

#ARTSTAYSHERE

VOTE YES 101

SOMERNOVA COMMUNITY BENEFITS AGREEMENT

#ARTSTAYSHERE is a volunteer-run non-profit organization committed to preventing arts/music/cultural displacement; creating policies/protections for artist workspaces as well as more inventory of affordable artist workspaces across Massachusetts.

What a YES Vote on the Somernova CBA Means to the Arts

- The biggest arts infrastructure community benefit in Somerville's history, estimated value at least \$55M
- A monumental precedent setting of arts stakeholders at the table, arts space prioritized & for the first time ever, commercial space affordability built in from the beginning
- A minimum of 8% ACE (Arts & Creative Enterprise) space (increased from 5% requirement)
- More than 100,000 SF Arts & Creative Enterprise (ACE) space, at least 60,000 SF will be form-built (to what artists/musicians need), affordable (under market rental rates) & with long-term leases (for security)
- The ACE space prioritizes artist studios/arts exhibition uses including 3 new independent live music venues, affordable music recording & rehearsal studios; artist galleries & studios (as asked for at the USNC CBA Summits)
- Preference to artists & educators for affordable housing units
- A Curatorial Advisory Team to weigh in on leasing, rental rates & more, made up of Somerville artists & arts stakeholders keeping artists at the table throughout
- Public art opportunities where Somerville creatives get the right of first refusal
- Mitigation for abutting arts buildings (Milk Row Studios & ESH Circus Arts during construction)

What a NO Vote on the Somernova CBA Means to the Arts

- Somernova can build "by right," 1.2M SF, without any community benefits; bigger buildings, more traffic
- City Council is allowed to pass the new zoning, even without community benefits, which could be more SF
- The artists, musicians & creative small businesses at both Milk Row Studios & ESH Circus Arts remain at high risk of rent increases & displacement**

What a YES Vote Means to the Community (not just arts)

- Setting a new precedent for future developments to engage in a CBA process that meets many needs
- A smaller development up to 1.45 SF, instead of 2.1M SF
- Guaranteed "step backs" & "set-backs" for bigger sidewalks
- A Project Labor Agreement with the Greater Boston Building Trades Unions guaranteeing hiring well-trained, well-paid construction workers, job-training & apprenticeships for young tradespeople
- At least 100 new housing units, at least 30% 2-3 bedrooms for families, at least 20% affordable (goal of reaching 50% affordable)
- A new, funded, 20K SF community center for youth, operated by a separate nonprofit
- The most rigid Mobility Management Plan in Somerville history, can stop construction if not adhered to
- \$250k to Union Square Main Streets to support for local small businesses
- \$500k to Somerville community Land Trust to help affordable homeownership
- \$375k to First Source for job training
- Two new parks (green/open public space)
- 150 new trees, 100% native plants, no poison rat control
- USNC CBA Oversight Committee for compliance of deliverables

CBA Voting 101

- Voting takes place in person on Wednesday, June 4, 7:30am to 7:30pm at St. Anthony's School, 480 Somerville Ave.
- Anyone who is a Union Square Neighborhood Council (USNC) member is eligible to vote
- Anyone who lives, works, owns property or regularly volunteers in the USNC catchment area in the last 12 months is eligible to be a member
- People may both become a member AND vote on the same day
- People must bring proof of eligibility: snail mail with your name/address, paystub or letter from your employer, letter from the organization you volunteer for, etc.
- Union Square Neighborhood Council's bylaws require a $\frac{2}{3}$ super majority vote of yes, for the CBA to pass
- If the CBA doesn't pass, all parties would have to agree to continue negotiating or Somernova may build by right without any Community Benefits

Note on How CBA & Zoning Are & Are Not Connected

- Each city/town/municipality handles zoning, development & community benefits differently
- In Somerville there are 2 different processes: one for zoning with the City, one for benefits with the Neighborhood Council
- Although both topics inform & impact each other, they are different, led/voted on by different entities
- Zoning changes get filed with the City, require public hearings, get evaluated by the Planning Board & the City Council Land Use Committee & get voted on by City Council
- Community Benefits Agreements are led by the Neighborhood Council, with input & voting directly from community stakeholders; if the CBA passes with $\frac{2}{3}$ majority, the Neighborhood Council & developer sign the legal, binding agreement
- This zoning change is put forth by the City
- The CBA negotiation happens in parallel with zoning process
- For questions on zoning process, reach out to City Councilors on the Land Use Committee
- Approving a CBA is like having an insurance policy should the developer seek a Master Plan Permit to build under the proposed Arts & Innovation Subarea Overlay.

History/Background

- In 2019 the City of Somerville revised its zoning ordinance to include a Fabrication District to dis-incentivize redevelopment to protect arts & creative enterprise buildings
- In 2021 the Somerville Arts Council & MAPC (Metropolitan Area Planning Council) published the Somerville Arts Risk Assessment, stating that EVERY ARTS BUILDING in Somerville was at risk of displacement due to rising property values, redevelopment & lack of ownership
- Somernova purchased 7.4 acres of Fabrication District property, planning to redevelop into a "climate tech" campus, to expand Greentown Labs' "climate tech" incubation tenants
- Climate tech is not bio labs or life sciences, which our region has too much inventory of; Climate tech is about incubating small businesses focusing on technology that helps solve climate change, including solutions for decarbonization, energy transition & emissions reduction.
- Climate tech expansion brings more commercial business to Somerville, providing tax revenue for the city
- Greentown Labs, the lead tenant on the Somernova property, plans to expand its incubation of Climate tech companies; Somernova needs to expand to continue housing it
- Due to incoming development, which would likely either increase rents or potentially displace abutting artist buildings, #ARTSTAYSHERE led an arts space advocacy campaign to make sure artists & musicians voices were at every table in the Somernova process, including organizing Milk Row Studios (50+ artists, musicians & creative small businesses) & ESH Circus Arts (professional aerial arts); holding advocacy community meetings, participating in the Union Square Neighborhood CBA process & the City's Central Somerville Ave. community processes
- The result is a monumental Community Benefits Agreement not only for the arts, but for union labor, housing, youth/community center, traffic/mobility mitigation, support for small businesses & more
- It will be the biggest arts infrastructure community benefits in Somerville history; over \$55M

Useful Links/Resources

USNC/Somernova Community Benefits Agreement (CBA)

<https://bit.ly/4dvwWdY>

USNC/Somernova CBA Executive Summary

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1PdHqe35dSt9WtJB4ZA0nHCJRGS-J0ffltzip13-MqOY/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.iu84rgk27cuz>

USNC CBA Voting Catchment Area

<https://sites.google.com/view/usnc/cba-vote>

USNC Somernova CBA Summit Report

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1BcC0pSiGkaULHJM9KStK94ThHV3QIpSA/view>

Somerville Arts Risk Assessment

<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/somerville-art-space-risk-assessment-study/>

Somerville Zoning Ordinance

<https://www.somervillezoning.com/ordinance/>

Central Somerville Ave. Zoning Community Process

<https://voice.somervillema.gov/cen-som-ave>

Milk Row Studios

<https://www.milkrowstudios.org/>

ESH Circus Arts

<https://www.eshcircusarts.com/>

Union Square Neighborhood Council

<https://sites.google.com/view/usnc>

Other USNC CBAs

<https://sites.google.com/view/usnc/cbas>

Somernova Project

<https://somernova.com/>

#ARTSTAYSHERE

<https://www.artstayshere.org/>

Greentown Labs

<https://greentownlabs.com/>

Somerville Land Use Committee

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/city-council>

Somerville Planning Board

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/planning-board>

Greater Boston Building Trades Unions

<https://gbbtu.org/>