

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

**SOMERVILLE
ARTS SPACE**
RISK ASSESSMENT

2022

Year 1
Progress Report

4/12/2023



This document is for tracking progress of the implementation of the *Somerville Art Space Risk Assessment*. It does not reflect a concrete timeline of the implementation, but acts as a communication tool to show where the City is in implementing the recommendations of this report.

Acronyms Used:

ACE	Arts and Creative Enterprise
ED	Economic Development
OSPCD	Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development
PPZ	Planning, Preservation, and Zoning
SAC	Somerville Arts Council

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Somerville Art Space Risk Assessment
Year 1 Progress Report
April 12, 2023

Somerville Arts Council
City of Somerville


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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.

Goal

Current Status

 Separate and define arts and creative workspace within new ACE use subcategories.

Establish a new ACE use category for Artists' Studios. Refine and adopt definition based on proposed language included in Appendix 6.


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.

Amend title of "Coworking" to "Coworking and Shared Workspace" and amend shared definition to reflect change.

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.

In Progress:

SAC is meeting bi-weekly with PPZ and ED to address drafting the language for these changes, in addition to other zoning changes recommended in this report. The City would like to have all zoning changes drafted and submitted as one item for approval by City Council. The public review of the draft changes is expected to be released in the fall of 2023.

 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.

Eliminate maximum number of rooms and requirement to share kitchen and bathroom facilities by floor.

Reference SAC's artist certification program.

Allow for separated artist housing and studio spaces within a single mixed-use artist building.

In Progress:

SAC is meeting bi-weekly with PPZ and ED to address drafting the language for these changes, in addition to other zoning changes recommended in this report. The City would like to have all zoning changes drafted and submitted as one item for approval by City Council. The public review of the draft changes is expected to be released in the fall of 2023.

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.

Goal

Current Status



Expand zones where arts and creative workspace is an allowable use.

Allow Home Occupations – Creative Studios in areas zoned for residential use, specifically Mid-Rise 4, Mid-Rise 5, Mid-Rise 6 and High Rise.

Allow amended Work/Live Creative Studio use by special permit in zoning districts that allow for a mix of residential and commercial uses.

In Progress:

SAC is meeting bi-weekly with PPZ and ED to address drafting the language for these changes, in addition to other zoning changes recommended in this report. The City would like to have all zoning changes drafted and submitted as one item for approval by City Council. The public review of the draft changes is expected to be released in the fall of 2023.



Incentivize the development of arts and creative workspace, particularly in the FAB district.

Exclude the Innovation subcategory from ACE-uses eligible to meet ACE-use set-aside requirement.

Provide density bonuses or other incentive mechanisms in exchange for developers to build more arts space than is required by set-asides.





In Progress:

SAC is meeting bi-weekly with PPZ and ED to address drafting the language for these changes, in addition to other zoning changes recommended in this report. The City would like to have all zoning changes drafted and submitted as one item for approval by City Council. The public review of the draft changes is expected to be released in the fall of 2023.

2 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.

Goal


Current Status

<p> Develop buy-out standards including in-lieu payment calculations</p>	<p>Queued: This work is in progress but currently paused. The two City contractors that would be able to do this work are held up on other projects and will resume when their other work is completed.</p>
<p> 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.</p>	<p>Queued: This work is in progress but currently paused. The two City contractors that would be able to do this work are held up on other projects and will resume when their other work is completed.</p>
<p> Develop a database of artists and arts organizations who are interested in finding space to assist in matchmaking as new spaces become available.</p>	<p>In Progress: SAC is amending the Art Space Connector to fulfill this role in addition to understanding demand. Outreach gaps are being measured and a plan for filling the gaps will be made to increase equity.</p>
<p>Conduct targeted outreach to BIPOC artists and organizations.</p>	
<p> 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.</p>	<p>Queued: This work is in progress but currently paused. The two City contractors that would be able to do this work are held up on other projects and will resume when their other work is completed.</p>

3 Streamline enforcement of the set-aside provision by improving internal coordination and staff capacity.

Goal

Current Status

 Continue to streamline interdepartmental communication, data sharing, and process review to clarify the ACE use set-aside implementation strategy

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.

Ensure OSPCD shares with SAC copies of decisions regarding developments that are subject to ACE use set-aside requirements.


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.


Allow SAC to draft recommendations to ISD prior to the issuance of a building permit.

Require inspectional services to verify arts uses at certificate of occupancy phase.

In Progress:


SAC is integrating into OSPCD processes regarding new development and has several recurring meetings on the books to increase communication and collaboration on ACE spaces.

 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


 Create and maintain database of ACE-use spaces scheduled to come online to support matchmaking.

Track the development pipeline to identify spaces coming online with OSPCD.

Track available space in existing developments with Economic Development.

 Liaise with artists and arts organizations to understand their needs for new space.

Conduct targeted outreach to BIPOC artists and organizations.

 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.

Completed:

Staff member hired. Michael Rosenberg, Arts Development Manager. Sub-Tasks are part of this position’s role.

In Progress:

New staff position is now part of the pre-development process to help track and guide new development with ACE requirements. SAC is also meeting bi-weekly with ED to track spaces coming online.

In Progress:

Modifications to the Art Space Connector are being made to serve this purpose, as well as outreach through the Mayor’s Listening Tour, the Cultural Capacity Plan, and direct staff outreach.

Queued:

Currently evaluating the best method to connect developers to organizations/artists looking for space.

4 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.

Goal



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.

Expand membership to include more BIPOC artists and arts organizations.

Current Status






Queued:

SAC is exploring the re-establishment of a cultural space task force with staff and residents to focus on ACE space needs within the community. Such a task force would be established after core ACE policies have been established and the zoning definition changes have been drafted. SAC is also part of an Anti-Displacement Task Force which has a cultural displacement sub-committee.

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


Goal

Current Status

 Partner with the Office of Racial and Social Justice to continue targeted outreach to BIPOC artists and organizations and develop equitable art space programs.	In Progress: SAC runs a program to provide temporary space for BIPOC creatives, this program will be evaluated before launching more programs.
 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	Queued: In an exploratory phase with ED, examining the ability to create an arts “operator” program.
 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.	Queued: Further exploration needed. Cross departmental collaboration needed to determine implementation policy.
 Create a program to offer rental assistance to low-income and BIPOC artists who operate in spaces that are seeking to diversify their audiences.	Queued: Further exploration needed. Cross departmental collaboration needed to determine implementation policy.
 Incentivize building owners to create affordable rental space for artists by providing tax relief to building owners who rent to certified artists.	Queued: This requires Home Rule Petition to the State Government

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 a municipal committee to oversee a new municipal arts space fund.

Goal

-  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.
-  Identify space needs and constraints across the creative economic ecosystem in Somerville.
-  Refine policies, space and supportive programming to address the needs of the arts, culture, and creative enterprise ecosystem in Somerville.
-  Incorporate findings into operations of municipal arts space trust fund.

Current Status

In Progress:

SAC is working with Forecast Public Art to conduct The Somerville Cultural Capacity Plan. This plan is expected in Fall 2023 and will help address these goals.

7 Proactively acquire and disburse properties for ACE uses.

Goal

- ② 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.
- ② Issue RFP to sell the property to non-profit arts organizations with agreement to preserve primary building use for arts and culture activities.
- ② 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.

Current Status

On Hold:

This is a long-term recommendation. The creation of a fund will most likely take place after the fee-in-lieu program is established. Capacity to purchase properties will depend on the size of the fund.

8 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.

Goal

Current Status



Establish deed restrictions for properties dedicated to arts uses.

In Progress:

SAC has reached out to the Arts & Business Council to discuss the legal implications of deed restrictions.



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.

Queued:

Exploring legal status and specific outcomes of policy.