

Katjana Ballantyne Responses

1. As mayor, how would you move to fully restore Davis Square and why should we trust what you say?

The most important thing that we can do is make sure that Davis Square is accessible to all users, and that we make the square work for Somerville residents and businesses as our first priority. This means investing in necessary sidewalk updates and other safety measures. We must make sure that the trees at Seven Hill are replaced, and work together to re-imagine the future of Davis Square including a pedestrian Elm Street. If we do this, it needs to take into account a full community process where the residents of Davis Square are able to share their vision for the future as well.

To move Davis Square forward I would use the same approach that I've used in business, as a councilor, and council president. I would continue the community process and the structure that groups like DavisNow have used to get buy in from the community of local residents, users and business owners.

When I led the community process for the redevelopment of Clarendon Hill/North Street public housing redevelopment, I hosted community meetings with all stakeholders. There were 11 community meetings, and one labor union forum over 22 months. There were some vibrant debates, and our process concluded with a public-private venture that provided public affordable housing and private, market-rate housing, almost 600 units in total. The project will be sustainable, with new open, green space and the project will fund a redesign and reconstruction of the intersection of Powderhouse Blvd. and Alewifebrook Pkwy. There were no objections voiced at the final ZBA meeting when the vote was taken to approve that project. Not one objection.

Additionally, for the nearly past 30 years I have been an active member of the community advocating for responsible mixed-use development that makes Somerville work for those who live and work here. I would continue this approach as mayor.

2. We believe brick walks can be installed level and without accessibility issues (as at Kenney Park and the recently restored West Branch Library). What will you do to restore the brick walks and plazas of Davis Square?

The first priority needs to be to make sure that Davis Square is ADA accessible, and that it will serve local residents and local businesses as a first priority. Right now, we all know how dangerous it can be to walk in parts of Davis Square and if there is a way to install the bricks without compromising accessibility I would be happy to partner with you to make this happen.

3. How would you make the city accountable to DavisNow and the Davis Square community for following through on agreed work to be done?

First I'll ensure that everyone has a seat at the table and we work together to make consensus and to establish common goals. I'll work together with DavisNow, Davis Square residents, Davis Square businesses, and other stake holders to get the agreed upon work done.

My leadership experience in business and local government has taught me to value inclusive leadership, which creates buy-in, shared purpose, enthusiasm, and better results. When we

have common goals agreed, we'll make commitments a part of our shared plan and as mayor, I'll make sure that we follow through.

4. What is your position on making Elm Street a pedestrian street?

I support Elm St. being a pedestrian zone. We need to look at this systemically and make sure that it would still be ADA accessible, and that it will work for businesses and residents. Creative solutions like making Highland Ave. two ways again would allow cars to bypass the square while keeping Davis Square a destination. Additionally, by simplifying the intersection at the heart of Davis Square will make it safer for all involved.

However, as we do this we need to make sure to continue to work for mixed use development so that we can keep Davis locally oriented and help connect local residents to local jobs and also work to bring more jobs into Somerville. As mayor, I will prioritize our existing, local businesses, and I'll set goals to bring new, complimentary businesses. The plan for Davis Square should work for Somerville, it should work for Somerville residents, and businesses and the redesign should build upon the existing success of the square. What is good for business also diversifies our tax base to help fund the rest of our shared goals on infrastructure and everything else. I understand the importance of having a thriving small business community and as mayor, I'll be committed to helping businesses thrive so that we can all thrive together.

5. How would you fund the restoration of Davis Square?

One avenue for funding would be the Boston MPO. These are the kinds of projects that the MPO and its partner MAPC, generally support. Somerville has a seat on the Boston MPO.

The city will have to do its part to get the Davis Square project ready for MPO support in the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program, which will be my goal as mayor. Cities have to do the early planning and entitlements work - the first 25% or so - to get projects into the LRTP and TIP.

Somerville is also expected to get stimulus dollars from the federal government. We need to invest in things like making our streets safe and accessible and we need to do this in Davis Square.

As additional thoughts, the proposed Davis plan could be traffic and pedestrian area tested, including for buses, with a fully pedestrianized but not yet raised Elm Street. This approach would be relying on two-way Highland and Cutter for most vehicular traffic, including the six Davis bus routes.