broadway/Holland/other major bus routes * Increasing the use of flex posts, bollards, etc throughout the city especially around bike infrastructure (ie. contraflow painted lanes) * Blanket approval for contraflow bike lanes city-wide There are longer term improvements/designs: * require dedicated bike and/or public transportation to any street that is repaved. * set standard vehicle travel lanes in Somerville to 9' max (unless wider is necessary for Public Transit/Emergency vehicles) * review one-way/two-way distribution
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]	As a systems thinker, I believe all designs should design with those traditional least served by our systems. Our streets and sidewalks are wholly inadequate for people with vision and/or mobility disabilities. Many of our sidewalks are crumbling - with uneven curbs and slabs. Trees (which are great! and we need more tree canopy in the entire city) break through the sidewalks with their roots. Curb cuts are often ineffective and poorly placed. Crosswalks are often full of potholes, no longer painted, and too-frequently-ignored by drivers. We must accelerate the speed that we're rebuilding our sidewalks. Holland in Ward 7 is slated to have sidewalks/street rebuilt starting summer. I believe all cross walks along Holland (and along all major streets) should be at sidewalk level so pedestrians never change their level when they cross the street. This has the added benefit of traffic-calming and forcing stops at stop signs (vs. rolling through) as the cross walks will also serve as a speed bump. For major intersections (like Cameron and Holland in Ward 7), the entire intersection should be a raised speed table to facilitated easy crossing and slowing vehicular traffic.
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 will build on my previous responses that cover many of these ideas - and share ideas that I couldn't fit in previous answers. Short Term: * work with the MBTA to make fare free transportation a reality in Somerville * Remove parking minimums on all projects in Somerville; explore parking maximums * City provided side-walk shoveling on all major roads and all intersections to make sure sidewalks and crosswalks are usable for all ages/abilities throughout winter. * Build out Street Eateries and make them permanent * increase parking meter expense Long Term: * implement physically protected bike lanes and/or priority bus lanes on all major streets in Somerville. * engage community institutions like Tufts to explore PILOT payments towards walk and bikability * build network through Somerville to make it easier to get to new GLX stations without a car. For example, a shuttle bus from the station at Clarendon Hill Towers on Broadway to GLX stations. * pedestrianize Davis Square (two-way Highland Ave/fully pedestrian Elm Street in Davis Square). * Grow the tree canopy as beautification, air quality improvement, temperature cooling, and traffic calming.
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]	Somerville City Council + the Mayor/City should convene our neighboring city councils and governments, as well as the DCR, MassDOT, and community organizations to agree to big picture, long term goals - and start enacting plans to get there. People power works! The City Council and the City should convene more regular public rallys to raise awareness and force change (as was seen in this summer's Highway Justice Rally at McGrath). In Ward 7, a top priority is to improve and more fully connect the inconsistent pathway along Alewife Brook Parkway between Alewife Station and Assembly Row. If designed well, this pathway could serve as a commuter corridor into Somerville and Boston who may park at Alewife and ride into Assembly or to GLX stations.
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]	Broadway (from Route16/Alewife Brooke Parkway to Teele Square/Holland) and Holland - and similar roads (large streets with two sided parking and congestion during peak hours that delays the bus) should all have priority bus lanes in the peak direction during peak hours. Somerville should also implement physical bus loading/unloading islands on streets that are too narrow to fit priority bus lanes but could fit protected bike lanes to make loading/unloading safer for bus riders.
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]	The City must conduct outreach through many different mediums (physical mail, flyering, phone calls/texts, face-to-face info sharing/canvassing including around bus stations, social media, and directly through neighborhood/communicating organizations) and translated in the most commonly spoken languages in our community. We must have outreach that is more than just informative but actually invites people to participate in the process of problem identification, idea creation, and improvement plan creation. We must design our solutions together. We should hold public meetings in locations and at times (meetings that exclusively happen after 6pm are not workable for many working people or those who care for family members). that work better for more people.

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]	The City of Somerville and the City Council must hold the state accountable to fulfill their obligations to mitigate the increased health burden of car-focused transportation. We must improve existing infrastructure (ie. toxin/sound barriers provided by the state) to buffer I-93. Somerville must increase green space - especially side-walk trees throughout East Somerville and enhance park spaced. Somerville should increase fee collection from parking meters to fund public health initiatives (increased screenings, access to chronic health support, etc.). Somerville should adapt a more equitable excise tax system for private vehicles that takes in to consideration: vehicle age, vehicle efficiency, annual miles driven, size and weight, car value, and owner income. Additional revenues should be invested into public health initiatives. The City of Somerville should more more closely with state programs like Mass Saves and community organizations, landlords, and local businesses to improve insulation and air filtration in buildings closest to I-93 and Alewife Brook Parkway.
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]	I think Ward specific councilors serve as the primary advocate and liaison to the other arms of government on behalf of the people who live in our neighborhood. As a Councilor, I would have open lines of communication with the community and collect concerns and ideas from the people who live here. I believe presenting ideas that aren't just my own - but having the support of the people that live here and the community organizations that advocate on specific issues is an effective way to build will amongst new governance boards. I also thinking building relationship with the board members and understanding what they can and cannot do is necessary. We need to identify the win-win scenarios and start there to build will, establish proof of concepts, and develop effective working relationships long term.
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]	I would prioritize these funds to roll our rapid improvements to make our streets more people-focused. These include: * easy-to-implement paint improvements (upgrading cross walks, bike lanes w. buffers, etc) * purchasing of more durable physical protection for bicyclists/pedestrians (jersey barriers, bollards, etc.) * Fare free bus access * painting priority bus lanes * Rolling out a permanent Share Street network with traffic calming infrastructure that is more aesthetically pleasing than plain plastic bollards * fund renovation/improvements to existing units under the supervision of the Somerville Housing Authority.
10. What do you propose Somerville should do with the $30M community contribution for Green Line Extension that is being returned? [1200 character limit]	I believe the City should place the full $30M into an endowment that is transparently managed with civilian oversight. This money should be used for the city to finance high density housing developments. Developments with increased proportion of permanently affordable housing units should receive cheaper financing.
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]	The city must facilitate the development of affordable housing throughout all of Somerville - but especially closest to the new GLX stations. High density buildings should be built surround all the stations and have increased affordability requirements. Increase the collection of fees (parking meters, registration fees, gas taxes, etc.) to continually fund the endowment mentioned in the previous answer to provide financing for on-going affordable housing development. We must also protect people currently living in their homes and must increase protections for renters - including extended the eviction moratorium.
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]	I think we have a surplus of parking throughout Somerville and that new developments should not have parking minimums. And, we should explore parking maximums - or even prohibit additional parking entirely for new developments. When thinking of new spaces, our priorities should be a balance of new housing, green spaces/community space, and easy people-focused infrastructure. In terms of building consensus within the community on competing priorities - we must do a better job of engaging various stakeholders from the very beginning. Too often, people in neighborhoods only get engaged with new public projects once they are late in the design phase and ready to break ground. The city must do a better job of proactively reaching out to community members and organizations to co-design improvements together from the beginning. Too often, people only become aware of improvement projects and latch on to elements of the solution (ie. parking removal) without focusing on the big picture goals/values (ie. making people-focused streets a reality). I think we need to convene our stakeholders, identify our shared values and goals, and then work together towards workable solutions.
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]	I recognize that the data of the long term impact of policy-based affordability requirements suggests that inclusionary housing, rent control, etc. may work against the intended goals of these programs. This is why I think we need to create a better incentive system to build affordable housing -- include a city managed endowment that provides preferential financing for building affordable units. Additionally, Somerville needs a massive increase in housing supply for low income earners and middle income earners. I would support a 60 unit building where 20% (and ideally more) over a 12 unit building if the choice is a zero-sum choice. This is the obvious choice because 12 affordable units is more than 6 affordable units. And, because the additional units will increase supply for medium incomes and market rate housing. That being said, I think location matters a lot - putting a 12 unit location in Powder House Circle (a current development plan) makes more sense than putting a 60-unit location because of the nature of housing on Broadway/College. However, putting a 12 unit building adjacent to a GLX station when a 60 unit option is available would be a missed opportunity.

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]	Somerville currently holds about 85,000 residents. At it's peak in the 1950s, the Somerville population was closer to 105,000. This was presumably because of larger families or housemates living within the same property. Somerville needs to increase housing across the entire city. The majority of our housing stock are 100+ year old homes - that are not prepared to withstand the demands of the next 100 years. We need to upgrade our existing housing supply while increasing the available housing supply for new properties. I think everything should be on the table to build new housing in Somerville while ensuring - through incentive programs and through explicit policy - the affordability of the housing supply. I think two-and-three family houses should be permitted to build up to create 4-6 unit buildings. I think Tufts University should build more high rise/high density student housing building on their existing properties - and require students to live on-campus for longer periods of time - to alleviate the demand of short term occupants/students in our neighborhood to allow longer term residents access to these houses.
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]	Until the the effects of the pandemic are fully under control and everyone can get back to stability in their lives, I believe the eviction moratorium needs to be extended. Additionally, city-provided relief for family-owned properties/landlords (ie. not corporate landlords, or landlords with many properties) to ensure that working families that also rent part of their property are support and less likely to sell their property to a corporate entity/developer. Additionally, as a councilor, I would rely on the guidance and expertise of dedicated community organizations that make proposals in given areas - like actions within existing municipal powers - and use my values and judgement to advance those that make the most sense. I'm not an expert in everything and don't pretend to be! And, I believe we can advance affordability and sustainability while keeping people in their homes.
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	Police offers are not required to achieve Vision Zero goals. At the same time, I do believe that municipal employees are important to take on community engagement, education, and enforcement of changes related to Vision Zero. (parking enforcement does not require police. neither should VZ)
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?	Somewhat Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	As someone who has been assaulted while riding my bike, I know that violence against people at the hands of motorists is real. Construction in urban environments heightens the stressors of congestion - and police may be necessary to address potential violence.
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]	I believe we need a massive increase in enforcement of traffic violations for motor vehicles. And, we must do everything possible to prevent the bias and systemic racism, sexism, and classism that comes in to all enforcement strategies.
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]	The infrastructure for automated traffic enforcement should be entirely owned/operated by the city (or, a private/public partnership similar to how Blue Bikes works) with dedicated civilian oversite (ie. a committee of citizens that reviews date, practices, etc.)
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]	I fully support the re-allocation of public space to facilitate the safe travel of walkers, bikes, and public transit users by removing dedicating parking. I think "lost" parking can be offset by rethinking parking on side streets (ie. creating metered spaces on side streets close to main arteries)
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]	As a daily/all-weather bike commuter for 10+ years (who never breaks a rule and has been hit by cars too many times), walking, biking, and public transit are the most important transportation investments we can make. It's a win-win for everyone -- if everyone felt safe.
7. To achieve many of Someville'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]	Yes, I believe we should implement higher fees for car ownership that takes in to consideration car size, age, value, usage, efficiency, and the income of the owner to collect higher revenues from large/inefficient gas guzzlers.

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]	Yes! We need to make the right choices the easy choices -- free fares for the MBTA is a logical approach to minimizing the barriers to using public transit. And, equally improtant, we need to prioritize the right-of-way for buses with Bus lanes to make the buses more attractive from usability view.
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]	Yes - and in my 5 years as an official member of the Somerville Bicycle Committee, I advocated for these types of improvements. And, for my 8 years in Somerville, I have been a constant advocate for protected bike infrastructure.
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?	Strongly Support
Please explain. [300 character limit]	And, I support parking maximums! The city should provide financial incentives for all home owners (existing or developing) to get rid of parking and cars.
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]	yes, and I support aiming for more than 20% -- 20% is a minimum. And, we can create additional incentives to get closer to 30%
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]	Yes, the growth in property values in Somerville is the result of community-wide improvements across all of Somerville. We all created the growth over the last several decades - and, all properties should contribute to increasing the CPA.