



**Priority Setting Housing Forum
March 4, 2014, 6:00-8:30 p.m.**

Solutions and Strategies

Policies and programs in action:

Zoning Initiatives

Inclusionary zoning: 12.5% of units in new developments over 8 units are designated as permanently affordable. The percentage of affordability is up to 17.5% in certain zoning districts.

City Ordinances

Condominium conversion ordinance: When private property owners convert rental apartments to condominiums, they must notify tenants 1-2 years in advance of the conversion. This provides tenants with the first option to buy a condo, and receive assistance with moving costs if they are lower-income.

Funding for affordable housing development and programs

Commercial Linkage fee: Developers pay \$5.15 per square foot on developments over 30,000 square feet into the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, which helps build new affordable housing.

Community Preservation Act: At least 10% of a property tax on higher-income households goes to community housing (serving households that earn up to 100% of the area median income).

Rental Assistance: The City or non-profits provide rental assistance to families or individuals who are homeless or at risk of homelessness and cannot access Section 8 housing choice voucher.

Housing rehabilitation/lead abatement: The City provides assistance to income-eligible households for housing rehabilitation and lead abatement to improve the city's housing stock.

First-Time Homebuyer Assistance: The City provides direct assistance to first-time homebuyers to for closing costs and down payments for the purchase of a home in the city. The SCC provides first-time homebuyer education, which gives graduates access to special financing and purchase opportunities.

Purpose-built housing: The City provides loans directly to developers that create affordable housing (serving households that earn up to 80% of the area median income).

Preservation: The City and SCC actively monitor current deed-restricted affordable housing units and ensures that current affordable units do not expire by negotiating with property owners to extend restrictions and by providing additional subsidies.

Organizational mechanisms to create and preserve affordable housing

Community Development Corporation: The Somerville Community Corporation acquires, builds and rehabilitates housing for long term affordability, both rental and home ownership; provides First Time Homebuyer assistance, foreclosure counseling; and organizes for affordable housing policies and preservation.

The Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund: The SAHT's purpose is to preserve and create affordable rental and homeownership units in Somerville and carry out programs to directly assist homeowners and renters. All of its activities must benefit low to moderate-income households (with incomes at or below 110% of area median income).

The Somerville Housing Authority: The SHA oversees more than 1400 units of affordable housing, including both family and senior developments, and also oversees administration of housing vouchers providing low-income households with rental assistance.

Additional Housing Agencies: A wide range of additional agencies in Somerville provide financial support and services to assist Somerville households in maintaining and finding affordable housing. These include; The Somerville Homeless Coalition, Community Action Agency of Somerville, CASPAR, Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services, Catholic Charities, Heading Home, Just A Start, MAPS, LIFT, RESPOND, the Visiting Nurse Association, Wayside Youth and Family Support Network, Volunteers of America, and Riverside Community Health, among others.

Policies and programs in the pipeline:

Funding for affordable housing development and programs

Acquiring property adjacent to the Green Line route: The City is using federal funds to acquire land near the Green Line for developers, such as SCC, to create and preserve affordable housing.

Middle-income housing program: The City is working with neighboring community leaders and state partners to create affordable housing for households earning more than 80% of area median income.

Capacity-building programs for local residents:

Economic Stabilization strategies: The Somerville Community Corporation, the City, and other community partners are working to connect Somerville residents to local jobs and ensuring that residents have the skills and preparation to succeed. SCC also provides financial literacy classes and counseling to help people achieve long-term financial stability.

Policies and Programs proposed:

Acquisition and Rehab: The City will provide funds for eligible households, and non-profit organizations such as SCC, to buy and rehab small properties throughout the city to keep them affordable.

Encourage/Require Family-Size Housing: Utilize zoning incentives to encourage new housing development including units with 3 or more bedrooms, sufficient storage, ample size, and other family-friendly features.

Encourage/Require Access to on-site amenities in new housing: Utilize zoning incentives or requirements to ensure new housing development provides sufficient on-site access to amenities such as dishwashers and storage to support a family.

Encourage/Require Access to off-site amenities in new housing: Utilize zoning incentives or requirements to ensure new housing development is located in a mixed-use district that provides easy access to open space, transportation, and other neighborhood amenities.

Provide targeted rental assistance to households most likely to face transit-induced rent increases, those living around Ball Square, College Avenue, Route 16, Union Square, and Washington Street.

Real Estate Transfer Tax: A tax on all market-rate property transactions that goes toward creating more affordable housing.

Real Estate Tax Abatement: Provide real estate tax abatement assistance to eligible property owners within the transit-shed, as allowed within State laws.

Community Land Trust: A non-profit corporation that buys land to create permanent affordable housing.

Limited Equity Co-op: Residents share ownership of a building and share decision-making power, offering opportunities to low-income households.

Tax Increment Financing (TIF): When taxes in a particular area go up, the value is set aside to fund improvements in the area, including affordable housing.

Improving inclusionary zoning: As part of the zoning overhaul, the percentage of affordable units could be increased, the income requirements could be lowered, and more family-size units could be required.

Lowering parking requirements: Lower parking requirements could allow for more affordable family-size units to be developed.

Public property disposition: When public properties are sold, the city could favor proposals that include more affordable housing.

Incentives: The City could create incentives for private owners who sell their units at an affordable price to an income-eligible purchaser, or who rent their rental units at an affordable price to income-eligible renters. .

Partnership with Tufts University: If Tufts develops more on-campus housing for students, it will take the pressure off housing in the surrounding community.

Reverse mortgage: A home loan that provides cash payments based on the home equity of the owner, to help low-income seniors remain in their homes.

Tax Abatements: Tax abatements for new construction and rehabilitation of housing in the city, with set asides for affordable housing.

Foster City, nonprofit, and private partnerships for preservation: Acquire, upgrade or build affordable homes or apartments to maintain affordability.

Implement regulatory measures to maintain housing stock quantity: Require that when subsidized public housing units are redeveloped, they be replaced on a one-for-one basis.

Multi-family homebuyer assistance program: Assistance to help first-time homebuyers to purchase and occupy a multi-family home, while creating an opportunity to become a landlord.

Commercial Development: Encourage new commercial development to help stabilize the city's tax base.