



PREPARED BY THE
METROPOLITAN AREA
PLANNING COUNCIL
FOR THE CITY OF
SOMERVILLE

DRAFT

**SOMERVILLE
ARTS SPACE**
RISK ASSESSMENT

2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment is made possible through the contributions and insights generously shared by the hundreds of artists, arts organizations, and owners, occupants and developers of arts spaces who responded to our survey and participated in informational interviews. The collaboration among the Somerville Arts Council, SomerStat, The Mayor's Office of Innovation and Analytics, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) Planning and Zoning Division, and the OSPCD Economic Development Division was critical for developing the analytic frameworks in this plan and providing actionable recommendations. We are grateful to the Cultural Space Task Force appointed by the

Somerville Arts Council to guide this work and its diverse membership that included representation from the City Council, Zoning Board of Appeals, a local bank, and artists of different disciplines.

This project was funded through technical assistance resources provided by the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) Arts & Culture Department and represents a collaboration between the Arts & Culture and Data Services Departments. Thank you to the City of Somerville for engaging MAPC in its analysis of how market pressure exposes arts spaces to redevelopment, and how municipal policies may foster the preservation of existing spaces and create a pipeline for the development for new spaces for arts uses.

Somerville Cultural Space Task Force

Staff at the City of Somerville
Bill White, Somerville City Councilor
Josh Safdie, Principal, KMA,
Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals
Jay Paget, MA Cultural Facilities Fund
Program
Kevin Gatlin, Vice-President, Commercial
Lending at Winter Hill Bank

Resa Blatman, Artist at Vernon Street
Studios
Callie Chapman, Dancer at Studio 550
Barbara Mangum, Sculpture and Decorative
Arts Conservation, Joy Street Studios
Steven Flythe, Artist
Randall Thurston, Artist, Brickbottom

City of Somerville Advisory Team

Greg Jenkins, Director, Somerville Arts Council
Kristen, Stelljes, Director of SomerStat, COVID
Incident Commander at City of Somerville
Thomas Galligani, Director of Economic
Development, Office of Strategic Planning and
Community Development (OSPCD)
Sarah Lewis, Director of Planning and Zoning,
(OSPCD)

Metropolitan Area Planning Council Team

Annis Sengupta, Director of Arts & Culture
Claudia Zarazua, Regional Arts & Culture Planner
II
Daniel Koff, Regional Arts & Culture Planner
Lily Perkins-High, Analytical Services Manager
Alyssa Kogan, Regional Planning Data Analyst
Joel Porterfield, Data Services Intern

CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Acknowledgments | 1 |
| Executive Summary | 3 |
| Key Findings | 3 |
| Recommendations..... | 5 |
| Introduction..... | 7 |
| Planning & Development Context | 7 |
| Project Impetus..... | 8 |
| Community Engagement..... | 10 |
| Arts Space Context in Somerville | 10 |
| Key Findings..... | 11 |
| Detailed Findings | 12 |
| Recommendations | 15 |
| Year 1 | 16 |
| Years 2-5..... | 19 |
| Appendices..... | 21 |
| Appendix 1: Internal Process and Policy Recommendations..... | 21 |
| Appendix 2: Proposed Revised Definitions for ACE Uses..... | 23 |
| Appendix 3: Methods for Exposure and Pipeline Analyses | 25 |
| Appendix 4: Exposure Analysis Atlas Maps..... | 35 |

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Working in partnership with the City of Somerville through a technical assistance grant awarded in 2020, MAPC conducted research and analysis to generate key findings about how development pressure impacts artists and arts organizations Somerville. The City of Somerville convened a task force of knowledgeable individuals to provide insights and guidance to MAPC staff throughout the process. This final report includes a summary of analyses quantifying the relative exposure to development pressure across Somerville and documenting the impact of development pressures of artists and arts organizations. In addition, it provides recommendations for short term and long-term actions the City can take to mitigate the impacts of development pressure on working artists and the organizations serving them.

KEY FINDINGS

Access to affordable creative workspace is critical for artists to maintain and develop their creative practice. **Artist studio buildings serve as a foundation for a thriving creative economy.** This is particularly true in the City of Somerville, which serves as a regional hub for artistic and cultural production. In 2015, Somerville was home to the third largest share of architects and designers, and the fourth largest concentration of visual artists, musicians, and other performing artists out of any city or town in Massachusetts (Arts N. E., 2017).

A survey of artists conducted by MAPC in 2021 confirms that **affordability of space and access to space are key to retaining and expanding Somerville's artistic community as a driver of its local cultural and creative economy.** Artists demonstrate a strong concern about the real estate market's impact on their creative practice; and nearly 80% of respondents see a role for the City in ensuring access to and affordability of housing and spaces where artists can make and share art. Currently artists rely on benevolent landlords for access to affordable space, with forty-five percent relying on informal agreements or annual leases with no guarantee of renewal. According to our survey data, one in ten

artists living in Somerville in 2021 will seek art space outside of Somerville within the next year, highlighting the continued impact of the pandemic.

Today, the extension of the MBTA Green Line into Somerville and growth in the regional demand for laboratory and office space are increasing redevelopment pressure throughout the city. The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased pressure on artist studio spaces, artists and arts organizations. The State of Emergency initiated in 2020 in response to the pandemic shut down arts space operations and venues and eliminated earned revenue, their primary source of income. This loss of income further limited individuals' and organizations' already-strained ability to maintain existing spaces or acquire new space. Furthermore, the City has limited capacity and lacks financial mechanisms to support artists and arts organizations by acquiring buildings in a timely manner or providing direct assistance.

While the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on artists was unforeseen, the City of Somerville has been preparing for growth resulting from improved transit access and a strengthening regional economy. The resulting plans and policies have

incorporated strategies to preserve Somerville's artist community and incentivize the inclusion of arts and creative enterprise uses in new development projects.

Somervision 2040, the comprehensive plan update for the city that was completed in May 2020, acknowledges that "Somerville's renaissance over the last generation has been sparked by artists, musicians, students, and other creative types,"¹ and that "With rising costs, special effort is needed to preserve and extend Somerville's status as a home for artists and musicians."² The Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) enacted in 2019 establishes Fabrication (FAB) Districts with the intent to "create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for small- and moderate-scale, single- and multi-use buildings; activities common to the arts & creative economy and supporting commercial activities; and a variety of employment opportunities in the arts & creative enterprises,"³ In addition, the ordinance requires that five to ten percent of commercial floor area be set aside for Arts and Creative Enterprise (ACE) uses in new developments in mixed-use and commercial districts. This creates an opportunity for new developments to generate additional spaces for working artists and creative enterprise

To understand the impact on arts spaces, MAPC combined data on nine factors known to influence development pressure into an exposure score mapped onto parcels across the city. In addition, MAPC analyzed proposed developments that have not received permits to estimate the amount of space dedicated to arts and creative enterprise uses that would be

generated from set-asides or negotiated agreements. This analysis found a **mismatch exists between the quantity and quality of spaces facing the highest exposure to development pressure and the ability for the Somerville Arts Council to respond to the potential loss of those spaces by exercising the ACE-use set aside requirements.** Buildings that house creative uses facing the high and highest levels of exposure to development pressure collectively represent three million square feet (3,011,000 sf) of total building area. Meanwhile, twenty-two (22) not-yet-permitted developments on record with the City of Somerville would collectively provide about 275,000 square feet of space dedicated to ACE uses if built to the square footage estimates currently on record. This represents nine percent (9%) of the three million square feet of creative-use building square footage in the high and highest exposure levels. In addition, some of the spaces generated through set-asides would be extremely small, with four of the developments generating one thousand square feet or less. The City currently lacks mechanisms for offering a buy-out option to developers in cases where meeting the space requirement would not achieve the goals of the provision.

Through survey data and interviews, MAPC found that **equitable access to arts space is an ongoing challenge, and policies designed to preserve or replace existing arts spaces will not in themselves address issues of equity.** Conversations with operators of arts spaces reveal that existing spaces predominantly serve white artists, and operators want to do more outreach to BIPOC communities to support diverse, intergenerational communities. In addition to policies that maintain affordable creative

¹ Somervision 2040 page 26.

² Somervision 2040, page 32.

workspace for artists, redistributive justice programs are needed to increase equitable access to arts space so operators can offer

affordable rental rates despite development pressure.

RECOMMENDATIONS

With guidance from a Cultural Space Task Force convened by the Somerville Arts Council, MAPC developed recommendations to guide Somerville in responding to development pressure and helping artists thrive in the city. These recommendations provide guidance on how to refine elements of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to achieve the objectives of SomerVision 2040 in relation to arts and the creative economy; how to ensure that housing in Somerville and new space dedicated to arts and creative enterprise uses meet the needs of working artists; how a municipal fund for arts space can help maintain affordability of workspace, and how Somerville can help match artists and arts organizations with appropriate spaces and ensure equitable access to space and resources for artists of color and arts organizations serving artists and communities of color. In addition, the recommendations offer long-term strategies to help the City be more nimble in mitigating the displacement of artists and arts spaces during periods of rapid redevelopment.

In the short-term, Somerville can improve its ability to mitigate and respond to development pressures on arts and creative workspace in the city by refining existing policies, creating mechanisms for implementation and enforcement, establishing programs to address lack of equitable access to creative workspace, and expanding the capacity of the Somerville Arts Council to work with developers, artists, and arts organizations to align arts spaces with space needs. A summary of these recommendations is provided below, with a detailed list of recommendations

provided in the report. This work should be initiated within the first year following this study.

1. Separate and define arts and creative workspace as an Arts and Creative Enterprise (ACE) use subcategory in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, expand arts and creative workspace as an allowable use in more zoning districts and incentivize the development of arts and creative workspace, particularly in the FAB district.
2. Establish mechanisms to implement zoning requirement that five to ten percent of commercial floor area be set aside for ACE uses where applicable; specifically, create buy-back standards and establish a municipal fund to receive in-lieu payments.
3. Streamline enforcement of the set-aside provision by improving communications among the Somerville Arts Council, OSPCD, and Inspectional Services and creating a database to track artists' and creatives' workspace needs.
4. Create a new staff position in the Somerville Arts Council to increase capacity to manage relationships among the development community, the arts community, and the City.
5. Maintain accountability to the Somerville arts and culture community through ongoing collaboration with Cultural Space Task Force or commission established to oversee new municipal arts space fund.

In addition to these short-term recommendations, medium-term strategies are needed to strengthen the larger arts and creative economy ecosystem within the

context of development pressures operating at a regional scale. Through a comprehensive cultural plan and by establishing mechanisms or partnerships for acquisition and development of arts spaces, the City can adopt a more proactive approach to preserving and developing spaces that meet the needs of the arts community. The following summary recommendations can be initiated within one to five years following this study and completed within ten years. For more detailed recommendations, please see the recommendations section in the body of the report.

6. Establish a collaboration between the Somerville Arts Council and Somerville Office of Racial and Social Justice to guide an inclusive comprehensive

cultural plan and develop programs that foster equitable access to arts spaces.

7. Launch a Comprehensive Cultural Plan to analyze the full ecosystem of ACE uses and spaces that support ACE uses and to recommend an arts space development strategy.
8. Establish a process for the City to proactively acquire and disburse properties for ACE uses.
9. Study additional incentives that may be proposed by Somerville and enacted by the State Legislature such as deed restrictions for arts uses and a right-of-first-refusal option for occupants of arts spaces under redevelopment.

INTRODUCTION

PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

Somerville is a Metropolitan Core Community (MCC) within the Inner Core Sub-region of Greater Boston. The city lies north and east of Cambridge and shares a border with Boston, Medford, Malden, Arlington, and Everett. While most of its land area is inland, two neighborhoods abut the Mystic River at the point where it joins the Malden River and meets the Amelia Earhart Dam, which separates the river's fresh water from the salt water of Boston Harbor.

Somerville is a dense and growing city. It is one of the densest in New England, housing 28.1 people per acre compared with 18.6 people per acre in other Metropolitan Core Communities. And the city is still growing – population estimates for 2019 show a 7% increase since 2010 for a current total estimate of 81,360 inhabitants³. Compared with other Metropolitan Core Communities, residents identifying as White make up a larger share of Somerville's population. Those identifying as White make up 69% of Somerville's population compared with 51% of all Metropolitan Core Communities⁴.

Somerville's population is growing and is becoming more diverse. While median wages in Somerville have increased, average housing costs have increased even more due to a regional housing shortage. The need for increased residential development to address local and regional demand for housing increases development

pressure on buildings that house creative workspace for artists and arts organizations. According to an analysis of MassBuilds, a database of residential developments with twenty or more units and commercial development projects, Somerville will see 3,785 new housing units constructed between 2021 and 2031. In that same period, the city will see over 4.7 million square feet of commercial space under construction or in the planning phase. Understanding the potential impact of new development on arts spaces and the potential for development to generate new arts spaces are central questions for this study.

The city has seen arts and culture as an important community asset to spur economic development. A major goal of SomerVision 2040 is to cultivate a local economy that can provide one job for every worker rather than its current position in which there are two workers for every job. Artists and creatives in spaces such as Artisan's Asylum and Greentown Labs have been at the forefront of Somerville's economic growth. The City seeks to use zoning and other tools to ensure that new development continues to support creative activities that help the city grow. However, existing policies and incentives are not sufficient. Artisan's Asylum has recently relocated to Allston in search of more affordable space.

³ U.S. Census Bureau. Washington: Population Estimates Program (PEP), July 1, 2019.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau (2010) Accessed from MAPC Data Common July 6, 2020: <https://datacommon.mapc.org/browser/datasets/352>

The City of Somerville has reformed its zoning code multiple times since 2009 to encourage the preservation and development of spaces for artists to live, work, and present their projects. Starting with the rezoning of Union Square in 2009, Somerville has added or amended definitions of artist spaces, streamlined requirements for developing arts-related uses, and mandated that future commercial development (especially in Transit Oriented Districts) set aside five percent (5%) or more of gross square footage to arts uses. These changes were further refined in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance enacted in December 2019, which established Arts and Creative Enterprise (ACE) as a principal use category and established set-aside requirements of 5% of commercial floor area for ACE uses in new development across the city in mixed use and commercial districts.

Despite these efforts, Somerville continues to grapple with the loss of existing artist spaces. The city's proximity to Boston and Cambridge and the construction of the Green Line extension has increased development pressure in the city. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic and the social distancing measures required to manage its impacts are raising a new series of challenges and opportunities for the long-term viability of creative workspaces. According to Americans for the Arts, 69% of arts organizations and artists in Massachusetts expect extreme impact to their operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.⁵ In Somerville, the impact is palpable. Iconic performance venues such as ONCE Ballroom, Thunder Road, and Bull McCabe's permanently closed due to the cost of extended closure and reduced capacity operations during the State-of-Emergency restrictions.

PROJECT IMPETUS

In 2020, the City of Somerville, led by the Somerville Arts Council, engaged MAPC to assess the impact of development pressures on arts production spaces in the city and opportunities to refine zoning policies and their implementation to support the preservation and development of these spaces. Throughout this project, MAPC has been guided by the project partners – the Somerville Arts Council, the Somerville Office of Planning and Community Development, and SomerStat, the city's data clearinghouse. In addition, the project team has worked closely with the Cultural Space Task Force as an advisory body to the work.

Cultural Space Task Force

The Cultural Space Task Force was convened in early 2020 by the Somerville Arts Council in recognition of the urgent need to address the loss of arts spaces in Somerville. The Cultural Space Task Force is made up of nine individuals with expertise in architecture, community arts, dance, cultural space management, economic development, real estate, and public office. This group served as the advisory body to guide MAPC work to assess arts spaces' exposure to development pressures and opportunities to better protect and incentivize arts space in the

⁵ Survey data collected from March 2020 to February 2021 accessed online Dec. 2021. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by->

[topic/disaster-preparedness/the-economic-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-arts-and-culture-sector](https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/disaster-preparedness/the-economic-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-arts-and-culture-sector)

city. MAPC staff attended and facilitated nine meetings with the task force.

Task force members crafted a vision statement and in coordination with the project team defined the values that should drive this effort. This group will bring accountability to the arts and culture community in Somerville and ensure that equity is at the forefront of this work. As this project concludes, the role of the task force will need to evolve into an advisory body that oversees the implementation of the recommendations including advocating for zoning changes, creating a municipal fund for arts spaces, and engaging with the arts community.

Equity lies at the foundation for this study and the work of the task force to ensure that decisions are being made and processes are being set up to create equitable decision-making. Too often arts spaces have only been accessible to those with access to privilege. Artists and arts organizations that have been historically

excluded should be prioritized as more art spaces are built in the future.

Values

- **Accessibility:** Ensure that arts spaces are affordable for – and have representation from – artists and cultural producers of all backgrounds including artists of color, queer and trans artists, artists with disabilities, undocumented artists, and indigenous artists.
- **Creativity:** Champion creators and the innovative use of cultural space.
- **Community:** Acknowledge and support spaces that contribute to social cohesion and strengthen resilience.
- **Collaboration:** Seek and foster mutually beneficial partnerships between private and public parties and other stakeholders.
- **Preservation:** Preserve existing buildings for arts organizations and artists, particularly those that serve the BIPOC community of Somerville.

Task Force Vision Statement

Artists and cultural producers of all backgrounds- including artists of color, queer and trans artists, artists with disabilities, undocumented artists, indigenous artists- and their work are present everywhere in Somerville- from our neighborhoods and commercial districts to our parks and walls and streets. Artists have affordable, safe, sustainable, and accessible space to both produce and present their work to the community so everyone- no matter their background - is able to participate in and enjoy arts and culture in Somerville. Artists and cultural producers of all disciplines and all career stages and their work are seen as integral to life in Somerville and space is dedicated throughout the city to support our artists and cultural producers to live, create, and share their work and collaborate with each other across disciplines.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project team engaged with the arts community and the City throughout the duration of this project in different mediums. In addition, an advisory task force was appointed to guide the design and implementation of this study.

Interviews were conducted during the fall of 2020 with artists and arts organizations to understand their experience as a tenant or landlord in negotiating with developers, owners, and operators. Two online surveys were conducted in early 2021. One survey focused on capturing sense of stability of individual artists in Somerville and a separate survey captured the sentiment of stability of arts organizations. These surveys were distributed by the Somerville Arts Council and members of the Cultural Space Task Force. The individual survey

received a total of three hundred (300) responses and the cultural organizations survey received thirty (30) complete responses.

Recommendations in this study are informed by the feedback received through conversations with City staff. Conversations were conducted with the Inspectional Services Department, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, the Department of Economic Development, the Mayor's Office and the Somerville Arts Council.

A city-wide online public forum was held in January 2022 to share results of the quantitative analysis and final recommendations to address development pressures in the region.

ARTS SPACE CONTEXT IN SOMERVILLE

Artists, creative workers and businesses and arts organizations rely on and make use of a wide variety of places and spaces in Somerville to engage in arts, cultural and creative activities. Restaurants, bars, gyms, social clubs and office spaces all support different kinds of artistic, cultural and creative activities in addition to more traditional artist studio spaces, galleries, and performing arts venues. Interviews and research suggest that artist studio spaces have largely emerged through informal artist networks connecting with benevolent landlords. Artist studios have provided an opportunity for property owners to find tenants for older buildings without making

costly upgrades required to attract other businesses. Somerville also has examples of long-standing properties owned and operated by artists. The Brickbottom Artists Association is housed in buildings purchased by an informal artists' collective and developed into condominiums available to both artists and non-artists.⁶

Despite the ongoing efforts by the Arts Council and the City to protect artist spaces, growing residential and commercial development trends continue to threaten the stability of arts spaces in Somerville. Projects like the Green Line Extension, Boynton Yards, Gillman Square and others

⁶ Brickbottom Artists Association website: "BAA History and Mission – Brickbottom Artists Association." Accessed October 4, 2021.

have created a confluence of development pressures that have only been exacerbated by the pandemic.

A recent example is Central Street Studios, a building located in an area that was rezoned in 2019 for neighborhood residential use. When the building's owner could no longer afford the maintenance of an old building, it was acquired to be redeveloped as a residential building. While the previous owner would have preferred to sell it to an arts organization or developer willing to retain its arts use, the City has no mechanisms by which to incentivize the maintenance of the previous arts use or directly connect property owners looking to sell their buildings with potential developers looking to retain arts uses. In addition, multiple arts spaces in Somerville shut down due to redevelopment or rising rents prior to this study – Third Life Studio,

Jamspot, and Out of the Blue Gallery are examples of spaces displaced in this way. Additional arts spaces are in buildings that have been recently purchased by developers, a potential sale has been publicly acknowledged, or where the arts tenant is planning to move include Artisans Asylum, Central Street Studios⁷, Joy Street Studios and 11 Miller Street.

In Boynton Yards, a different challenge is apparent. The Boynton Yards Master Planned Development Overlay Subdistrict requires that 10% of commercial floor area be dedicated to Arts and Creative Enterprise use as a principal use. The process by which that requirement is implemented, and opportunities for the Somerville Arts Council and community members to review and understand the characteristics of the resulting art spaces has remained unclear.

KEY FINDINGS

To support the City of Somerville and the Somerville Arts Council to mitigate development pressure on arts spaces, MAPC developed analytic tools to visualize where development pressure is highest in Somerville, created a preliminary dataset of artistic and creative workspaces in Somerville, surveyed artists and arts organizations about their access to working space, and researched programs and

policies that have been used to support artistic production spaces in other cities.

The study was guided by three research questions related to understanding the factors impacting development pressure on arts spaces; factors impacting equitable access to creative workspace; and alternative approaches to policy and programming.

Research Questions:

1. What indicators can be reliably used to quantify exposure to development pressure in Somerville?
2. How might an artists' income, race, or status in their career affect their access to working spaces?

⁷ Hues, C. "Artists in Somerville's Central Street Studios struggle to find space as leases end abruptly," *Cambridge Day*, July 19, 2021.

<https://www.cambridgeday.com/2021/07/19/artists-in-somervilles-central-street-studios-struggle-to-find-space-as-leases-end-abruptly/>

3. What municipal programs or policies can support the resiliency of artistic production spaces in the face of displacement?

In this study, the primary focus was on arts production spaces, although the preliminary creative organization database includes a broader range of entities that support the arts and creative ecosystem in Somerville and includes organizations and businesses such as social clubs, restaurants, bookstores, design firms, theaters, and

galleries, among others. Future work could examine the interrelation among these organizations within the arts and culture ecosystem in Somerville and the potential impact of development pressure on spaces and organizations outside of arts production spaces.

Overview of Findings

Feedback collected through surveys and interviews with owners, operators, and users of arts and culture spaces as well as a spatial analysis of existing arts spaces,

development pressure across the city, and the current development pipeline in Somerville, inform three key findings:

- 1) Affordability of workspace and access to workspace are key to retaining and expanding Somerville's artistic community as one of the drivers of its local cultural and creative economy.
- 2) A mismatch exists between the quantity and quality of spaces facing the highest exposure to development pressure and the ability for the Somerville Arts Council to respond to the potential loss of those spaces by exercising the ACE-use set aside requirements.
- 3) Equitable access to arts space is an ongoing challenge, and policies designed to preserve or replace existing arts spaces will not in themselves address issues of equity.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Affordability of workspace and access to workspace are key to retaining and expanding Somerville's artistic community as one of the drivers of its local cultural and creative economy.

Artists' access to workspace is vulnerable to market pressure. 74% of artists who responded to our survey expressed the highest (56%) or second highest (18%) level of concern about the real estate market's effect on the stability of their arts or creative practice. When asked what the City can do to help their practice, approximately 79% of respondents mentioned the need for the City to address issues related to housing and arts space. Of those, 58% specifically highlighted increasing affordability or access to creative studios as important.

Homeownership in Somerville is associated with more stable arrangements for creative workspace, particularly for owners of multi- or single-family homes. No individuals who rent their homes reported owning creative workspace while one-quarter of homeowners also reported owning creative workspace. Individuals who rent their homes are also more likely to have workspace through informal rental agreements. Holding commercial leases for creative workspace for one year without guarantee of renewal was twice as common

among condominium owners (a third of whom reported such arrangement) as among renters and owners of single- and multi-family homes.

Overall, **artists rely on benevolent landlords and their social networks for access to affordable space**, with 45% of artists who rent creative workspace relying on an

informal rental agreement or the landlord's benevolence to renew a lease for their space. These conditions create a barrier to entry for people whose social networks do not connect them with individuals who can provide access to space. BIPOC and emerging artists are more likely to face such barriers to acquiring space.

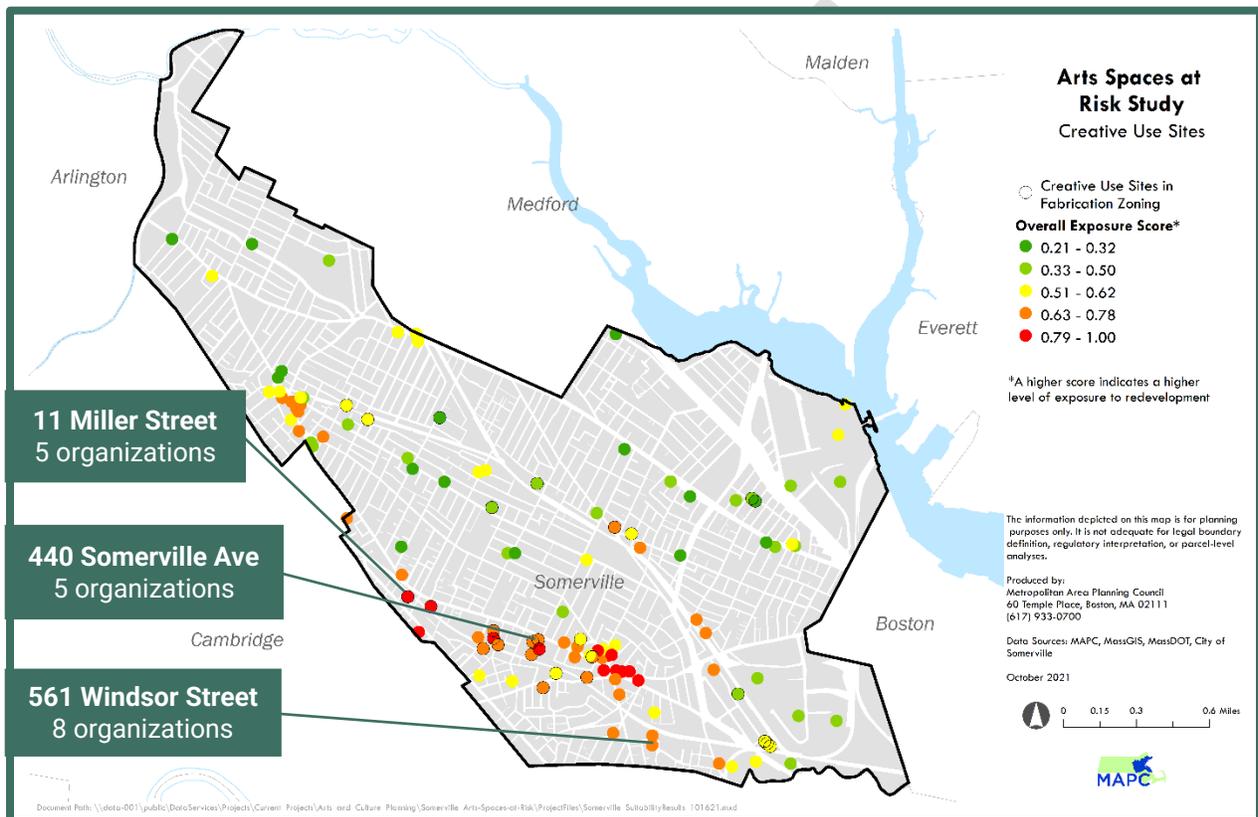


Figure 1. Arts spaces' exposure to development pressure in Somerville highlighting three buildings that house multiple arts spaces, 2021.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of one hundred and eighty-one arts spaces in one hundred and twenty-six buildings across Somerville. These spaces are the foundation for Somerville's role in as a hub for arts production within the region's creative economy. These are spaces where artists across a wide variety of disciplines create their work and earn income from their creative practices. While all locations in Somerville are exposed to development pressure (aggregated across nine indicators), buildings that house creative

uses facing the high (orange) and highest (red) exposure to development pressure collectively represent three million square feet (3,011,000 sf) of total building area. **The areas of relatively higher exposure to development pressure coincide with Somerville's major clusters of arts spaces in the corridor between Brickbottom and Porter Square.**

In addition, some of the buildings facing highest exposure house multiple arts spaces. For example, three buildings in the

high and highest exposure categories together house eighteen organizations or ten percent of all organizations identified. **The size and cost of creative workspace rentals varies considerably among survey respondents; however average annual rent per square foot for creative workspace is \$19.58** across all locations and disciplines. Excluding artists who reported working out of their homes, fifty-four artists in

Somerville reported details of their rented workspaces. These spaces range in reported size from 60 square feet to 1,600 square feet and comprise over 25,000 square feet across all locations and disciplines. Artists report rents ranging from \$81.00 to \$2,000.00 per month, calculated to a range of \$2.25 to \$53.33 per square foot annually.

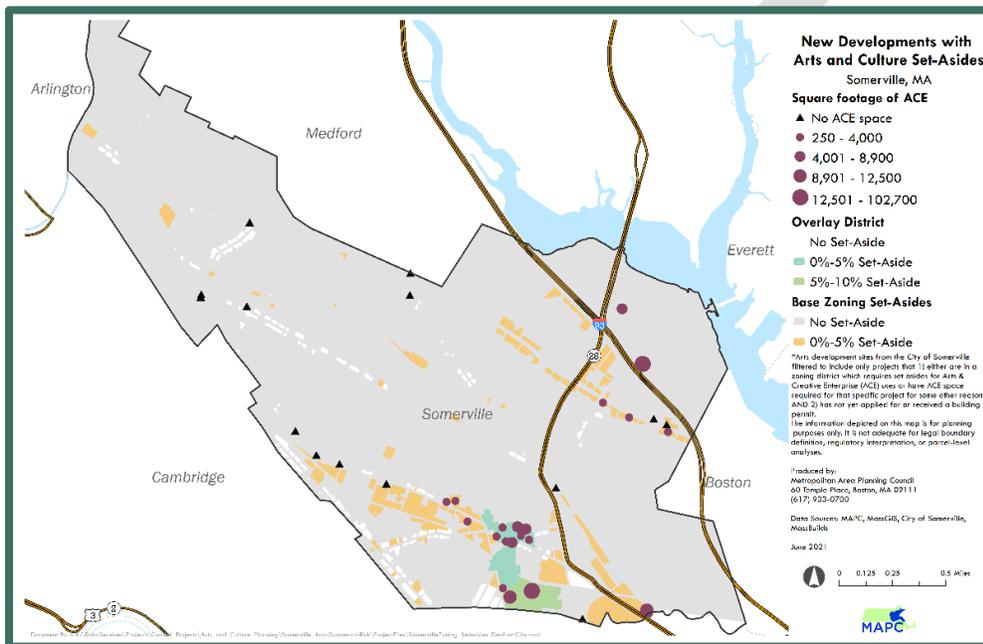


Figure 2. Not-yet-permitted developments on record with the City by estimated ACE-use square footage. Triangles represent developments lacking sufficient information to calculate estimated ACE-use set-asides, 2021.

A mismatch exists between the quantity and quality of spaces facing the highest exposure to development pressure and the ability for the Somerville Arts Council to respond to the potential loss of those spaces by exercising the ACE-use set aside requirements.

ACE-use set-asides create opportunities for new creative workspaces to be included in development projects and represent an important opportunity to offset the potential loss of arts space located in existing buildings facing the highest exposure to development pressure. exceeds the potential square footage of creative workspace likely to result from application of the set-aside requirements on current and upcoming development projects.

Twenty-two (22) not-yet-permitted developments on record with the City of Somerville would collectively provide about 275,000 sf of space dedicated to ACE uses if built to the square footage estimates currently on record. Thirteen other not-yet-permitted developments will likely generate additional space; however, records do not include approximate built square footage from which to estimate ACE use set-asides.

This total estimated square footage represents 50% of the total building area (545,000 sf) for creative-use buildings in the highest exposure level and 9% of total building square footage for creative-use buildings in the high and highest exposure levels.

The current ACE-use category lacks an explicit definition of artist workspace and lacks a way to distinguish between artistic uses and creative uses that are more closely related to small-scale manufacturing, retail, innovation and professional services. This means that a wide range of uses are eligible to meet the ACE-use requirement including tech-makerspaces, design firms, and general coworking spaces. It is not possible to ensure that arts workspaces benefit from ACE-use set-asides under the current zoning. Mitigating the potential loss of arts

spaces most exposed to development pressure requires refinement of Somerville's ACE use category as well as programs outside of zoning to manage how new spaces are used and distributed.

In addition, the current zoning does not address how to manage set-asides that are too small to function as stand-alone spaces. Four developments are estimated to generate less than 1,000 square feet each, with the smallest estimated to generate only 250 square feet. The City needs tools to allow developers flexible options to fulfill ACE-use set-aside requirements (such as in-lieu payments) that align with the goal of preserving quality affordable arts space in Somerville.

Equitable access to arts space is an ongoing challenge, and policies designed to preserve or replace existing arts spaces will not in themselves address issues of equity.

Arts organizations acknowledge that they predominantly serve white people and want to do more outreach to BIPOC communities to support diverse, intergenerational communities.

Redistributive justice programs are needed to increase equitable access to arts space since arts organizations rely on rent from space rentals to support their operating costs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The challenge of maintaining affordable and accessible workspace for artists and creatives is pervasive in the metropolitan Boston region. Somerville can improve its ability to mitigate and respond to development pressures on arts and creative workspace in the city by refining existing policies, creating mechanisms for implementation and enforcement, establishing programs to address lack of equitable access to arts and creative workspace, and expanding the capacity of the Somerville Arts Council to work with

developers, artists, and arts organizations to align arts spaces with space needs. A summary of these recommendations is provided below, with a detailed list of recommendations provided in the report. This work should be initiated within the first year following this study.

- 1) Separate and define arts and creative workspace within new ACE use subcategories, expand zones where arts and creative workspace is an allowable use and incentivize the development of

arts and creative workspace, particularly in the FAB district.

- 2) Establish mechanisms to implement ACE use set-asides; specifically, create buy-back standards, establish a municipal fund to receive in-lieu payments, and create a database to track artists' and creatives' workspace needs.
- 3) Streamline enforcement of the set-aside provision by improving communications among the Somerville Arts Council, OSPCD, and Inspectional Services and create a new staff position in the Somerville Arts Council to manage relationships among the development community, the arts community, and the City.
- 4) Maintain accountability to the Somerville arts and culture community through ongoing collaboration with Cultural Space Task Force or commission established to oversee the new municipal arts space fund.

In addition to these short-term recommendations that use local tools to mitigate development pressure of arts and creative workspace, medium-term strategies are needed to strengthen the larger arts and creative economy ecosystem within the context of development pressures operating at a regional scale. Through a comprehensive cultural plan and by establishing mechanisms or partnerships for acquisition

and development of arts spaces, the City can adopt a more proactive approach to preserving and developing spaces that meet the needs of the arts community. The following summary recommendations can be initiated within 1-5 years following this study and completed within 3-10 years. For more detailed recommendations, please see the recommendations section in the body of the report.

- 5) Establish a collaboration between the Somerville Arts Council and Somerville Office of Racial and Social Justice to guide an inclusive comprehensive cultural plan and develop programs that foster equitable access to arts spaces.
- 6) Launch a Comprehensive Cultural Plan to analyze the full ecosystem of ACE uses and spaces that support ACE uses and recommend a comprehensive arts space development strategy including defining the role of the Task Force or Commission to oversee a new municipal arts space fund.
- 7) Establish a process for the City to proactively acquire and disburse properties for ACE uses.
- 8) Study additional incentives that may be proposed by Somerville and enacted by the State Legislature such as deed restrictions for arts uses and right-of-first-refusal option for occupants of arts spaces under redevelopment.

YEAR 1

I. Separate and define arts and creative workspace within new ACE use subcategories, expand zones where arts and creative workspace is an allowable use and incentivize the development of arts and creative workspace, particularly in the FAB district.

- 1) Separate and define arts and creative workspace within new ACE use subcategories.
 - a) Establish a new ACE use category for Artists' Studios. Refine and adopt

- definition based on proposed language included in Appendix 6.
- b) Amend title of "Shared Workspace or Arts Education" to "Arts Education and Training," and amend definition

- to reflect change using proposed definition in Appendix 6.
- c) Amend title of “Coworking” to “Coworking and Shared Workspace” and amend shared definition to reflect change.
- d) Establish sub-categories to allow separation of innovation uses from arts and artisanal and allow for better alignment of set-aside benefits and the refinement of build-out standards: See Figure 3 for more detail.

| Existing §9.2.2 Arts & Creative Enterprise Uses | Proposed §9.2.2 Arts & Creative Enterprise Use Sub-Categories |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artisanal Production • Arts Exhibition • Arts Sales or Services • Co-working • Design Services • Shared Workspace or Arts Education • Work/Live Creative Studio | <p>Artisanal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Artisanal Production • Art Sales or Services <p>Arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arts Exhibition • Arts Education and Training • Work/Live Creative Studio • Artists' Studios (NEW) <p>Innovation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coworking and Shared Workspaces • Design Services |

Figure 3. Recommended changes to Arts & Creative Enterprise Use include adding sub-categories and amending use definitions in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

- 2) Amend Work/Live Creative Studio definition to align with Union Square Arts Overlay District definition of Artist Live/Work space and existing artist certification program.
 - a) Eliminate maximum number of rooms and requirement to share kitchen and bathroom facilities by floor.
 - b) Reference SAC's artist certification program.
 - c) Allow for separated artist housing and studio spaces within a single mixed-use artist building.
- 3) Expand zones where arts and creative workspace is an allowable use.
 - a) Allow Home Occupations – Creative Studios in areas zoned for residential use, specifically Mid-Rise 4, Mid-Rise 5, Mid-Rise 6 and High Rise.
- b) Allow amended Work/Live Creative Studio use by special permit in zoning districts that allow for a mix of residential and commercial uses.
- 4) Incentivize the development of arts and creative workspace, particularly in the FAB district.
 - a) Exclude the Innovation subcategory from ACE-uses eligible to meet ACE-use set-aside requirement.
 - b) Provide density bonuses or other incentive mechanisms in exchange for developers to build more arts space than is required by set-asides.

London's **Cultural Infrastructure Toolbox** maintains an inventory and map of cultural facilities and assets, provides information on how to create new cultural facilities, acts as a portal to programs dedicated to preserving local cultural spaces, and provides guidance to artists looking for space. Learn more at <https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/arts-and-culture/cultural-infrastructure-toolbox>.

II. Establish mechanisms to implement ACE use set-asides; specifically, create buy-out standards, create a database to track artists and arts organizations' workspace needs, and establish a municipal fund to receive optional ACE set-aside buy-out payments.

- 1) Develop buy-out standards including in-lieu payment calculations
- 2) Determine average rental costs per square foot for Arts, Artisanal, and Innovation Uses. Calculate a model in-lieu payment for ACE use set-asides by calculating the difference between the average Arts Use revenue with the highest and best allowable use revenue such as Office (Research & Development or Laboratory) or Residential, where the primary occupancy use is the intent of the developer.
 - a) Develop a database of artists and arts organizations who are interested in finding space to assist in matchmaking as new spaces become available.
 - b) Conduct targeted outreach to BIPOC artists and organizations.
- 3) Establish a municipal fund, administered by an Arts Space Commission, to receive in-lieu payments from developers who opt into a buy-out provision for ACE use set-asides.

The **Community Arts Stabilization Trust (CAST)** in San Francisco and Oakland California is piloting a five-step model for how to create permanent affordable space for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and arts & culture organizations in a comparably expensive real estate market. The initiative combines property acquisition and management with rent stabilization and capacity building and could inform the use of a municipal fund for arts space in Somerville. Learn more at <https://cast-sf.org/>.

III. Streamline enforcement of the set-aside provision by improving internal coordination and staff capacity. For more detail on this recommendation, please see Appendix 1.

- 1) Continue to streamline interdepartmental communication, data sharing, and process review to clarify the ACE use set-aside implementation strategy
- 2) Create a new staff position in the Somerville Arts Council to increase capacity at the City to manage relationships among the development community, the arts community, and the City.
 - a) Create and maintain database of ACE-use spaces scheduled to come online to support matchmaking.

IV. Maintain accountability to the Somerville arts and culture community through ongoing collaboration with Cultural Space Task Force or Commission established to oversee new municipal arts space fund.

- 1) Maintain the Cultural Space Task Force as an advisory body to guide implementation of these recommendations to ensure equitable access to arts spaces, including the ongoing mapping of arts organizations, the tracking of ACE use spaces in the development pipeline, and the establishment of a commission to manage funds from in-lieu payments,
 - a) Expand membership to include more BIPOC artists and arts organizations.

YEARS 2-5

V. Expand SAC support for diversity, equity and inclusion within arts organizations and ensure equitable access to arts spaces.

- 1) Partner with the Office of Racial and Social Justice to continue targeted outreach to BIPOC artists and organizations and develop equitable art space programs.
- 2) Increase capacity of creative community to manage and operate arts and creative enterprise spaces by offering workshops and trainings in building management and real estate development with preference given to individuals and arts and culture organizations who have been historically excluded from intergenerational wealth building real estate strategies
- 3) Provide diversity equity and inclusion (DEI) training and assistance to arts organizations' staff and board through the Office of Racial and Social Justice or by offering grants to organizations to hire consultants.
- 4) Create a program to offer rental assistance to low-income and BIPOC artists who operate in spaces that are seeking to diversify their audiences.
- 5) Incentivize building owners to create affordable rental space for artists by providing tax relief to building owners who rent to certified artists.

The Seattle Office of Arts & Culture runs a certification program called **Building Art Space Equitably (BASE)**. This program was launched in 2018 to provide professional development to people of color who make up annual cohorts of experts in fields related to cultural space. The program's goal is to build capacity in communities of color to establish permanent affordable cultural spaces. Learn more at: [Build Art Space Equitably \(BASE\) - Arts | seattle.gov](https://arts.seattle.gov/build-art-space-equitably)

VI. Launch a Comprehensive Cultural Plan to analyze the full ecosystem of ACE uses and spaces that support ACE uses and recommend a comprehensive arts space development strategy including defining the role of a municipal committee to oversee a new municipal arts space fund.

- 1) Work with Office of Racial and Social Justice to conduct targeted outreach to BIPOC artists, and creative enterprises owned or operated by members of BIPOC communities.
- 2) Identify space needs and constraints across the creative economic ecosystem in Somerville.
- 3) Refine policies, space and supportive programming to address the needs of the arts, culture, and creative enterprise ecosystem in Somerville.
- 4) Incorporate findings into operations of municipal arts space trust fund.

VII. Proactively acquire and disburse properties for ACE uses.

- 1) Staff and fund the acquisition of properties as they come up for sale on the private market.
- 2) Hold the real estate with a property management plan that ensures rents go to support the bonding of the purchase.
- 3) Issue RFP to sell the property to non-profit arts organizations with agreement to preserve primary building use for arts and culture activities.
- 4) Identify and establish funding sources such as municipal budget allocations, in-lieu payments for set-asides, and grants to support acquisition, development, and management of properties to preserve arts spaces in accordance with goals of Somervision2040 and Comprehensive Cultural Plan.

VIII. SAC studies additional incentives that may be proposed by Somerville and enacted by the State Legislature such as deed restrictions for arts uses and right-of-first-refusal option for occupants of arts spaces under redevelopment.

- 5) Establish deed restrictions for properties dedicated to arts uses.
- 6) Enact a transferable "First right of refusal" for arts space properties so that artists displaced from redeveloped properties have an opportunity to access new arts spaces in the development pipeline.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERNAL PROCESS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Over the course of the project, MAPC identified opportunities to integrate the Somerville Arts Council into planning and development processes more consistently in order to ensure that development projects and zoning enforcement align with the needs of the Somerville Arts Community. This appendix details those process changes and provides a summary of key policy changes recommended in the report.

Year 1 Recommendation III

Streamline enforcement of the set-aside provision by improving communications among the Somerville Arts Council, OSPCD, and Inspectional Services and create a new staff position in the Somerville Arts Council to manage relationships among the development community, the arts community, and the City.

- 1) Continue to streamline interdepartmental communication, data sharing, and process review to clarify the ACE use set-aside implementation strategy
 - a) Improve Somerville Arts Council's capacity to use data provided by OSPCD to track ACE set aside implementation during master plan review, design review, site plan review, building permit, and prior to issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
 - i) Ensure OSPCD shares with SAC copies of decisions regarding developments that are subject to ACE use set-aside requirements.
 - ii) Require developers to propose the type of arts space they intend to create during the design development phase as a condition for a building permit.
 - iii) Allow SAC to draft recommendations to ISD prior to the issuance of a building permit.
 - iv) Require inspectional services to verify arts uses at certificate of occupancy phase.
- 2) Create a new staff position in the Somerville Arts Council to increase capacity at the City to manage relationships among the development community, the arts community, and the City.
 - a) Create and maintain database of ACE-use spaces scheduled to come online to support matchmaking.
 - i) Track the development pipeline to identify spaces coming online with OSPCD.
 - ii) Track available space in existing developments with Economic Development.
 - b) Liaise with artists and arts organizations to understand their needs for new space.
 - i) Conduct targeted outreach to BIPOC artists and organizations.
 - c) Issue RFPs to the arts community to help developers identify tenants for the arts space that they are required to set aside in new development.

Summary of Year One Policy Action Recommendations

- 1) Update Arts & Creative Enterprise Use definitions as described in Year One Recommendation 1.1. See Appendix _ for recommended definitions and considerations.
- 2) Align 2019 Work/Live Creative Studio definition with definition used to establish the existing artist certification program.
- 3) Allow creative studios as a home occupation in areas zoned for residential and mixed-use.
- 4) Exclude Innovation subcategory from uses eligible to meet ACE-use set-aside requirements in new development.
- 5) Establish optional in-lieu payment option for ACE use set-aside requirement to be exercised in consultation with OSPCD and SAC.
- 6) Establish municipal arts space fund to receive in-lieu payments and other funding to support short- and long-term arts space stabilization priorities.
- 7) Establish municipal committee to oversee the use of the municipal fund and maintain accountability to the Somerville arts community.

APPENDIX 2: PROPOSED REVISED DEFINITIONS FOR ACE USES

I. **Artist Studio**

Space used for the creation, production, or rehearsal of any visual art or craft, including but not limited to painting, drawing, design services, photography, video, film, sculpture, pottery, printmaking, set design, glass working, jewelry making, metal working, wood working; of written works of fiction or nonfiction; or of any performing art, whether for live or recorded performance, including music, movement-based art, and theater, and accessory sales of such art and their substantial equivalents. These spaces may be shared between artists or individually dedicated. Activities must conform to the following requirements:

- a. The use, including storage of materials or products, shall be carried on strictly within an enclosed building.
- b. The production of offensive noise, vibration, smoke, dust or other particulate matter, heat, humidity, glare, or other objectionable effect shall be prohibited.
- c. Retail sales of art produced on-site or teaching that does not take place more than twelve (12) hours per week will be an allowable accessory use.
- d. Design services in artists' studios spaces must be limited to sole practitioners."

II. **Arts Education and Training**

Organizations facilitating the transfer of knowledge or skills related to arts and creative enterprises through teaching, training, or research; the arts education & training category includes arts centers, arts organizations and small businesses offering classes, workshops, or training in arts and creative enterprises as their primary business activity, and their substantial equivalents.

- a. In addition to the review criteria for all Special Permits specified in §15.2.1.e. Review Criteria, the review board shall make findings considering the following in its discretion to approve or deny a special permit authorizing an arts education & training principal use:
 - i. Appreciable methods to mitigate noise for abutting residential properties.
 - ii. Location of loading, trash and recycling storage, and the procedure for drop-off and pickup.
 - iii. The limitation of visitors to between the hours of 7:00am to 9:00pm.

III. **Co-Working and Shared Workspace**

A commercial or non-profit organization providing multiple individuals and small firms access to workplace facilities, including but not limited to, artist studios, office suites, for-rent 'hot-desks', dedicated workstations, conference rooms, meeting rooms, event space, resource libraries, and business or administrative support services; organizations providing collaborative workplace facilities and business planning, finance, mentoring, and other business or administrative support services to creative enterprises; and multipurpose facilities dedicated to providing space for multiple creative enterprises. The coworking & shared workspace category includes commercial office coworking facilities, creative incubators, culinary incubators, design & fabrication centers, fabrication laboratories, and their substantial equivalents.

- a. In addition to the review criteria for all Special Permits specified in §15.2.1.e. Review Criteria, the review board shall make findings considering the following in

its discretion to approve or deny a special permit authorizing a shared workspace principal use. These criteria shall not apply to facilities that exclusively provide commercial coworking office facilities:

- i. Appreciable methods to mitigate noise for abutting residential properties.
- ii. Location of loading, trash and recycling storage, and the procedure for drop-off and pickup.
- iii. The limitation of visitors to between the hours of 7:00am to 9:00pm.

IV. Work/Live Creative Studio

Creative studio space at least 750 square feet in size including an area for accessory living, where the work needs of creative industry activities within the same building take precedence over any “quiet expectations” of the residents and neighbors residing in work/live creative studios within the same building. The following standards apply:

- a. Floor area for accessory living space is limited to 30% of the total floor space of a Work/Live Studio.
- b. The occupant(s) of the Work/Live Creative Studio must be households that include at least one certified Artist with the Somerville Arts Council.
- c. Inclusionary Units in Artist Live/Work Space projects will be made available to households in which at least one member is an artist certified by the City of Somerville subject to inclusionary household income eligibility requirements.
- d. Retail sales of art produced on-site that does not take place more than twelve (12) hours per week will be an allowable accessory use.
- e. In addition to the review criteria for all Special Permits specified in §15.2.1.e. Review Criteria, the review board shall make findings considering the following in its discretion to approve or deny a special permit authorizing a work/live creative studio principal use:
 - i. Width of doorways and hallways to accommodate the moving of large objects.
 - ii. Weight capacity of elevators to accommodate heavy equipment.
 - iii. Access to natural light within each studio with a preference towards northern exposure.
 - iv. Sound transmission co-efficients to prevent the transmission of sounds from equipment or repetitive tasks.
 - v. Ventilation and air handling techniques to ensure the safety and health of residents, visitors, and neighbors.
 - vi. Ceiling heights that allow for the creation of large works and equipment, including machinery and lighting.
 - vii. Weight-bearing capacity of the floor.
 - viii. Ability to install flooring for specific users such as dancers or performers

APPENDIX 3: METHODS FOR EXPOSURE AND PIPELINE ANALYSES

Memorandum

To: City of Somerville, Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, SomerStat, Somerville Arts Council
From: Alyssa Kogan, Regional Planning Data Analyst at MAPC
Lily Perkins-High, Analytical Services Manager at MAPC
On: January 7, 2022
Re: Methods and Results from Exposure to Redevelopment Pressure and Pipeline Analyses

Introduction

This memorandum describes two analyses MAPC conducted to inform the *Somerville Arts Space Risk Assessment*: an analysis of which arts organizations in Somerville are in spaces particularly exposed to redevelopment pressure and an analysis of the volume of Arts and Creative Enterprise (ACE) space that might be created through the ACE set-aside provision in Somerville's Zoning Ordinance. Together, these analyses can be used to better understand threats and opportunities ahead of Somerville.

Exposure to Redevelopment Pressure Analysis

The purpose of the exposure to redevelopment pressure analysis ("exposure analysis") is to understand where arts organizations in Somerville are under particular threat of displacement due to their location within the city and/or the characteristics of the parcel where they are located. The final product is a map showing the exposure faced by 182 arts organizations on a scale of zero, meaning least exposure, to one, meaning most exposure.

Method

For the analysis, MAPC identified three criteria likely to result in heightened exposure: Demonstrated Market Interest, Connected Location, and Larger Growth Potential. We then identified indicators, and corresponding data, to measure each parcel against these criteria. Parcel scores for individual indicators are aggregated to three criteria scores, which are then aggregated to one final exposure score for the parcel. The analysis framework, or logic model, below shows the criteria and indicators used in the analysis.

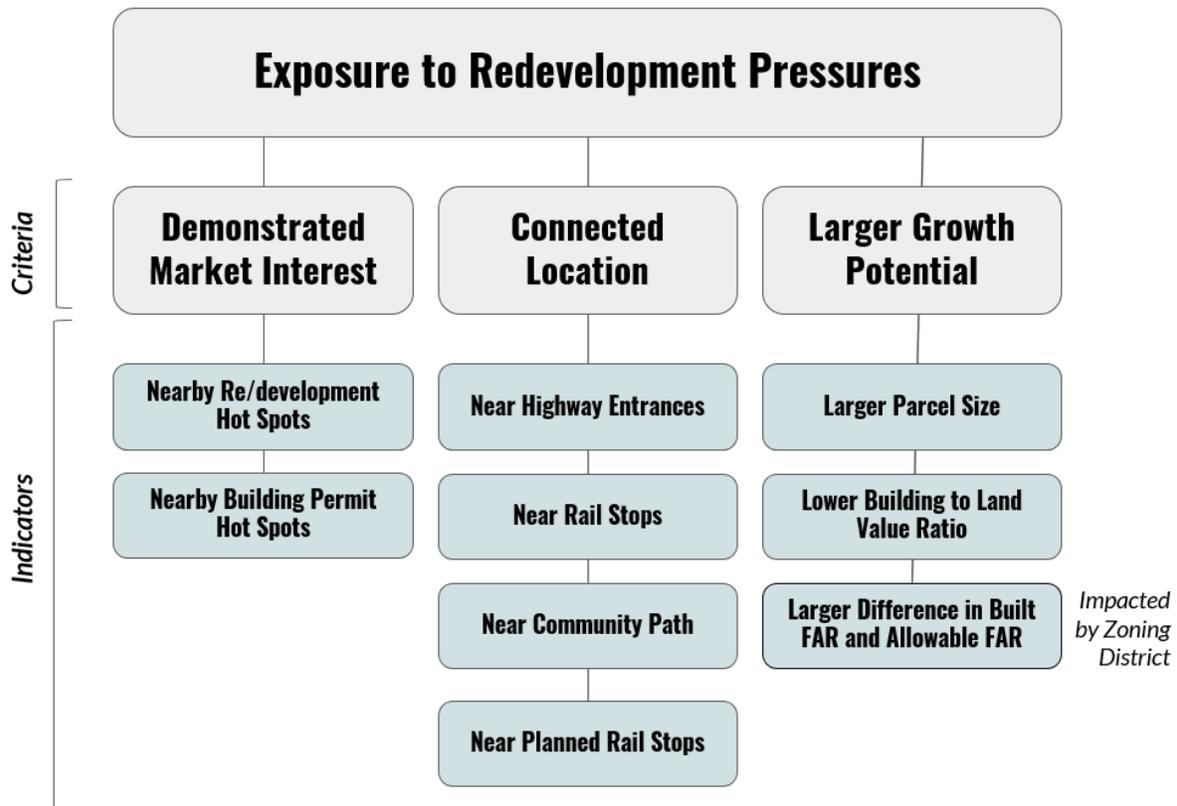


Figure 1: Analytical Framework

Below, we review each criterion and indicator.

Criterion 1: Demonstrated Market Interest

This criterion uses proximity to redevelopment sites and areas with higher building permit activity to approximate the demonstrated market interest around the location of each parcel. It assumes that redevelopment tends to occur in patterns, with certain areas or corridors being redeveloped in waves, due to consensus within the private market of potential value.

Indicator 1a: Nearby re/development hot spots

To identify areas of Somerville nearby recent redevelopment, MAPC mapped development sites from MassBuilds, an MAPC database of residential buildings of 20 or more units and commercial buildings. Areas with many MassBuilds points are defined as areas of increased development pressure.

Data Source: MassBuilds (www.massbuilds.com), accessed on February 8, 2021. Filtered to sites within Somerville, with a status of under construction or constructed, and a planned completion date between 2015 and 2025.

Treatment: MAPC used MassBuilds points, weighted by commercial square footage, to define redevelopment hot spots using the Kernel Density tool in ArcMap. Parcels

received a score on a scale of 0 to 1 based on the intensity of the development hotspot they fell within; parcels completely outside of hotspots received a zero and those in the densest hotspots received a 1.

Indicator 1b: Nearby building permit hot spots

To identify areas of Somerville nearby more modest development activity, MAPC mapped building permits filed with the City. Areas with many building permits are also defined as areas of increased development pressure.

Data Source: Building permits from the City of Somerville, accessed through the Somerville Data Catalog on October 9, 2020. Filtered to building permits with an Expiration Date between 2015 and 2025.

Treatment: MAPC used building permit points to define redevelopment hot spots using the Kernel Density tool in ArcMap. Parcels received a score on a scale of 0 to 1 based on the intensity of the development hotspot they fell within; parcels completely outside of hotspots received a zero and those in the densest hotspots received a 1.

Criterion 2: Connected Location

This criterion uses proximity to transportation access points to approximate the connectedness of parcel locations. It assumes that redevelopment is more likely to occur in areas that have better access to transportation, as this makes the site more desirable relative to others.

Indicator 2a: Near rail stops (existing and planned)

To identify areas of Somerville that have better access to public transit, MAPC mapped existing and planned MBTA rapid transit stops. Parcels that are closer to a transit stop are defined as areas with increased connectivity.

Data Source: MassDOT MBTA Rapid Transit Stations

Treatment: MAPC used buffers to define a half-mile radius around rail stops. Parcels within that buffer receive higher scores. The scores continue to increase until they are within one-tenth of a mile of the stop and then the scores stay steady. Parcels within one-tenth of a mile radius receive the highest score of 1.

Indicator 2b: Near highway entrances

To identify areas of Somerville that have better vehicular access, MAPC mapped major highways and their entrances. Parcels that are closer to a highway entrance are defined as areas with increased connectivity.

Data Source: MassDOT Highways

Treatment: Parcels closest to a highway entrance received the highest scores of 1, with decreasing scores corresponding to increased distance from a highway entrance.

Indicator 2c: Near Somerville Community Path

To identify areas of Somerville that have better pedestrians and bicycle access, MAPC mapped the Somerville Community Path. Parcels that are closer to the Community Path are defined as areas with increased connectivity.

Data Source: MAPC TrailMap

Treatment: MAPC used buffers to define a half-mile radius around rail stops. Parcels within that buffer receive higher scores. The scores continue to increase until they are within one-tenth of a mile of the stop and then the scores stay steady. Parcels within the one-tenth of a mile radius receive the highest score of 1.

Criterion 3: Larger Growth Potential

This criterion uses parcel size, building-to-land-value ratios, and the difference between build floor area and allowable floor area to approximate the growth potential on each parcel. It assumes that certain unique parcel and building characteristics (i.e., large parcel size, poor building quality) make a parcel more lucrative to redevelop.

Indicator 3a: Larger Parcel Size

To identify parcels that might be particularly appealing to redevelop due to their scale, MAPC used parcel size data from the Somerville Assessor’s database.

Data Source: City of Somerville’s Assessor’s database

Treatment: Parcels above the 75th percentile of all parcel sizes received a 1 and those below that threshold received a zero.

Indicator 3b: Lower Building to Land Value Ratio

To identify parcels that might be particularly appealing to redevelop due to building condition, MAPC calculated building to land value ratio for all parcels. Parcels with lower building to land value ratios indicate that the current building does not have a high value, relative to the land value.

Data Source: City of Somerville’s Assessor’s data

Treatment: Parcels received a score on a scale of 0 to 1 based on the building to land value ratio; the lowest values received a score of 1 while the highest received a score of 0.

Indicator 3b: Larger difference in built FAR and allowable FAR

To identify parcels that might be particularly appealing to redevelop because the scale of existing buildings is smaller than what is allowed, MAPC calculated the difference between allowable FAR (according to Somerville’s Zoning Ordinance) and built FAR (according to Somerville’s Assessor’s Database) to determine the remaining potential for further growth. A larger difference suggests that there is remaining growth room available to developers.

Data Source: City of Somerville’s Assessor’s Database, City of Somerville’s Zoning Ordinance

Treatment: Parcels received a score on a scale of 0 to 1 based on the FAR difference between allowable and built; the lowest values received a score of 0 and the highest values received a score of 1. Parcels with a negative value were adjusted to zero.

Results

The individual criteria from each indicator are aggregated into a final exposure score, with higher scores indicating amplified exposure relative to other areas in the city.

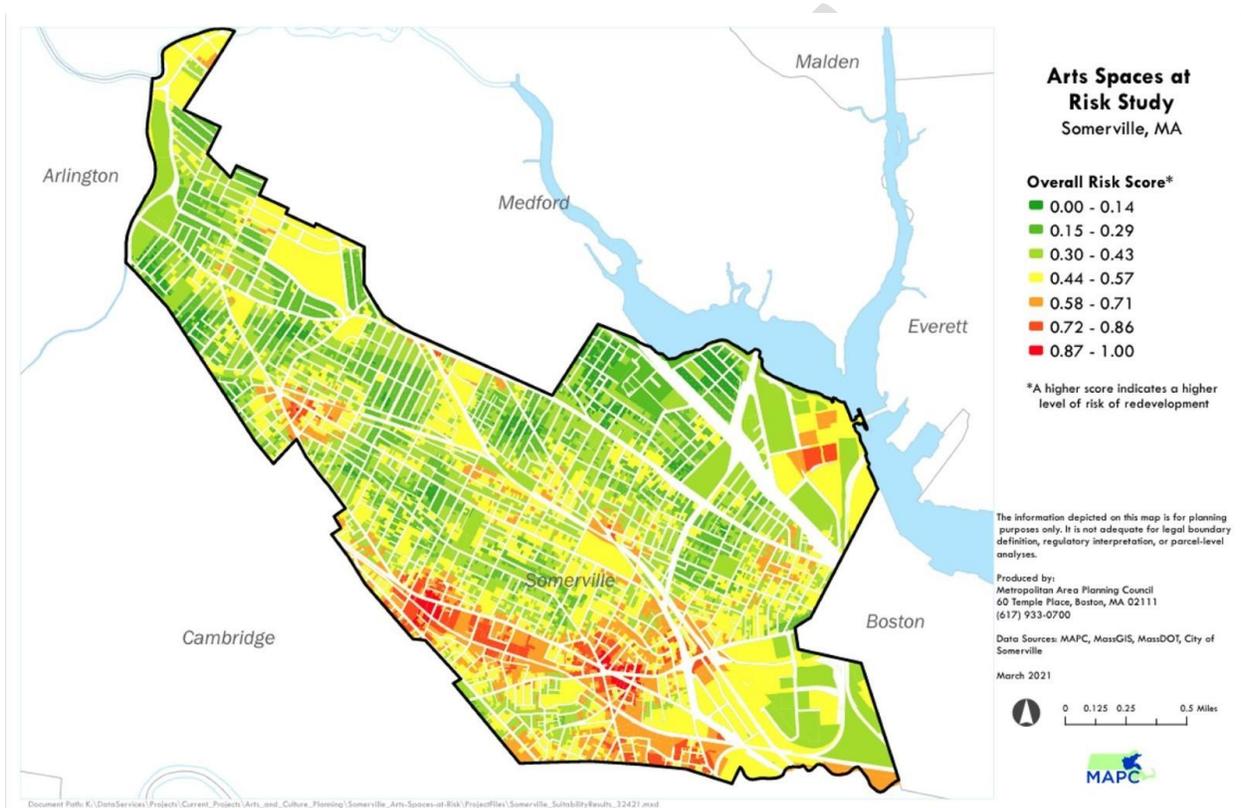


Figure 2: Overall Exposure Scores

To understand the exposure facing individual arts and cultural spaces, MAPC calculated the exposure scores of 182 spaces in Somerville. These spaces included in the study have a wide range of uses. They include spaces used for production and dissemination of art, such as artist studios and galleries; artist supply, such as fabric stores; design services, such as graphic design and architecture businesses; and creative movement, such as dance and martial arts studios. Many, but not all, of these spaces fall within the Arts and Creative Enterprise (ACE) use category defined by the City of Somerville.

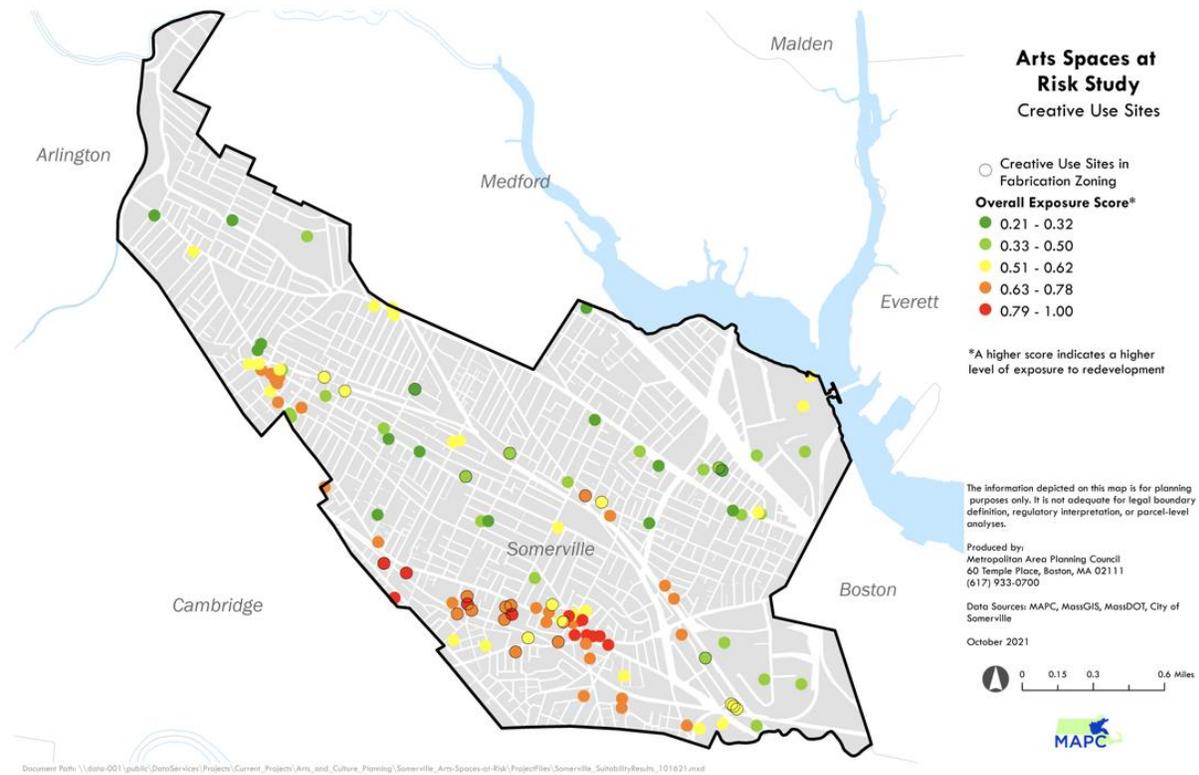


Figure 3: Art Spaces Risk Scores

After calculating the exposure score of each space, MAPC categorized the spaces by level of exposure (lowest, low, medium, high, and highest) using Jenks Natural Breaks Classification. This classification method identifies clusters of values within a dataset (in this case, spaces with similar exposure scores) and defines classes to group these clusters together. This approach maximizes differences between classes, making it easier to detect patterns.

As a final step, MAPC summed the square footage of the buildings where each of the 182 spaces are located by level of exposure¹. The 17 spaces in the lowest exposure class reflect 120,000 square feet of building area, the 40 spaces in the low exposure class reflect 7,268,000 square feet of building area, the 48 spaces in the moderate exposure class reflect 3,205,000 square feet of building area, the 58 spaces in the high exposure reflect 2,278,000 square feet of building area, and the 19 spaces in the highest exposure class reflect 508,000 square feet of building area. Together, buildings in the high and highest exposure levels total 2,786,000 square feet.

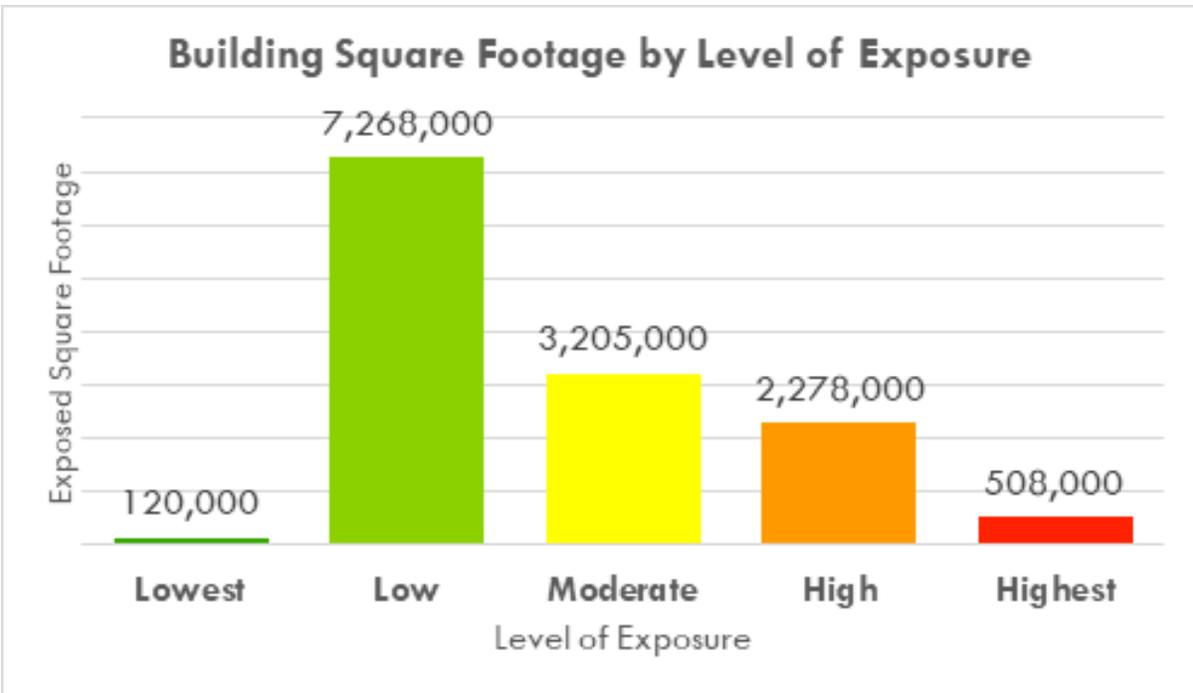


Figure 4: Square Footage by Level of Exposure

In interpreting these results, it is important to keep in mind that exposure scores are not predictive of the displacement of individual spaces; an arts space with an exposure score of one (the greatest level of exposure) may never be displaced and, conversely, an arts space with an exposure score of zero (the lowest level of exposure) may be displaced. One reason for this is that development pressure is influenced by many factors that cannot be summarized in a citywide analysis. These factors include fine-grained parcel conditions, such as environmental contamination, and unique value of a parcel to individual developers, such as the opportunity to add a new type of asset to a portfolio. Another reason the exposure analysis is not predictive of the displacement of individual spaces is that the analysis does not incorporate factors that would make an arts organization able to withstand redevelopment pressure, such as ownership of their building or ability to pay increased rent.

The exposure analysis can and should be used, however, to understand broad trends and to prioritize outreach to building owners about their plans and to arts organizations about their financial position. It can also be used to understand the volume and characteristics of spaces that might be lost so that the City can plan to preserve or replace them.

Development Pipeline Analysis

The purpose of the development pipeline analysis (“pipeline analysis”) is to understand the amount of space that might be generated through the arts and creative enterprise (ACE) provisions in Somerville’s Zoning Ordinance. These set-aside provisions apply to the following base zoning and overlay zoning districts, at the following amounts:

- Mid-Rise 5 (MR5), Mid-Rise 6 (MR6), High-Rise (HR), and Fabrication (FAB) Districts – A minimum of five percent of the gross leasable commercial floor space

- Commercial Core (CC) and Commercial Business (CB) Districts – A minimum of five percent of the gross floor area of any Commercial Building or Lab Building
- Master Planned Development (MPD) Districts –
 - Boynton Yards (BY) Sub Area –
 - At least ten percent of the total commercial floor area
 - Any development site that includes lot MBL 96/A/6 must provide at least one hundred thousand leasable square feet
 - Union Square (USQ) Sub Area –
 - At least forty percent (40%) of the commercial floor area
 - At least five percent (5%) of the total gross floor area
 -

Somerville’s Mid-Rise 3 (MR3) and Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) districts also provide a structure for the creation of ACE space, through a use limitation on “any Ground Story commercial space fronting a Pedestrian Street, excluding lobbies for Upper Story Uses.” This use limitation restricts ground story commercial space to four principal use categories, of which ACE is one. This opportunity relies on the selection of an ACE space by the property owner and is thus difficult to predict.

Method

To estimate the amount of ACE space generated through the set-aside provisions, MAPC used a list of thirty-six (36) not-yet-permitted development projects provided by the City of Somerville on May 11, 2021. This list includes developments located in a zoning district with set-asides for ACE space and developments that have ACE space set aside for some other reason.

MAPC began by converting the list of development projects to a spatial dataset with geocoding. Developments with addresses. Twenty-eight (28) were matched to a location automatically; those without addresses (8) were matched to a location manually, using their parcel number and Figure 3: Development Site Plan of the *Coordinated Development Special Permit Application, Union Square Redevelopment*. MAPC then executed a spatial join to match the thirty-six (36) developments with their corresponding zoning district.

Eleven (11) of the thirty-six (36) developments had ACE square footage previously identified by Somerville. We used this ACE square footage for these developments. Four of the eleven developments are located in zones with a defined ACE set-aside (CC) and two are located in zones with the option of an ACE set-aside (MR4). The remaining five developments are located in zones without a defined set-aside: two are located in the Civic (CIV) zone, one is located in the Commercial Industrial (CI) zone, and two are located in the Assembly Square Mixed-Use (ASMD) zone. The City clarified that the ACE space for these projects comes from project-specific approvals that the development has to comply with rather than coming from an underlying district requirement.

For the twenty-five (25) developments where ACE square footage was not identified, MAPC estimated ACE square footage by multiplying the building square footage² by the set-aside requirement of the zoning district. This process yielded ACE square footage estimates for twelve (12) developments. Seven of these developments are in the MR5 zone, two are in the MR6 zone, two are in the HR zone, and one is in the CC zone. The thirteen remaining developments are located in the MR3 and MR4 zoning districts, with seven also lacking building

square footage information. MAPC did not estimate ACE square footage for these developments due to the ambiguity of set-aside space in the MR3 and MR4 districts, coupled with limited square footage information. The locations of these 13 developments are identified on the map with black triangles.

To conclude the analysis, MAPC tabulated potential ACE space city-wide and by zoning district for twenty-three potential developments.

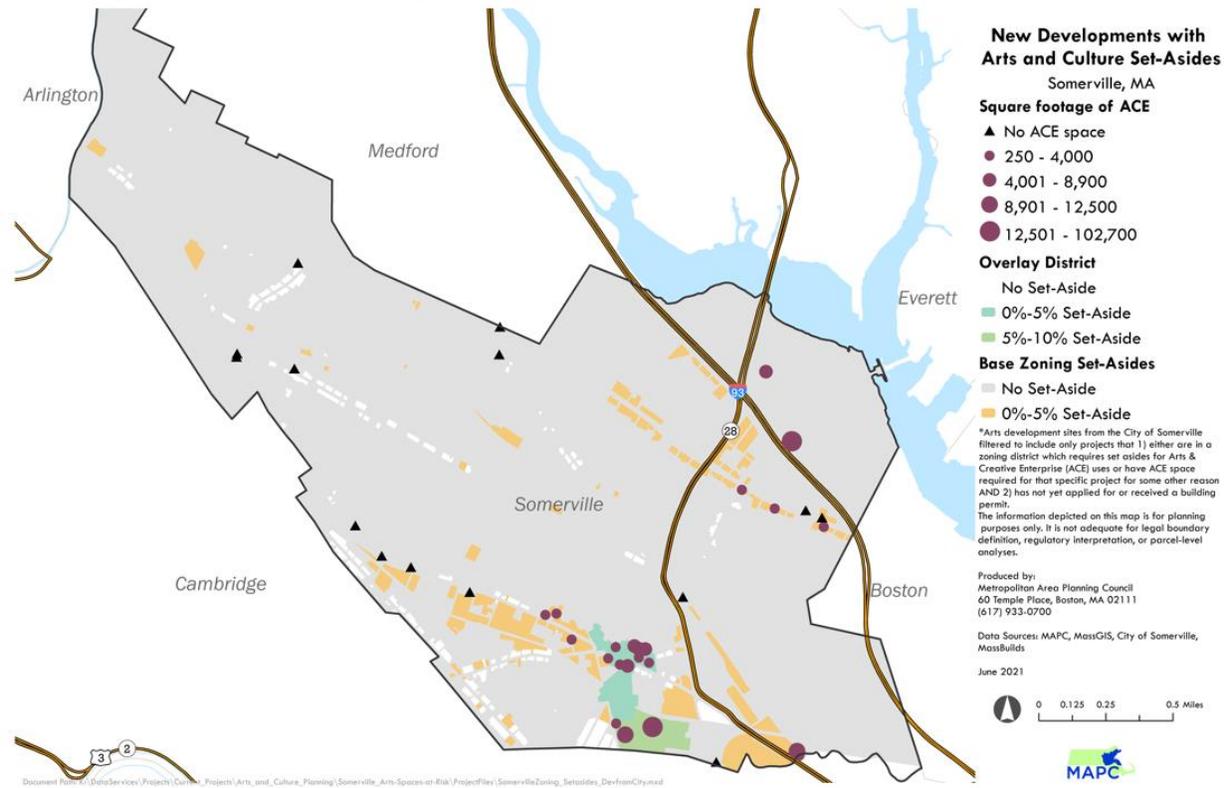


Figure 5: New Developments with Arts and Culture Set-Asides

Results

The twenty-three potential developments could together provide about 275,000 square feet of ACE space in Somerville, if built to the square footage amount currently on record with the City. The characteristics of the generated ACE spaces would be highly varied, with the smallest being 250 square feet (followed closely by four others, at 642 square feet, 658 square feet and 900 square feet) and the largest being 102,700 square feet (preceded by two spaces at 12,500 square feet and one space at 80,000 square feet). Most (22) of these spaces would be generated in and through Mid-Rise zoning districts MR3, MR4, and MR5, with seven, eight, and seven new developments, respectively. Another five spaces would be generated in Commercial (CC) zoning districts; the other 9 developments are evenly distributed between the ASMD, CI, CIV, HR, and MR6 zones.



Figure 6: Number of New ACE Developments by Zone

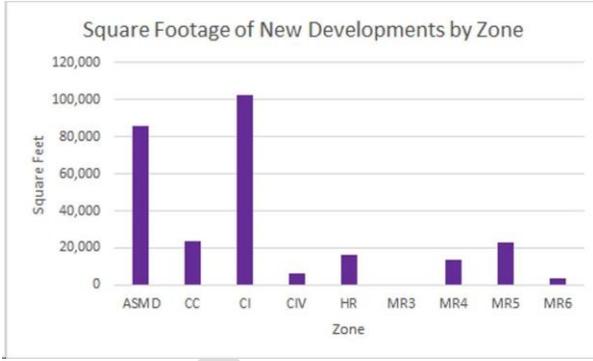


Figure 7: ACE SF by Zone

Further ACE space will likely be created through the thirteen potential developments where MAPC was not able to supply an estimate. In both cases, it is important to remember that the thirty-six developments are in early stages of planning and could be halted completely or have their square footages – particularly the gross leasable commercial floor space on which ACE set-asides may be based – changed during design and permitting.

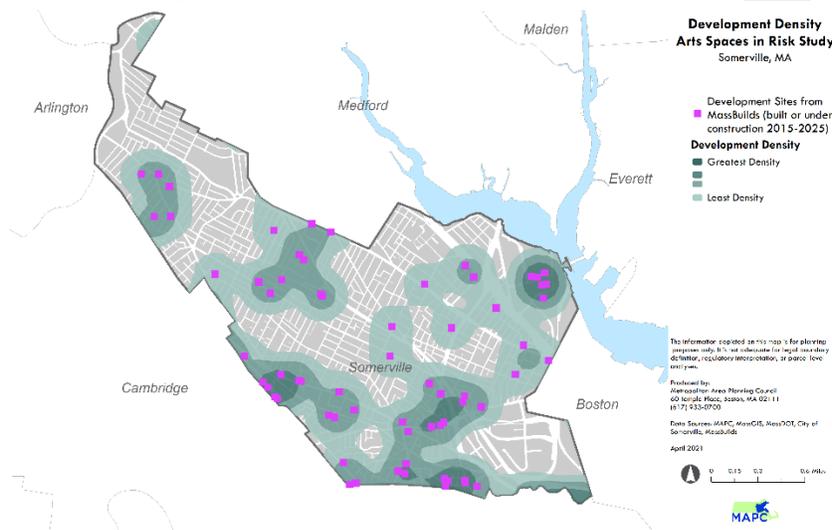
APPENDIX 4: EXPOSURE ANALYSIS ATLAS MAPS

The following maps illustrate the spatial dimensions of the criteria and indicators used in the analysis of exposure to redevelopment pressure.

Demonstrated Market Interest

1.a. Nearby Re/development Hot Spots

To identify areas of Somerville nearby recent redevelopment, MAPC mapped development sites from MassBuilds, an MAPC database of residential buildings of 20 or more units and commercial buildings. Areas with many MassBuilds points are defined as areas of increased development pressure.



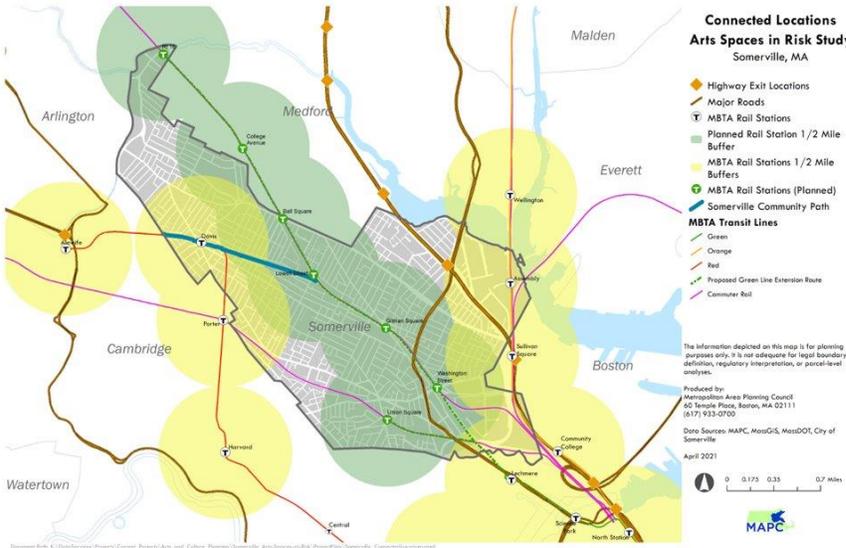
1.b. Nearby Building Permit Hot Spots

To identify areas of Somerville nearby more modest development activity, MAPC mapped building permits filed with the City. Areas with many building permits are also defined as areas of increased development pressure.



Connected Location

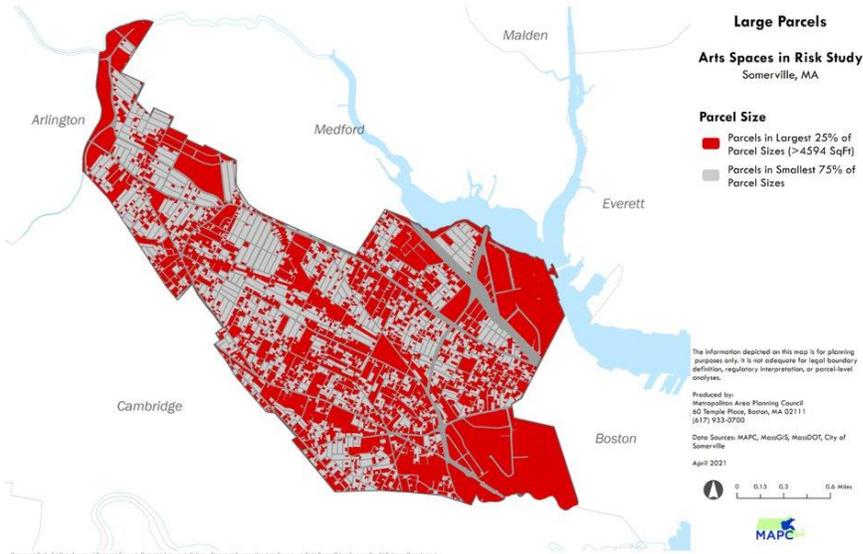
This criterion uses proximity to transportation access points to approximate the connectedness of parcel locations. It assumes that redevelopment is more likely to occur in areas that have better access to transportation, as this makes the site more desirable relative to others.



Larger Growth Potential

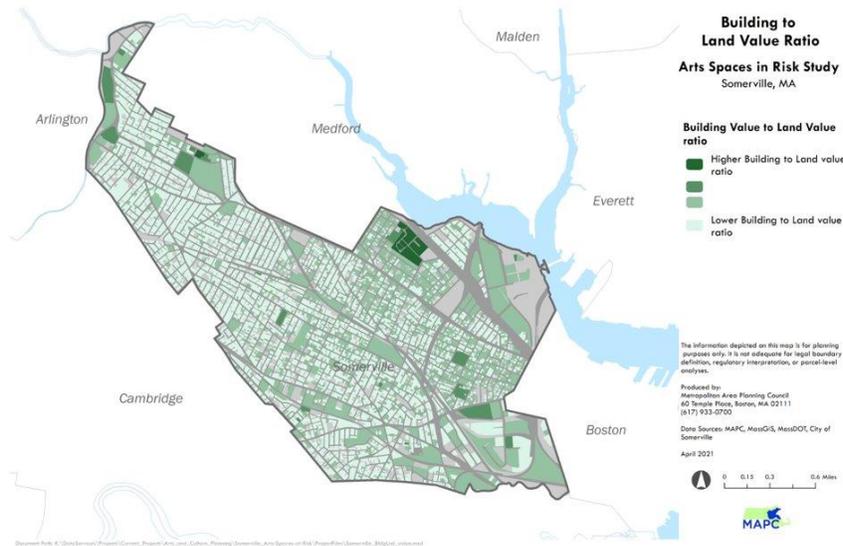
Larger Parcel Size

To identify parcels that might be particularly appealing to redevelop due to their scale, MAPC used parcel size data from the Somerville Assessor's database.



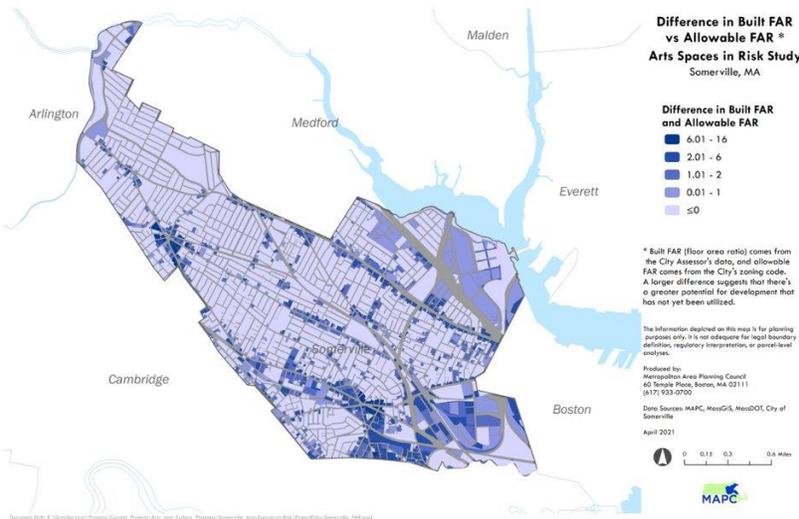
Lower Building to Land Value Ratio

To identify parcels that might be particularly appealing to redevelop due to building condition, MAPC calculated building to land value ratio for all parcels. Parcels with lower building to land value ratios indicate that the current building does not have a high value, relative to the land value.



Larger difference in built FAR and allowable FAR

To identify parcels that might be particularly appealing to redevelop because the scale of existing buildings is smaller than what is allowed, MAPC calculated the difference between allowable FAR (according to Somerville's Zoning Ordinance) and built FAR (according to Somerville's Assessor's Database) to determine the remaining potential for further growth. A larger difference suggests that there is remaining growth room available to developers.



DRAFT