Jenn Harrington: Should there be an Artists Union in Somerville / Greater Boston? Join the discussion on FB! https://www.facebook.com/groups/495545885217683

Sasha Parodi (MAPC, she/her): Please note that the meeting is being recorded. If you would like to not be recorded, you can turn off your video.

Sasha Parodi (MAPC, she/her): IMPORTANT: Please add an identifier to name to identify how you want to be in the conversation today:

A=artist D=developer O=arts/culture organization R=resident G=general interest

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): We will share the slides and recording after the event.

karen morse (AG): Central Street has not been sold. Artists remain

Adam Brown A+O: 275K sqft over what timeline?

A/O - Bess Paupeck: Is ACE use different than a ‘Fabrication Zone’?

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): Yes - Fabrication zones are one of (but not the only) area in the city where ACE set-asides apply.

A/O - Bess Paupeck: Got it, thanks Annie!

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): ACE uses are also allowed by-right in Fabrication zones

A/O - Bess Paupeck: Oops sorry - Annis 😊

Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): Are music practice spaces also included in "artist studios", or is this different?

Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): I thought Fabrication was intended to protect artist’ space? I was told that by peopel form the city

Luis E. Cotto: includes more arts spaces "on site" ?

Adam Brown A+O: Makerspaces like the former Artisan’s Asylum included shared workshops and spaces. I think we need to be careful about not accidentally excluding unique shared spaces like Artisan’s Asylum

Julia Cseko (A): I think the danger is to just have too many “worker bars” rather than maker spaces.

Adam Brown A+O: Agreed
Julia Cseko (A): Maybe jumping the gun here, but would love to see more emphasis on spaces where artists can show their production. Making art is great, but we need to show it in order for things to make sense.

(A-O-R-G) Adi Nochur: ^^^ and access to performance spaces is critical as well!

Stephanie Scherpf - O Arts at the Armory: Where do dance studios, music and theater rehearsal spaces, and performing arts spaces fit into this?

Julia Cseko (A): Yes!

Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): Set-asides might be great for visual art, but other types of art might suffer as they might be too "loud" or "disruptive" to businesses (speaking as a musician).

Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): I agree with Stephanie.

Scott Farrell (A, G): I agree with Stephanie’s concern above. Performance spaces are disappearing.

A/R, Amanda Bristow: Also a musician here, who lives with a developer/guitar pedal builder who needs the performance/practice space issue addressed as well

Julia Cseko (A): Hmmm, an important piece of info - for when these spaces are being built, they may need to be made to be versatile, so - sound proofing, and or have more than one functionality. So - performance space with a gallery space - not flex space, both spaces in the same building, side by side

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): performing arts studios are included in our artists studio space analysis.

Charlotte Dore artist/ puppeteer: Thanks for having the meeting. And sharing the draft in the Pre meeting info. As an artist I feel more help for current benevolent landlords to give them breaks when space is art studios/ space. And they want to maintain the building for such use. Also be great to have incentives to save and restore the older historic buildings. Sorry I have to go but wanted to express thoughts and concerns. I saw in the draft you sent us was to help the landlords yes.

Erin Naomi Burrows - A: Curious if the team looked at the effectiveness of Seattle’s Office of Arts and Culture’s SpaceFinder tool

Julia Cseko (A): Yes on using buildings that are already there.

Mike Gintz [he/him] [A,R, G]: I’m glad to hear that @Annis - music rehearsal/practice needs in particular are often not served by the design of, or welcomed within, typical “art” studio space.

Julia Cseko (A): Not be dependent on developers!!!!

A/R, Amanda Bristow: Agree that this shouldn’t all be dependent on the “kindness” of developers!

(O + G) Luis E. Cotto: http://www.seattle.gov/arts/programs/cultural-space/build-art-space-equitably-certification
Stephanie Scherpf - O Arts at the Armory: How do current spaces, both owned and managed by the City, and those that are independent from the City, fit into this? What actions are being taken to preserve, manage and advance current arts spaces in the city so that we don’t keep losing or compromising current spaces?

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): @Stephanie, that is a conversation we'd love to bring into the breakout group conversations


Callie Chapman / Studio at 550 / A O: page 438

Jonah Sacks A,R: Thanks Callie

Thanks, Mike. That is exactly what I was going to say.

Stephanie Scherpf - O Arts at the Armory: Who is going to be managing the allocation and use of ACE spaces?

Greg Jukes [A and O] (he/him) - The Fourth Wall: An unfortunate provision from the revised definitions when it comes to sound concerns for musicians: “The production of offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust or other particulate matter, heat, humidity, glare, or other objectionable effect shall be prohibited."

From Appendix 2.I.a

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): Thanks for flagging that @Greg Jukes.

Jason Pramas: hi all, the Somerville Wire is always interested to publish opinion submissions on arts-related issues in the city ... contact Shira Laucharoen and me at somervillewire@binjonline.org for more info ...

Mike Gintz [he/him] [A,R, G]: Thanks @Gregory - I appreciate the context. I just want to nudge on the fact that a lot of time music/sound-art is much more expensive to build for (soundproofing) and much more likely to prompt neighbor complaints, so I think it’ll take a dedicated effort to focus on music space so as to not just end up with “art” space, only. (Not that we don’t need that too!)

SALVATORE MANCINI (AOR): That’s where makerspaces come in

@Jonah - Hello! <3 <points at my eyes, points at your eyes>
Adam Brown A+O: What Wig is speaking of is exactly part of what a makerspace like Artisan’s provided to the community.

Callie Chapman / Studio at 550 / A O: @Mike - performing arts in general (speaking as a multidisciplinary performing artist/dancer)

Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): But I think there is a big difference in potential financial capability between a startup and an artists’ space.

Adria Katz (O/A: Multicultural Arts Center, she/her): echoing Stephanie’s q: Who is going to manage the allocation of the ACE spaces and set asides?

Julia Cseko (A): Thank you!

Julia Cseko (A): I would love to learn more.


A - Joe Wight: @greg, I hope you don’t mean lumping everyone at 438 somerville ave (Milk Row Studios) into the Somernova innovation district. We’ve been an artist building before the Asylum even put roots here.

Julia Cseko (A): I know that this can get into the weeds.

Crystal Bi (A/O/G): I have to pop out before the breakouts, thank you all so much for organizing this meeting! I look forward to watching the recording when it is sent out.

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): Notes document: https://mapc365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/ArtsandCulture/EdwYV2BW5ZFbYTgf_AMNMB3nby5F5_IU1zK2aFZudnQ3Q?e=aQoXqe

Sasha Parodi (MAPC, she/her): 1. Share one action you can take to improve artists’ and arts organizations’ access to space. 2. Share one recommendation the City should prioritize. 3. Share one issue/concern not addressed in this work.

Jane Carey: I didn’t see.

Emma Boast (she/her) | MAPC: To my group - so sorry we got cut off!

Carolina Prieto (MAPC, she/her): Randal I would love to hear what you were saying.

Ron Newman (R, G): that felt like not long enough in breakout.

Robert Smyth - O & R: Is it possible to send a message to a participant?

Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): force I agree with that ron!

Scott Farrell (A, G): That was a bummer to be cut off after having my hand raised for several minutes.

Heather Balchunas, Somerville Arts Council-AORG: I can report from my group.
01:33:50 Rachel Strutt (O): I can report for my group

01:34:00 Emily O A R (Somerville Arts Council): I can report from my group

01:34:25 Scott Farrell (A, G): I’d like to hear more from the City about how Econ Dev can push for artist space with some seemingly abandoned spaces and especially in situations where the city might be taking property by eminent domain actions.

01:34:47 Jesa Damora (A+G): I can report from my group

01:34:48 Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): 👍

01:35:10 (O + G) Luis E. Cotto: I added to notes the Group 14s short convo. @Wig, your comment is there.

01:35:12 Robert Goss: Brick bottom was 250,000 sf for $7million..

01:35:31 (O + G) Luis E. Cotto: I also started to write @Adam's thoughts but we got caught off

01:36:11 Ethan Dussault (A/R, he/him): Artists, please consider sharing your ideas here: https://www.facebook.com/groups/495545885217683


01:36:43 (O + G) Luis E. Cotto: To my other Team 14 (yay) peeps, go here to add your thoughts (https://mapc365.sharepoint.com/:w:/s/ArtsandCulture/EdwYV2BW5ZFvYgTgf_AMNMB3nbyF5_IU1zK2aFZudnQ3Q?rtime=N_udLKvb2Ug)

01:37:00 A/R, Amanda Bristow: I can confidently say I’ve lost about 12 artist friends in the city to displacement due to cost of rising rent in the city. There is no arts in Somerville without actual artists living here. We’ve already lost so many — what can we do to incentivize landlords to keep rent affordable to artists?

01:37:04 Blake Courtney (A/O): Concerns from my side are twofold: how will we ensure that these spaces are actually affordable for real working artists (ie sub $20 per sqft)? Secondly, who will be holding the developers accountable and determining who/what qualifies as art? There are many developments (ie US2) that have not spoken as to how they will be adhering to these requirements.

01:37:29 Carolina Prieto (MAPC, she/her): Thank you Greg for reporting and Adria for taking notes!

01:37:39 Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): At Washington Street we used to be mostly somerville residents, now it is very few somerville residents — even though many the artists are the same as before...
The Fourth Wall: We also had a great comment about defining ACE spaces for what they are as well as what they are not.

A/O/R Darci Hanna (she/her): I’m concerned about spaces for tomorrow’s artists/young art enthusiasts in the city too. I want to ensure that there’s access to art spaces for them as well to learn from mentors and have more exposure to the arts, close to home, that they might not have otherwise.

Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): Thank you @Darci Hanna - I am sorry we didn’t get into that in our conversation!

Scott Farrell (A, G): How about outdoor/public spaces for displaying and performing?

Robert Goss: What about ART FARM? Cambridge did Starlight in a few months...and Art Farm has been sitting for years with nothing happening/

Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): Art Farm!

nancy anderson A / R: Art Farm!

Ethan Dussault (A/R, he/him): Thanks, Jesa!

Paula Jordan, she/her/hers G: I just want to push back a bit to someone on my group who suggested artists have made the city “livable”. ie no one wanted to live here 20 years ago. Gentrification can have negative effects as well.

(R) Diana Marsh (she, her): What about requiring a certain percentage of ground floor space in new buildings to be artists space of some type, rather than a retail storefront that might sit empty, or an office lobby that doesn’t create any visual interest. Such ground-floor spaces could also help screen parking garage areas from the street.

Julia Cseko (A): Robert, you can contact me through my website if you like www.juliacseko.com

Resa Blatman A/R: Thanks Greg, Annis, et al, for your continued and important work, and I’d like to help if/when I can in the coming months. In the meantime, we need an arts advocacy organization that is separate from the Arts Council; a group that can deal solely with the space issue and the dedicated work that it takes to make artists’ spaces, a complex project, happen. BTW, I thought my camera was off while I was slobbering up my dinner — so sorry you had to see that! ;-) I’ll have to leave shortly. Keep up the good work!

Kathe Gregory: We discussed buildings being vacant for a long time (Star Market) which could be utilized for studio spaces and that the artists who are there be part of the discussion with the developer if the building is purchased so arts is a part of the thinking.

William Shelton R: Amending the ACE definitions is the only solution proposed tonight that can deliver tangible near-term relief. New definitions should include what is not ACE.
Diana Marsh (she, her): The city could offer density and height bonuses for new development that provides a full floor of artists space. Deed restrictions could protect the space in perpetuity and require an affordable rent.

Luis E. Cotto: Great point @Paula. Somerville's population has only increased by about 5,000 ... so 'someone' lived in Somerville in the last 20 years.

JJ Gonson: I have a lot of thoughts about this.

Abby Jamiel: Starlight Square was created through Central Square’s BID (Business Improvement District). My hunch is that is why it was able to implement faster and be more nimble. (not sure who is behind ArtFarm though?) I know there have been discussions about BIDs in Union Square for a while, but perhaps one focused on arts space, etc is the angle it needs.

Ron Newman (R, G): One thing the city could do is remove the requirement that restaurants or other venues get entertainment licenses at all.

Blake Courtney (A/O): Maybe re-examine entertainment licensing for performance space concerns.

Paula Jordan, she/her/hers G: @Luis, Yes!

Jonah Sacks A,R: We all love live music in restaurants, but that’s not the right setting for every kind of music. There’s a need for space suitable for “sit and listen” music performance, like the late Third Life Studio.

William Shelton R: Density bonuses probably won’t be effective because height limitations in transformative districts are already higher than commercial developers are building.

(A) Nicole Cuff: ^^

JJ Gonson: Performance spaces have to be insulated and sound proofed, in addition to being big and open. It’s very hard to find a big space in Somerville that is not going to be bothering someone.

Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): The could be building lower to avoid hitting affordable space limits/quotas.

Luis E. Cotto: Thank you Somerville, MAPC, and this incredible arts community for this evening. I have to go join my son in Fortnite! :) seriously tho, I look forward to digging into the recommendations. Great job tonite! <3 Peace

Mike Gintz [he/him] [A,R, G]: #somervoid

Adam Brown A+O: I think is important for the city to somehow quantify the dollar value of the Somerville Arts and cultural sector as an economic engine.

Adria Katz (O/A: Multicultural Arts Center, she/her): Agreed - thanks MAPC and SAC and all the community for this amazing conversation!
Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): I would like to see more multidisciplinary arts spaces like the armory with dance, music, art, drama, and writing spaces with workshops, rehearsals, and performance spaces. The city should restore abandoned buildings or repurpose buildings or put protections on existing spaces, and use funding and tax $$ to keep costs low for artists.

Scott Farrell (A, G): ^^

Barbara Mangum A+O: Emiliano Great ideas!

Susan Murie (A) she/her: I think we should be looking at Midway Studios in Boston as a model for artist controlled buildings for both studio and work/live space.

Ron Newman (R, G): Could the city deliberately look the other way if artists take over abandoned empty buildings (Circuit City, Star Market)?

Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): 😻

Ann Hirsch (A): ^^^^^^^^

Stephanie Scherp - O Arts at the Armory: Discussion, planning and assessment are needed and valued. We also need action and accountability. Arts and cultural spaces are being lost in real-time. Before we end tonight, I’m sure I’m not the only one who would like to know what next steps and action items are. This is an amazing turnout tonight. I am grateful the community turned out tonight. How is this collective energy going to be channeled going forward?

Emily O A R (Somerville Arts Council): Totally forgot in my rush that the group wanted to bring up the Somerville Armory. A member mentioned not understanding what is going on there and another member knew that the city is on the cusp of a large public process for what is next for that space. So in one group two understandings co-existed. Looking to get on the same page and understand.

Resa Blatman A/R: Great comment @Lauren, about what we’ve lost. I think a comprehensive list of the artists that were here and have left (either moved their studios and/or residence) would be a profound way to show the previous and continued losses, and how drastically the City has changed over the last 10 years.

(A O R)Charan Devereaux: I just want to echo others in emphasizing the importance of clear definitions and requirements for developers.

Adria Katz (O/A: Multicultural Arts Center, she/her): 🌟 @Stephanie!

Ron Newman (R, G): another abandoned building in a very prominent location is the former East End Grill on Broadway.

JJ Gonson: O and A: Sorry I have to go, thank you for including me. If anyone has a spot for ONCE, give me a shout! :)

Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): I know there have been temporary uses of buildings in other cities, like Cambridge, just by talking ot the landlords.

Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): Sending love to ONCE!
01:54:52 Stephanie Scherpf - O Arts at the Armory: ^^^

01:54:57 Ruth Faris she/her/hers O,R: yes ONCE!!!

01:54:58 Ron Newman (R, G): I am also concerned about what appears to be the eviction of an existing gallery and performance venue (Out of the Blue) from the Armory

01:55:09 Yvette o- arts/culture organizations: ONCE!!

01:55:31 A/R, Amanda Bristow: Gotta find a place for ONCE

01:55:53 Barbara Mangum A+O: Artisan’s Asylum was a real loss for the City and innovators here.

01:55:59 Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): agreed

01:56:03 (A/G) Lauren (A/G): Agree

01:56:04 Resa Blatman A/R: The problem with taking over empty buildings is that artists don’t want to be at the whim of absent landlords or city regulations/zoning. Once an artist sets up to work in their space, they don’t want to be told they have to move out 6 months later; it’s expensive, disruptive, and frustrating.

01:56:11 Joseph Lynch (AORG): Question? How long does the City see this initiative will actually become a reality?

01:56:13 Andrea Read: That is a great idea! Pooling the setbacks...

01:56:18 Julia Cseko (A): Yes!! Less little pieces of $ and space and more planning and bigger funds to build the right type of spaces

01:56:25 Kathe Gregory: Much of the discussion is with what will happen with developments in the future, what about The City purchasing buildings that are currently vacant and have the artists be part of that discussion.

01:57:00 Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): agreed Kathe

01:57:33 Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): Can musicians reclaim the abandoned hospital/nursing building on Lowell st? lolol

01:57:41 Resa Blatman A/R: To add: artists do not want to be squatters; we want dedicated, safe, reliable spaces in which to work.

01:58:07 Iaritza Menjivar, O + R + A: Another comment that stood out, The need for Transparency between developers and artists— the need for an opportunity to have conversations. A real conversation about money. What works, what doesn’t. Giving more clarity to artists about what to expect when their space has been bought out— and the city giving priority given to artists being displaced. And the concern that if Washington st disappears, there will be no darkroom!!

01:58:11 Jesa Damora (A+G): @Kathe, agreed
Joseph Lynch (AORG): Please provide the list of the 152 designated sites included in your report. Thanks.

SALVATORE MANCINI (AOR): will the chat be included?

Melissa Nilles (she/her, A+R): That's true, but the situation has led us to feel scrappy and make even ugly spaces beautiful. If you give us a building, we'll make it awesome and keep it forever.

A/R, Amanda Bristow: We don’t want to be squatters, but we also don’t want to be at the whims or definitions of developers who don’t see us as contributing to the economy.

Sasha Parodi (MAPC, she/her): Yes, the chat will be included.

A - Joe Wight: Join the Facebook group https://www.facebook.com/groups/495545885217683 Should there be an Artists Union in Somerville / Greater Boston?

William Shelton R: How about creating an ongoing online forum to discuss these issues?


Annis Sengupta | MAPC (she, her): Link to join project mailing list: https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/su/BS05jJe

Tom Galligani - Econ Development: Boynton Yards should be thought of as OPPORTUNITIES, not issues. There's a lot to work with!


Gregory Jenkins, Somerville Arts Council: gjenkins@somervillema.gov

Nikki Spencer (she/her) - Chief of Staff, City of Somerville: Thanks to MAPC, Task Force, and all of you for your hard work and insight!

Barbara Mangum A+O: Great meeting, all!

Julia Cseko (A): Thank you so much for organizing this

Ann Hirsch (A): THANK YOU!!!

Sharon Lacey (she/her): A+R: Thank you!

(A/G) Lauren (A/G): Thanks for hosting this conversation!

Mike Gintz [he/him] [A,R, G]: Thanks all for welcoming this discussion!

Lucy Friedman-Bell - R: Thank you!

Yvette o- arts/culture organizations: thank you
Kevin Leppmann (O): Thanks everybody!
Jesa Damora (A+G): Thanks to all!
A/O - Bess Paupeck: Thanks for all you’re doing, and yay Somerville artists!
Ariel Basson Freiberg, A +R+G: Thank you!!
(A) Nicole Cuff: Thank you!
Rachel Strutt (O): Great meeting - let’s keep conversation going!
Kathe Gregory: Thanks!
Claudia Zarazua (she/her) | MAPC: Claudia Zarazua czarazua@mapc.org
Lee Kilpatrick (A,O) | Washington Street (he/him): Thanks!
Greg Jukes [A and O] (he/him) - The Fourth Wall: Thanks all!
nancy anderson A / R: thanks!
Carolina Prieto (MAPC, she/her): Connect with someone new and chat about the report ;)
SALVATORE MANCINI (AOR): good night
Adam Brown A+O: Thank you Greg!