

## Somerville Christmas tree, menorah lighting ceremonies bring out sense of community

By PJ Montezuma / [somerville@wickedlocal.com](mailto:somerville@wickedlocal.com)

Posted Dec 11, 2018 at 2:13 PM

Updated Dec 11, 2018 at 2:13 PM

Somerville is no stranger to celebrating the holidays and illuminating the night sky with a plethora of blocks of houses decorated with lights.

But apart from the lights that adorn houses and complexes in the city's various neighborhoods, two ceremonial events took place last week to also help mark the time of year, and bring out a sense of community amidst residents.

On Dec. 6, Somerville held its annual Christmas tree lighting along with a visit from Santa Claus. The well-attended event was held at the City Hall Concourse and is only the beginning of the holiday festivities that are happening in the city this month. A meet-and-greet with Santa Claus after the tree lighting took place in the Somerville High School Culinary Arts Bistro.

Santa was accompanied by Somerville Mayor Joseph Curtatone while flipping the candy cane switch to illuminate the tree.

"Now's the time we're going to light the tree - you all ready to do this?" Curtatone said as children gathered around. "One, two, three ... Merry Christmas!"

All children who attended the event received a gift from Santa. To top the event off, the Somerville High School Chorus and Band, El Sistema Somerville, and the Somerville Community Chorus provided entertainment for the night.

"Celebrating the lighting of the tree are so much of our American culture, and our civic culture," Curtatone said. "No matter what your denomination is it's nice to come out — there's community, and celebrating the holidays and the hopes of good health and good fortune for all, and peace on Earth, I think that's

important for all of us and this is one way of celebrating that, and as we lead into the New Year as well, so I think it provides a moment of civility and compassion and making a promise for the New Year as we move forward.”

Then on Dec. 9, the next holiday event took place: the ceremonial lighting of the city menorah on the City Hall Concourse.

This is a newer celebration that continues to grow in size each year. Curtatone was joined by Rabbi Eliana Jacobowitz from Temple B’nai Brith, as they shared some traditional prayers and songs. The Menorah is lit every night for the eight days of Hanukkah.

Board of Alderman president Katjana Ballantyne shared what the ceremony meant to her.

“I think it’s beautiful that during this darkest time of year leading into the winter months that the season is made brighter by the menorah lights,” she said. “I’ve always loved candle lights and I’m always happy to see a menorah lighting brightly. This menorah lighting ceremony inspires me to reflect upon the bonds of family, friendship and community ... The ceremony reminds me that there is so much more inclusion and good than otherwise.”

Jacobowitz echoed those words, adding how important it is for people to be able to share their faith with their community.

“One of the most wonderful aspects of living in this country is being able to be out in the open and celebrate Hanukkah with your friends in the community,” she said. “I really hope one of the miracles of Hanukkah is that we can continue to celebrate feeling comfortable enough to put these symbols of who we are out in the open, and feel so welcome.”

Another well-attended event is happening on Dec. 15, with the Illuminations Tour of Somerville. The 22nd annual tour will be held from 4:30-9:15 p.m., lasting 45 minutes long.

The trolley will begin and end at Somerville City Hall. The trolleys are split into East Somerville tours and West Somerville tours, and both options have many houses covered in holiday lights on display. Somerville residents are known for transforming their houses and yards for the holidays.

This tour is a fundraiser for the Somerville Arts Council. Tickets are only \$15 for adults and \$8 for children 12 and under as well as Senior Citizens above the age of 62.