

Candidate name (first and last):	Will Mbah
Office the candidate is seeking:	Mayor of Somerville
1. In your role as mayor, how do you plan to work with the statewide delegation to advance your policy priorities, and what are your specific state policy priorities related to transportation, housing, and climate? [1200 character limit]	One specific area where I intend to collaborate with our state delegation is to put pressure on MassDOT to fund and build I-93 Sound Barriers, build improvements to pedestrian walkways to finally bring justice for those living in the "Corridor of Death" along McGrath and I-93. Let's turn McGrath into a people-oriented street instead of a car-centric street. I will also work with the state delegation by requesting additional funds for a Green New Deal for Somerville. This would include updating our municipal buildings to be truly net-zero, adding green stormwater infrastructure throughout the city, and creating a program that provides free HEPA indoor filters to those residents living in buildings that can't be retrofitted with better filtration systems.
2. How do you see transportation, housing, and climate issues connecting and how will you work to align them if elected? [600 character limit]	All residents should enjoy access to effective and efficient public transportation and access to safe ways of accessing the city they live in without having to use cars. When I first moved to Somerville I did not have a car and I spent more time commuting than I did with my family and friends. This is still the reality for too many residents of Somerville. Unfortunately, many of our streets are not safe or accessible for many of our residents. As a founding member of Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets (SASS), I have worked to address these issues, and I will continue that work as Mayor.
3. In recent years, the City of Somerville has had strong Mayoral leadership on transportation issues that has been crucial in moving key projects. Often street projects designed to improve safety and public transit infrastructure face opposition due to removing on-street parking or reducing the number of vehicle travel lanes. As Mayor, how will you be a strong advocate and leader on transportation issues amidst pushback? [1200 character limit]	I believe that we must prioritize bus improvements, protected bike lanes, and accessible pedestrian routes whenever we are redesigning a street, as well as upgrading curb cuts to make Somerville a more accessible city for our neighbors with disabilities. If we build a road for cars, more cars will come. If we build a road for bikes, more bikes will come. The challenge for the next mayor will be threading the needle to ensure our city can safely accommodate both cyclists/pedestrians and some working people and families, as well as people with disabilities who depend on cars. There is understandable pushback whenever a plan is proposed to replace parking with a more equitable use of roads, but by listening to the concerns of our neighbors and working together, I believe we can achieve a final result that is embraced by the neighborhood. We must also make sure that those who are ill-served by our current streetscapes, including seniors and neighbors with disabilities, are at the front and center of these conversations.
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.)	As a renter, Home ownership
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]	I am very happy that a resolution I sponsored that called for funding a city-wide bicycle network was ultimately funded, and am committed to seeing the project through as Mayor. As we turn to the planning phase, making sure the bicycle network is inclusive of our pedestrian and transit infrastructure needs is critical. There are many mobility plans underway in Somerville, and they must work together to achieve the transportation priorities that reflect our values. I am interested in exploring what aspects of Cambridge's ordinance on network implementation could be applied to Somerville.
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]	Due to decades of poor planning and maintenance, the accessibility of our city's sidewalk network is terrible. While recent street redesigns have prioritized features like accessible ramps, sidewalks, and infrastructure for the visually-impaired, much of the city is still in dire need of this type of infrastructure. I support increasing our budget to repair and replace infrastructure that is inaccessible and continued efforts to identify and prioritize the most-needed sidewalk repairs. In addition, I support additional traffic calming measures in the city and the sidewalk snow-clearing pilot program that was included in this year's DPW budget and would like this program expanded citywide: http://somervillecityma.igm2.com/Citizens/Detail_LegiFile.aspx?ID=24501&highlightTerms=sidewalk%20snow I would also ensure that programs such as the pop-up outdoor dining established during the pandemic meet all accessibility requirements, and would work through the Chamber of Commerce and ISD to ensure education and enforcement.
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]	As mentioned above, I am committed to prioritizing walkability, accessibility, MBTA bus infrastructure, and protected bicycle lanes in any new street redesigns, and making sure that those who are ill-served by the status quo, including seniors and neighbors with disabilities, are at the center of these conversations. I intend to use my leverage over the city budget as Mayor to ensure that a Complete Streets approach that encompasses these priorities is implemented.
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]	As a founding member of Somerville Alliance for Safe Streets (SASS), I am so grateful for our advocacy and progress in pressuring MassDOT to improve the "Corridor of Death" at McGrath Highway and Mystic Ave. As Mayor, I would commit to work side-by-side with them and other neighbors, community groups, and elected officials to support these continued efforts. In addition, you will notice from my endorsements, that I believe strongly in forming partnerships across the region and I will continue to strengthen and grow those partnerships as mayor to apply coordinated pressure on the state for improvement.
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]	As Mayor, I commit to continue supporting and fighting for bus and bus + bike lanes, expanding signal priority, increasing the number of bus lanes during peak hours, and would also fight for a fare-free MBTA in Somerville. Buses reduce fossil fuel usage, help reduce traffic and therefore overall commute times, create good union jobs, and are disproportionately used by people of color and immigrants. Improving bus service and infrastructure contributes to environmental justice, good jobs, and racial justice and equity, and will be a major priority for me.
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]	It is important that we acknowledge the barriers that lower-income and other marginalized communities have participating in the political process and making their voices heard. I would use my platform as Mayor to spread awareness about the Bus Network Redesign process, and would continue working with community members, advocacy groups, and providers of community services that provide direct support to Somerville residents whose transportation needs are not being met. I believe we have to bring the process to the people, by gathering feedback in areas of high transit usage, especially major housing developments around Somerville like the Mystics and Clarendon.
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 communities bordering I-93 experience the worst air pollution in Somerville. Through the advocacy efforts of groups like SASS, the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership (STEP), community members, and elected officials in East Somerville and at the state level, there is finally a possibility of building sound and pollution barriers along I-93. As Mayor, I would take advantage of interest in development along this corridor in Assembly Square to fund pollution mitigation and physical protection. In the future, we should improve this corridor by grounding McGrath and making it the appropriate scale for a "people-oriented" city street.
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]	As Mayor, I would use my platform to advocate for the wishes and concerns that have been prioritized by community members and organizations, in order to help build political pressure on board members and other decision-makers.
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]	In the next term, Somerville will have a new Mayor and a significantly-changed City Council, which will face the challenge and opportunity of deciding how to spend this stimulus funding. The pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the existing inequities within our city, in particular for our neighbors who are precariously close to being displaced from their homes. I believe we should direct significant amounts of funding to address this housing crisis, including through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Direct assistance to residents who have fallen behind on their rent - Subsidizing significant amounts of new, permanently affordable housing, particularly on city-owned land near transit hubs - Funding projects like the 100 Homes program, community land trusts, and community development corporations In addition to housing, we should also fund improvements like Complete Streets projects that will make our streets safer for pedestrians and bicyclists and improve commutes. There are also local transportation projects where we should direct these funds. For instance, I believe we can use these funds to fund the construction of an elevator on school street for the Green Line extension so that our neighbors with disabilities and seniors have access to the green line
10. What do you propose Somerville should do with the \$30M community contribution for Green Line Extension that is being returned? [1200 character limit]	If we don't use the stimulus funds to fund on the School Street elevator mentioned above, we should put this money towards constructing the Green Line elevator on School Street. Our neighbors with disabilities and seniors will need this elevator to access the Green Line, so it is vital that we follow through on our commitment to construct it.

<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>While the GLX has potential to bring many benefits to our community, the looming danger is that it will incentivize landlords to vastly increase rents and displace their existing tenants. To prevent displacement of lower-income residents, we ultimately need rent control and just-cause eviction. We must continue to build a statewide coalition to support these policies, as well as policies like a transfer fee and tenant's right to purchase. I am also interested in the work of the Fair Housing and Anti-Displacement Task Force, which will be investigating whether changes in zoning could mitigate the displacement of people of color, people with disabilities, low-income residents, and other communities in Somerville. In addition, subsidizing significant amounts of new, permanently affordable housing, particularly on city-owned land near transit hubs would be a great start. We must also continue to build on earlier municipal housing affordability efforts like the Affordable Housing Overlay District, the Office of Housing Stability and ordinances regulating condo conversion and AirBNBs.</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>The recent zoning overhaul removed parking minimums within a half-mile of transit stations – I believe we could go even further and remove these mandated minimums citywide. Under the zoning overhaul, new developments do not qualify for on-street parking permits and should therefore not create additional on-street parking issues. I look forward to seeing the recommendations from the comprehensive parking study which I am part of that the city is currently working on and believe it will provide an important opportunity to look more closely at our existing policies on parking permits.</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>In my experience with projects that have come before me as a city councilor, nearly all of them have included the maximum size and number of units allowable under our new zoning regulations. Therefore 20% is clearly possible in Somerville's housing market, and I believe we should strive to set the inclusionary percentage as high as possible without reaching a point where construction would be discouraged.</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>Building higher density housing in areas around transit should be a priority for Somerville. It is important to note that pushing simply for more density itself is not enough, as simply more supply of luxury/high end apartments will not help slow or stop displacement. Prior to the zoning overhaul, the fate of most projects was at the discretion of the Zoning or Planning Board. By contrast, with the new zoning overhaul, it is much less subjective and clear where you can build housing and to what density. In this way, I believe the new zoning is an improvement over the old system with regard to the density goals set forth in SomerVision 2040. However, there is still room for improvement - for example, areas of West Somerville that are close to transit should be zoned for higher density housing.</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 am proud of the role that I played as a City Council member in helping to create and fund the Office of Housing Stability. I also helped to pass the Affordable Housing Overlay District and ordinances regulating condo conversion and AirBNBs. As Mayor, I would advocate for using municipal funds to subsidize the right to counsel for tenants facing eviction, and for new ordinances to ensure that development projects benefit the community instead of undercutting and displacing our neighbors.</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>We can't be a city that takes pride in the diversity of our community but takes no action as Black and Brown people continue to be forced out of the city each year.</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>Strongly Support</p> <p>The city lost the argument to allow civilian flaggers when Somerville's police contract went to binding arbitration at the state level, but we should re-litigate this issue in the upcoming contract.</p>
<p>3. One key strategy that has been proven to effectively reduce speeding, improve safety, and remove racial bias in traffic enforcement in other states and countries is automated enforcement (i.e., speed cameras and red-light cameras). The MA Vision Zero Coalition is specifically supportive of the following bills due to their strong protections around equity and data privacy, H.2426, H.2532, S.1545. If the State House passes this automated enforcement legislation and allows cities & towns to opt-in to a speed or red-light camera program, would you support your municipality using this tool? 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>Strongly Support</p> <p>Yes, I would work together with advocates to ensure that a home rule petition includes the data and equity provisions described in those 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>Using infrastructure to improve safety at intersections, such as daylighting sightlines and adding pedestrian refuge islands can be effective and more equitable than relying on law enforcement.</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>Moving people from private cars to transit, walking and bicycling is the only way that we will meet our climate, equity, and quality-of-life goals.</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>	Strongly Support
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Like all new measures to increase revenue, I would want to make sure there were easy to access programs/subsidies for working class residents to not suffer from these rising costs, much like fixed income seniors trying to stay in their homes.
<p>8. Do you support free bus service on the MBTA, and a low-income fare option for other public transit options?</p>	Strongly Support
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	As I explained earlier, I would like to see a fare-free MBTA in Somerville.
<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>	Strongly Support
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	I supported the resolution to fund the bike plan, and as the bike plan and other plans (parking study, bus network, etc.) are completed, Somerville will have an integrated vision for how the streets can be more equitable and supportive of our long-term goals.
<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>	Strongly Support
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	There is understandable pushback whenever a plan is proposed to replace parking with a more equitable use of roads, but by listening to the concerns of our neighbors and working together, I believe we can achieve a final result that is embraced by the neighborhood.
<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>	Strongly Support
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	
<p>12. The Community Preservation Act (CPA) adds a 1.5% surcharge on net property taxes and qualifies the city to receive matching funds from the statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund to help support affordable housing in Somerville. It received a 76% approval as a ballot question in 2015. Do you support increasing this surcharge to further support affordable housing as part of CPA?</p>	Strongly Support
<p>Please explain. [300 character limit]</p>	Yes, we need to look at many opportunities to increase revenue for affordable housing here in our city.