

STRATEGIC VISION

APRIL 24, 2023

FY2023–FY2027

The City of Somerville's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development and the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund's Board of Trustees prepared this plan to help guide the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund's vision and priorities for the fiscal years 2023 through 2027 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2027).

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The JM Goldson team would like to thank you the community-based organizations, including SAHTF applicants and grantees, and Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund members, City staff and public officials who contributed their time and local knowledge to this report by participating in interviews and surveys. In total, six past applicants and community organizations gave their input through a survey, and the project team conducted 16 one-on-one interviews.

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¹ Ms. Turner served as trustee during the planning process and resigned prior to adoption.

² Mrs. Donato left her role(s) in Somerville in May, 2023

INTRODUCTION

The Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund (SAHTF) was established in 1989. The mission of the Trust is to identify, evaluate, and provide funding to help create, preserve, and support affordable housing in Somerville. The Trust received an initial capitalization of \$400,000, and formally began its programming in 1991.

The purpose of this plan is to establish a guiding vision and set of priorities for Trust for the next five years. The SAHTF Board of Trustees and SAHTF staff will use this plan to help decide how to recommend allocating Trust funds.

The purposes of the Trust are:

- To assist in the creation of new affordable homes and rental units in Somerville.
- To assist in the preservation of existing affordable homes and rental units.
- To directly assist renters and homeowners.

FUNDING SOURCES

Since 2015, the Trust has relied on four main funding sources. These sources include linkage payments, inclusionary fractional payments, Community Preservation Act (CPA) appropriations, and other revenue, including repayments on prior development loans and bank interest.

The Trust first received Community Preservation Act appropriations in FY15. CPA appropriations have become a reliable and significant source of annual funding for the Trust. Historically, linkage payments and inclusionary fractional payments have made up a smaller proportion of the Trust's overall funding. These funding sources are variable relative to rates of development in the City. Substantial commercial development in recent years has resulted in an increase in available linkage fees. Linkage fees will remain a significant funding source as the City invests in planning for commercial development along the Green Line Extension.

GOALS OF THE TRUST

In 2022 the Trustees undertook a review of the performance of the Trust to update its 2014 Strategic Vision Plan & Guidelines. As part of this process, the Trustees developed an updated set of goals and procedures to guide the deliberations of the Trustees. These goals are in four primary categories: 1) Create, Preserve, and Support; 2) Advocate; 3) Services and Other Assistance; and 4) Board Operations and Program Administration.

In brief, these goals focus on ensuring the Trust serves as a flexible funding source to create affordable housing units, including as the first dollars into housing initiatives with a focus on extremely low and very low-income housing and housing assistance as well as supporting first time middle-income homebuyers.

The Trust's advocacy goals range from promoting a Home Rule Petition to expand the types of programs the Trust can fund to advocating for progressive housing and zoning policies to promote more affordable options. The service goal focuses on supporting housing stability including eviction and homelessness prevention. These goals are further detailed in Chapter 2.

VISIONING PROCESS

The project team conducted a thorough analysis of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund as a basis for developing this strategic vision. Through this process, the project team reviewed what the SAHTF has funded, how it coordinates with other City departments, how it conducts community outreach and communicates with residents and organizations, and what the Trust Fund application process is like for applicants.

Overall, the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a trusted partner, and a critical organizational asset in the provision and preservation of affordable housing in the City of Somerville. The findings derived through this process informed the development of the goals in this document, which are intended to help the SAHTF build on its success.

CHAPTER 1: VISIONING PROCESS

The project team conducted a thorough analysis of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund as a basis for developing this strategic vision. Through this process, the project team reviewed what the SAHTF has funded, how it coordinates with other City departments, how it conducts community outreach and communicates with residents and organizations, and what the Trust Fund application process is like for applicants. Overall, the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a trusted partner, and a critical organizational asset in the provision and preservation of affordable housing in the City of Somerville. The findings derived through this process informed the development of the goals in this document, which are intended to help the SAHTF build on its success. The following are some of the key findings from this analysis process.

ANALYSIS APPROACH

The project team evaluated the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The project team began the analysis process in June of 2022 by completing a review of past SAHTF annual reports, plans, and financial information. Then, the project team conducted the engagement portion of the analysis, which consisted of interviews and a survey.

The team began the process by reviewing the Trust's 2014 Strategic Guidelines to establish an understanding of the Trust's goals and priorities for the past eight years. The project team then compared the Trust's Strategic Guidelines' goals and priorities to the program funding and project outcomes identified in the Trust's Fiscal Year 2017 Report. The project team then compared the Trust's goals and priorities to the goals and priorities of other relevant City plans to identify opportunities for the Trust's alignment with other City departments and programs.

The project team also conducted one on one interviews with City staff, public officials, and members of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund Board of Trustees. The interviews were an essential component of learning how the Trust has operated in the past, what has gone well, and what should be changed going forward. The project team also administered a survey to past applicants. The survey asked past applicants about the application process and gathered insight about how the application process might be improved. The survey also asked all participants about how they would want to see the Trust prioritize types of projects.

The analysis and engagement processes led the project team to the creation of the goals presented in this document.

ANALYSIS SUMMARY

REVIEW OF FISCAL YEAR 2017 SAHTF ANNUAL REPORT

In 2018 the Trust published a report on its activities in its preceding fiscal year (FY2017). Staff recently completed the FY18-19 report, which was in production during the visioning process. While the 2018 report focused on activities that occurred within the 2017 fiscal year, the report also gave insight into how the Trust's funds extended across multi-year projects and initiatives.

According to the report, \$1,433,680 was allocated for the preservation and development of affordable housing. This sum comprises \$200,000 from existing Trust funds, and \$1,233,680 from Community Preservation funds. These funds supported the construction of 46 housing units (35 new rental units and

11 homeownership units) as well as the preservation of 20 existing 2- to 5-family homes. All these housing projects were for low- and moderate-income households, with specific unit set-asides for households earning at or below 60 percent Area Median Income (AMI) and at or below 30 percent AMI.

Collectively, these projects aligned with 8 of the 12 goals laid out in 2014.

An additional \$306,075 was awarded as grants to various housing programs and service providers, as well as general housing assistance. Fifty-six percent of this amount (\$172,075) was CPA funds, while the remaining 44 percent (\$134,000) were other Trust funds. 20 percent of the total grant funding supported households earning at or below 80 percent AMI, while 46 percent and 30 percent of total grant funding supported households earning at or below 60 percent and 30 percent AMI, respectively. These program grants fulfilled the Trust's goal to support housing stability through various initiatives.

While some of the housing construction and acquisition projects served a range of incomes, it seems that there was a lack of project opportunities and funding for households earning between 80 percent and 110 percent of the Area Median Income in the 2017 fiscal year.

REVIEW OF LOCAL PLANS

It is important for the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund to consider the established goals of the City. The City of Somerville has several planning documents that establish goals related to the Trust's affordable housing priorities. These include SomerVision 2040, the City's comprehensive plan, and Somerville's 2021 Housing Needs Assessment. Some of the key findings from this portion of the analysis are listed below.

SomerVision 2040

SomerVision 2040 has three core themes that are applicable to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust. These themes include the advancement of equity, displacement prevention, and the active involvement of and partnership with community members. Moreover, the affordability and availability of different housing types is a cross-cutting issue that supports several of Somerville's shared values, such as the City's diversity and long-term sustainability.

The City aims to make 20% of its housing stock affordable in perpetuity by 2040. In addition to this top-level goal, the plan also identified ten broad housing goals:

1. Encourage on-campus housing solutions
2. Increase the housing supply
3. Increase the proportion of affordable housing
4. Stop forced displacement
5. Protect immigrants
6. End chronic homelessness
7. Support modernization of the existing housing stock
8. Aim for universal design
9. Ensure diversity of the housing stock
10. Promote continuity

All ten of these goals can inform Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund's proposal review process, and funding targets. Finally, SomerVision 2040 outlined a series of tasks to support the housing goals'

implementation. Tasks that are relevant to the Trust are identified below. The Trust could be a vehicle to implement some of the proposed tasks.

- Explore innovative solutions to high housing costs (For example, 3D-printed homes and modular construction).
- Continue to increase the supply of housing as a key strategy for containing costs.
- Expand the subsidized housing options to include middle-income households.
- Continue to partner with non-profit developers to increase the supply of permanently affordable housing.
- Create a right-to-counsel program.
- Disseminate information about tenants' rights, especially for non-English-speaking tenants
- Collect data on displacement in Somerville.
- Investigate rent stabilization solutions.
- Expand revenue sources for permanent supportive housing units and transitional and emergency services.
- Consider new models of rental co-housing.

Other tasks identified by the City of Somerville concern housing data collection, tenant protection policies, unit accessibility, and environmental sustainability. It may also interest the Trust to consider how the Trust can advance other housing goals related to sustainability, accessibility, and building modernization in its project criteria.

Somerville Housing Needs Assessment 2021

The Somerville Housing Needs Assessment was commissioned in 2019 and identified a variety of housing trends in the City.

Trends Since 2015

- The City continues to lack enough affordable units to reduce housing cost burden.
- Housing cost burden affects a significant percentage of Somerville's low- or moderate-income renter households, but it disproportionately affects Somerville's extremely low and very low-income homeowners.
- Rates of housing burden have dropped as the number of low- or moderate-income residents, particularly renters, has decreased.
- Renter households with incomes greater than 100 percent of the regional median household income are growing faster than any other group of rental households.
- The City is trying to balance its existing land use patterns and housing types with the recognition that small, multi-unit buildings are more difficult to cross-subsidize than large-scale residential developments.
- "While the City's attractiveness to investors presents a wealth-building opportunity for residents whose properties have appreciated dramatically, the same market forces threaten the City's ability to retain households with a wide range of incomes."³
- The growth and preservation of Somerville's affordable housing supply will require more funding, particularly to support extremely low- and very low-income households.

³ Somerville Housing Needs Assessment 2021, pg. 12

Table 4.14 from the Somerville Housing Needs Assessment 2021, pg. 62:

TABLE 4.14. SUMMARY OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEMAND					
Income Tier	<30% AMI	30%-50% AMI	50%-80% AMI	80%-110% AMI	110-140% AMI
Number of Renters	4,818	4,081	4,463	8,337	
<i>Deed-Restricted Units</i>	2,725	157	340		
<i>Remaining Demand</i>	2,093	3,924	4,123	8,337	
Number of Homeowners	NA	NA	4,463	8,337	8,041
<i>Deed-Restricted Units</i>	NA	NA	34	98	0
<i>Remaining Demand</i>	NA	NA	4,429	8,239	8,041
Sources: SHI, City of Somerville (IZ data), income analyses for Tables 4.11-4.12.					

The following recommendations are from the Housing Needs Assessment. As the Trust considered its priorities for the next five years, recommendations 1b and 3a and 3b were particularly relevant to the Trust (bolded for emphasis).

1) Population and Household Data

- a) The City should develop a comprehensive database of units accessible to individuals with disabilities, quantifying existing accommodations and tracking the accessibility status of new units.
- b) The City should carefully track the local housing market's recovery from the pandemic and explore possibilities to take advantage of lower rents and sales prices while they last.**
- c) As the City continues efforts to increase the supply of affordable housing, it may wish to consider steps to increase opportunities for minority homebuyers and renters and people with disabilities in neighborhoods where they are noticeably underrepresented.

2) Housing Policy

- a) The City should keep a watchful eye on the results of its Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) ordinance in the coming years to see if affordable units are being disproportionately concentrated outside of Somerville's traditional neighborhoods. If such inequitable development patterns should begin to occur, the City should be prepared to consider changes to its IZ ordinance to correct them.

3) Stakeholder Perspectives

- a) Anecdotally, overcrowding in Somerville is a larger problem than official data sources would suggest. The City should attempt to better understand the extent of the issue and develop assistance programs that do not result in the residents of unlawful and/or crowded apartments losing their homes.
- b) The City should consider shifting its focus away from the 100 percent AMI level and to the 30 to 50 percent level to meet reported demand. One hundred percent AMI rents were said to be too similar to market rents, although the market is changing quickly at the time of writing and should be monitored closely by the City.**

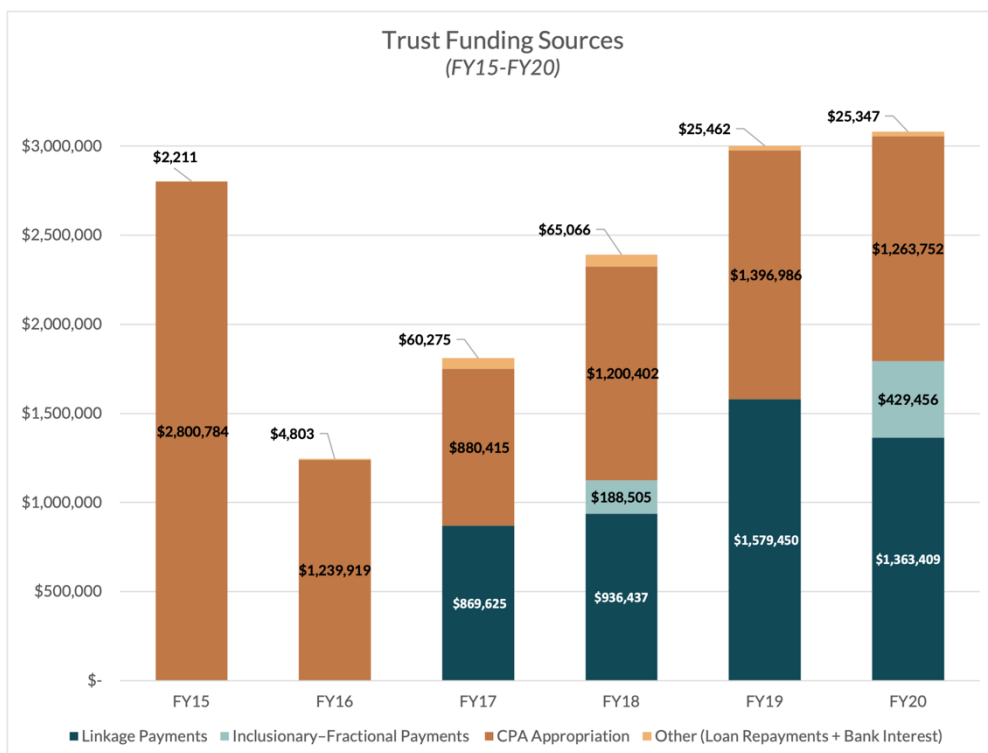
QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

Understanding what the Trust has accomplished and where it has focused can help when looking forward and trying to determine what should be changed or where the focus should be adjusted. The following analysis examines Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund's financial statements and funding reports (FY2015-2020) to understand trends in the Trust's funding sources, and disbursement of Trust funds towards housing initiatives. This summary is intended to supplement the Strategic Vision, and to serve as a benchmark of the Trust's impact relative to its program and funding goals laid out in the 2014 Strategic Plan.

FUNDING SOURCES

Over the most recent years for which data was available, the Trust has relied on four main funding sources. These sources include linkage payments, inclusionary fractional payments, Community Preservation Act appropriations, and other revenue, including repayments on prior development loans and bank interest. A summary of the Trust's funding sources between FY15-FY20 can be seen in the graph below.

The Trust first received Community Preservation Act appropriations in FY15 (note, this funding was for years FY14 and FY15, though received in FY15). CPA appropriations have become a consistent and reliable source of funding for the Trust. Historically, linkage payments and inclusionary fractional payments have made up a smaller proportion of the Trust's overall funding than they currently do. These funding sources are variable relative to rates of development in the City. Substantial commercial development in recent years has resulted in a dramatic increase in available linkage fees. Linkage fees will remain a significant funding source as the City invests in planning for commercial development along the Green Line Extension.



PROGRAM EXPENDITURES

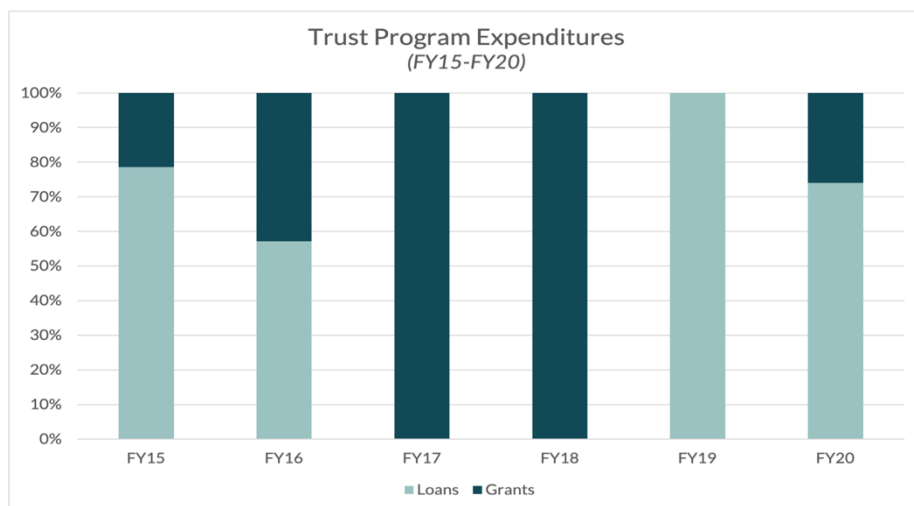
In 2014, the Trust set guidelines for allocating funds by program. The table below summarizes Trust Fund allocations (non-CPA and CPA) by the program in the past five fiscal years. Note that the allocation of funds varies from the guidelines, primarily to allow the Trust funds to be responsive to eligible opportunities as they arise that will further the Trust's overall goals.

Program Area	Minimum % of Available Funds	FY15	FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20
Housing Development/Acquisition	65%	92%	89%	69%	94%	97%	63%
Housing Programs (Direct Grants)	10%	7%	8%	25%	6%	3%	19%
Tenancy Stabilization Program	10%	2%	3%	6%	0%	0%	18%

* This table excludes mention of funds allocated to Closing Cost Assistance, new initiatives, or reserve for "Rainy Day Funds" due to insufficient data to track allocations for these areas over time.

The graph below shows a breakdown of funds across the Trust's two major program expenditure types—loans and grants—for FY15-FY20.

TRUST EXPENDITURES BY PROGRAM AREA



QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

An important part of understanding the Trust and identifying its priorities in coming years is speaking with people directly involved in the process and hearing from people that have worked with the Trust or have a special interest in it. The project team conducted interviews with Somerville City staff, SAHTF members, and community-based organizations that work with the Trust regularly. A survey was sent to project applicants from the past eight years. These groups included public sector, private, for-profit, and private, not-for-profit entities.

In total, the project team connected with 22 individuals as part of the engagement process for qualitative research, through interviews and the survey.

Summary of Interview Findings

The purpose of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund interviews was to learn about the Trust from a variety of perspectives. Interviewees were asked about their association with the Trust, their opinions on what the Trust is doing well and on how the Trust could improve, and their thoughts on the Trust's priorities for the next five years.

One key point that was raised across the interviews was that the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust is viewed very highly. The interviewees were quick to elaborate on the good work that Trust programs have done and the open-minded and collaborative nature of the Board of Trustees. While the interviewees noted ways that the Trust's work could be improved or streamlined, the Trust overall is seen by City staff, other departments and committees, and community organizations as a critical asset to the achievement of Somerville's affordable housing goals.

Some key themes that emerged through the interview process include improvements in how the trust functions and is governed, the application process, public participation, perceptions about unspent funds, coordination, and reporting and data.

In addition, interviewees discussed funding priorities for the next five years including for programs and service providers, more innovation such as the 100 Homes Initiative, and the Early Action Acquisition Fund which provides pre-development funding and is the first money in for an affordable housing development. Some also expressed desire for the Trust to function more as an advocate for innovative housing policy such as property tax incentives for owners to rent units at below-market rates.

Summary of Survey Results

The purpose of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund Past Applicant Survey was to both learn about the project application process from past applicants, and to learn about public awareness of the Trust's goals and priorities. The survey was sent to all applicants who applied for funding between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2022. Six people participated in the survey. The survey was active for about two months from early July through late August, 2022. Additional details about the survey and responses to it can be found in the Appendix.

The following are the key findings from the survey results.

- Five out of the six respondents were representatives of non-profit organizations, while the remaining one respondent was representative of a private, for-profit entity.
- Respondents represented at least one applicant from each of the past eight fiscal years. All six respondents received full funding awards in the most recent fiscal year, FY2022.
- Past applicants indicated that they found the application process difficult, overall, but that the application process became easier to complete over time.
- Most respondents (83 percent) were aware of the Trust's goals at the time of their application. Additionally, 80 percent of respondents felt that the Trust's goals were made clear to applicants through the Trust's strategic guidelines, website, and project RFPs.
- Fifty percent of respondents said they would apply for future funding to support tenant stability or general rental assistance. The remaining 50 percent (3 respondents) said they would apply for project development funds.

Overall, survey respondents suggested the Trust continue funding housing preservation, development, and rental assistance with attention to gentrification and displacement trends. Fifty percent of respondents advocated for the expansion of rental assistance funding to include short- and medium-term housing subsidies, and ancillary rental costs.

CHAPTER 2: GOALS AND GUIDELINES

GOALS OF THE TRUST

In 2022 the Trustees undertook a review of the performance of the Trust to update its 2014 Strategic Vision Plan & Guidelines. As part of this process, the Trustees developed an updated set of goals and procedures to guide the deliberations of the Trustees.

Consistent with the requirements purpose of the Trust, the Trustees will pursue allocation of Trust funds for the following purposes:

Create, Preserve, & Support:

1. Be a unique and flexible source of financing that effectively leverages other public and private funds by being the first dollars in and provide funds that other programs cannot in a manner that is responsive to market realities and the highly competitive nature of real estate transactions in Somerville.
2. Prioritize funding to create and preserve housing opportunities for households with incomes below 30% AMI (extremely low) and between 30% and 50% AMI (very low) and to support households with these extremely low and very low incomes with direct assistance.
3. Fund initiatives to create and deploy aggressive and innovative acquisition and production of long-term affordable housing, both rental up to 80 percent AMI and ownership up to 110 percent AMI.
4. Support affordability for first-time homebuyers with incomes up to 110% AMI through loans, such as closing cost assistance, that can supplement and further other city initiatives.

Advocate:

5. Advocate at the state level including approval of the Home Rule Petition, known as “An Act Further Defining the Purposes of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund” to expand the Trust’s eligible funding initiatives to include supportive services and other assistance.
6. Advocate for increased revenue allocation to the Trust fund such as amendments to the Article 15 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinances (Linkage Zoning) project mitigation contribution for affordable housing.
7. Advocate for progressive local property tax policies, zoning, or other regulatory changes to advance housing goals in Somerville.
8. Be a voice for affordable housing in Somerville. Encourage awareness of housing needs and support innovative housing solutions through grants and loans.

Services and Other Assistance:

9. Support rental housing stability for households with incomes up to 80% AMI through a variety of activities such as eviction prevention.
10. Support owner housing stability for households up to 110% AMI, such as foreclosure prevention, and pathways to ownership, such as Rent-to-Own programs.

GUIDELINES

The amount of money in the Trust Fund may vary from year to year depending upon new payments under the linkage ordinance, inclusionary fractional payments, repayment of existing loans, and allocation of CPA funds. It is important to remain a flexible funding source to effectively respond to existing opportunities, therefore this Strategic Plan does not include specific funding allocation targets, as prior strategic plans did. However, the guidelines described below are intended to help guide the Board of Trustees in their funding decisions as well as applicants in shaping their requests.

TYPES OF ASSISTANCE

The Trust will offer grants and loans in the categories listed below. Depending upon the amount of funding available and the demand for the funds, the Trust may limit the types of awards from year to year.

Loans

Development loans

The development loans are in two categories:

- Short-term financing for acquisition or development soft costs.
- Longer-term gap financing. These can be subordinate debt and may leverage state, federal and private money.

Loans to Individuals

Closing Cost Assistance: Eligible homebuyers may access this fund for help with closing costs for ownership in Somerville. The loans will not incur interest and will be forgivable after 5 years provided the borrower does not default on any terms.

Grants

Tenancy Stabilization Program

This program's purpose is to help preserve tenancies or to help tenants access housing. It has been used for tenants for rent arrearages, first and last month rent, and security deposit to stabilize their housing situation. The goal of this program is to create sustainable tenancies, and recipients may be required to complete self-sufficiency activities in connection with this program.

Program Grants

Program grants are available on a limited basis for programs that support activities and services that help Somerville residents with housing problems. Priority is given to programs that help low and moderate-income residents to sustain affordable housing, help gain access to affordable housing, and/or preserve or increase the supply of affordable housing.

TERMS OF ASSISTANCE

The Affordable Housing Trust Fund is a revolving fund, except for funds that are explicitly given in the form of a grant. In general, the Trust makes closing cost assistance available in the form of deferred loans that can be forgivable after a specified term. The Trustees intend to create standard terms for development loans, which will be made available through City's Housing Division.

Amount of Loan

The amount of the loan will depend on several factors including amount of Trust funding available, minimum amount necessary for project feasibility, demand for the funds and how well a project meets the criteria established. The Trustees intend to establish standard funding guidelines that will incorporate per

unit maximums based on unit size, level of affordability, and maximum total annual requests per project. The standard funding guidelines will be made available through the City's Housing Division.

Criteria for Evaluation of Loan requests

The Trust will evaluate development project loan requests on a rolling basis but may periodically issue RFPs for projects. In addition to specific criteria that may be established in these RFPs, the Trust will generally evaluate projects based on criteria described as part of its funding application. The funding application will be made available through the City's Housing Division.

BOARD OPERATIONS, FUNDING APPLICATION PROCESS, AND ADMINISTRATION

As part of its 2022-2023 Strategic Planning process, the Board of Trustees reviewed and revised the funding application to streamline and improve the application process. Recommendations to consider for improving operations and program administration include:

1. Strengthen Trust member onboarding, facilitate meaningful discussion and consideration of funding requests, and provide applications and other materials in a timely manner for review, with a goal to provide materials by the Friday before each meeting whenever possible. The Managing Trustee may waive this requirement for special urgent situations.
2. Formalize and systematize the process and application materials for funding requests to ensure complete, timely, and consistent submission by organizations and agencies requesting funds.
3. Work closely with city finance and auditing staff to facilitate prompt vendor payments.

As a result of the Board's work to formalize and systematize the application process and materials, the procedures below may be adjusted.

LOAN REQUESTS

Applicants for Trust development project loans may apply on a rolling basis. Before applying, applicants should contact the staff liaison for the Trust in the Housing Division of the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD). Trust staff will review the request and determine project eligibility and if funding is available at the time of the request. Once project eligibility and funding availability is confirmed, the applicant will be invited to submit an application, and Trust staff will work with the applicant on preparing a presentation to the Trust for the funding request.

Applications for the Tenancy Stabilization Program are available through the program administrators who are Non-Profit Agencies in the City of Somerville designated by the Trust from time to time based on an RFP selection process.

GRANT REQUESTS

In each year that funds are available for grants, the Trust will issue an RFP for the Grant awards and establish additional specific criteria at that time. The grant requests will be reviewed by Housing Division staff and first-time applicants (or proposed programs/activities) may be invited to make a presentation of the proposal to the Trust. The Trust will make the funding decisions and determine the final award amount.

The Trustees will work with the City's Housing Division to streamline the execution of grant agreements as much as is feasible to facilitate prompt execution.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Trust will issue an annual report listing the loans and grants awarded that year and featuring the work of the Trust in supporting affordable housing in Somerville. After last issuing a report for fiscal year 2017, Trust staff recently completed a report which covers fiscal years 2018 and 2019. Trust and Housing Division staff will continue efforts to produce reports for fiscal years 2020 through 2023.

CHAPTER 3: BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

The Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund (SAHTF) was established in 1989. The mission of the Trust is to identify, evaluate, and provide funding to help create, preserve, and support affordable housing in Somerville. The Trust received an initial capitalization of \$400,000, and formally began funding program activities in 1991. The Trust developed its own operating procedures that outlined the Trust's governance, meeting schedules and an order of business, and reporting requirements.

In 2005, the Massachusetts State Legislature passed the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund Law (Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 44, Section 55c). The primary effect of this legislation was to streamline the process of creating Trusts for Massachusetts cities and towns. However, the legislation also laid out general parameters for the governance and powers of local Affordable Housing Trust Funds. Following this legislation, the City of Somerville amended its original Affordable Housing Trust Fund ordinance to align with state law.

ORGANIZATION CHRONOLOGY

Important milestones in the Trust's history include:

1989	Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund is established.
1990	The City of Somerville passes linkage and Inclusionary Housing ordinances.
1991	SAHTF begins programming.
2005	The Massachusetts State Legislature passed the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund Law (Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 44, Section 55c). This legislation enabled all local legislative bodies to establish Affordable Housing Trust Funds without state approval.
2012	The City of Somerville adopts the Community Preservation Act. CPA funds become a new source of funding for the Trust.
2015	The Trust receives its first round of Community Preservation funds.
2019	Home Rule Petition submitted to pass An Act Further Defining the Purposes of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in the City of Somerville (pending legislative approval as of the time of this writing, November 2022)

ELIGIBLE PURPOSES

The Declaration of Trust was created in 2005 following the adoption of Ordinance 2005-05 (the Ordinance which the Trust reformed under to be in compliance with the Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund Law). These documents describe the purposes of the Trust as follows:

- To assist in the creation of new affordable homes and rental units in Somerville.
- To assist in the preservation of existing affordable homes and rental units.
- To directly assist renters and homeowners.

Furthermore, the Trust documents elaborate upon the purposes by listing permissible uses (note the following list is intended to be illustrative and not to limit the discretion of the Trustees)

- Funds to assist in the development of affordable housing such as site acquisition, site clearance, site improvements, and/or option money.

- Funds to assist in the preservation of existing housing, including arson prevention and rehabilitation subsidies.
- Funds to assist renters, such as loans for security deposits and/or monthly subsidies or rent.
- Funds to assist new homeowners, such as loans and/or grants for down payments or closing costs.
- Funds for research projects to determine other appropriate uses of the Trust Fund.
- Seed money for new programs or new organizations, such as limited equity cooperatives, a community land trust and/or a community loan fund.
- Any other programs or projects that fulfill the purpose of the Trust.

In setting criteria, the Declaration of Trust instructs the Trustees to consider the following:

- 1) Ensure long term affordable housing.
- 2) Community need for the project.
- 3) Organizational capacity within the community to facilitate the program or project.
- 4) Current Trust assets.
- 5) Other sources of funding available for the program.

HOME RULE PETITION

In 2019, the City of Somerville approved a home rule petition to the Massachusetts State Legislature. The petition requested state legislative approval of special legislation titled, “An Act Further Defining the Purposes of the Affordable Housing Trust Fund in the City of Somerville.”

Per M.G.L., ch. 44, s55c, Trust activities are limited to programs directly connected to the affordability of a physical unit of housing. The City’s appeal for special legislation seeks to expand the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund’s powers to fund housing-related social service programs and start-up costs for new affordable housing production initiatives. These activities are not directly related to the affordability of a physical unit, thus requiring state legislative approval.

The City of Somerville filed this home rule petition in 2019. As of May, 2023 the HRP had not yet been brought to a vote by the legislature, but had received a favorable report from the Joint Committee on Housing in 2022.

GOALS ESTABLISHED BY 2014 STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2014, the Trust developed goals and procedures to help guide its project and funding deliberations. These goals and procedures stemmed from a review of the City’s existing planning documents, including SomerVision, the most recent Somerville Housing Needs Assessment, and the HUD mandated Consolidated Plan. The 2014 goals are below.

1. Create rental housing for Somerville residents with incomes up to 110 percent AMI.
2. Make special efforts to ensure housing opportunities for households with incomes below 30 percent AMI and between 31 percent and 50 percent AMI.
3. Create homeownership units for residents with incomes up to 110 percent AMI.
4. Support affordability for first-time homebuyers with incomes up to 110 percent AMI through loans, such as closing cost assistance, that can supplement and further other city initiatives.
5. Preserve existing affordable housing and encourage innovative efforts to acquire and preserve unassisted stock for affordable housing.
6. Be a voice for affordable housing in Somerville and encourage awareness through public forums and outreach and through innovation in grants and loans.

7. Ensure that any housing created is affordable for the long term through the use of deed restrictions, particularly on rental and homeownership development projects.
8. Be a unique and flexible source of financing, providing funds that other programs cannot.
9. Effectively leverage state, federal, and private funds particularly by being the first dollars in to demonstrate local commitment.
10. Support projects and programs with measurable goals and positive outcomes.
11. Support housing stability for households with incomes less than 80 percent AMI through a variety of activities such as eviction prevention and homelessness prevention as well as foreclosure prevention for households with incomes up to 110 percent AMI.
12. As opportunities arise, support development projects that foster community development goals as documented in SomerVision and other City plans, including transit-oriented development, mixed-use and mixed-income projects, and sustainable design as well as goals of the Community Preservation Committee, as described in the Community Preservation Plan.

The Trust has sought to achieve these goals through a combination of loan and grant initiatives. The Trust's two forms of loan assistance historically have included project development loans and loans to individual households in the form of closing cost assistance. The Trust also supports two grant programs: the Tenancy Stabilization Program, and program grants. Program grants support activities and services that help Somerville residents with housing problems and have been limited to the affordability of a physical housing unit.

Finally, the Trust had income criteria for the disbursement of funds. Per the City's Trust Ordinance, Trust funds are used to create or preserve housing that is affordable to households with incomes of no more than 110 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI) for the Boston Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area (SMSA). Furthermore, the Declaration of Trust specifies more detailed allocation minimums as follows:

- at least 20 percent of the funds are to serve households between 0 percent and 50 percent AMI.
- at least 20 percent are to serve those with incomes between 51 percent and 80 percent AMI.
- at least 10 percent are to serve those with incomes between 81 percent and 110 percent AMI.

The remaining 50 percent of funds are discretionary and can be allocated over these three target income categories. The Trust regularly reviews its allocation of funds by income category to ensure that the income requirements of the Trust are met. In addition, the Trust encourages deeper affordability where possible consistent with project feasibility. Many housing development loans and grant-funded programs serve households with incomes below 30 percent of AMI. The Trust also seeks to encourage projects and programs that serve homeless households.

SOURCES OF TRUST FUNDING

The Somerville Affordable Housing Trust receives funds from a variety of sources. These sources are listed below.

1. Linkage Payments.

Soon after the Trust was formed, the City enacted a linkage ordinance on large-scale commercial development. The linkage ordinance specifies that all payments, called Project Mitigation Contributions, go to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust. The payments are made in either a lump sum or between three and five annual installments.

2. Inclusionary Housing Fractional Payments.

The City passed an Inclusionary Housing Ordinance in 1990, a year after the formation of the Trust. The current ordinance mandates that a set percent of housing projects with four or more

units must be affordable units. When that percentage calculation results in a partial amount or fraction, the developer is required to make a fractional payment to the Trust.

3. Early Action Acquisition Funds.

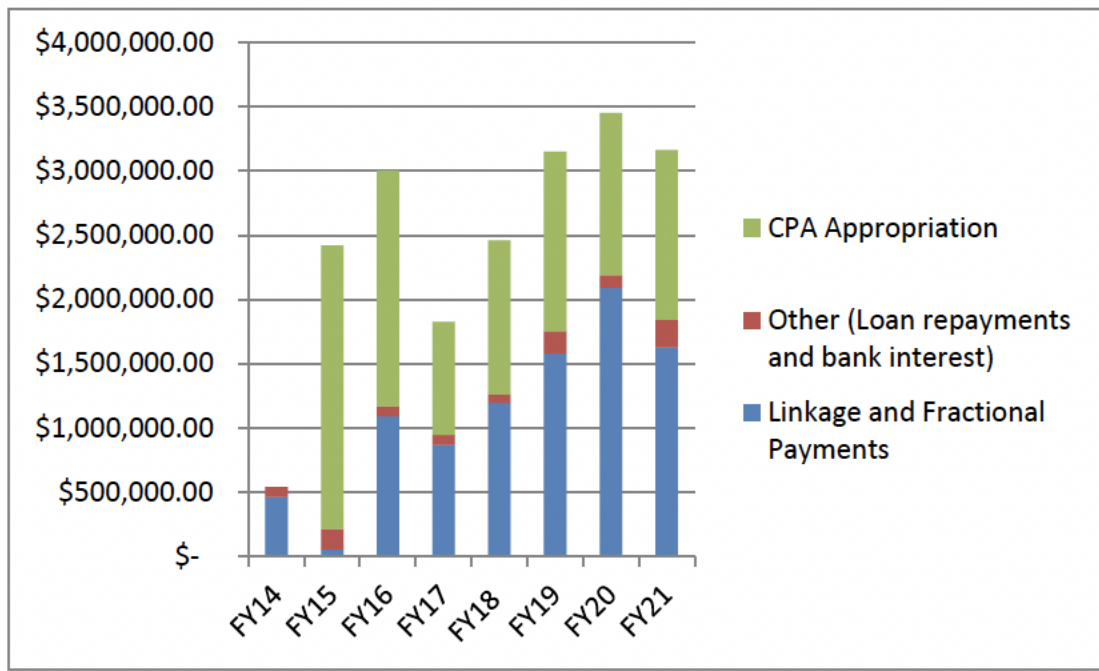
Nearly \$8.3 million from the Green Line Extension (GLX) Stabilization Fund, no longer needed for GLX, was reallocated to the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund for affordable housing acquisition in 2022. This special one-time allocation will enable affordable housing partners to buy land or buildings quickly to create new affordable housing.

4. Community Preservation Act Funds.

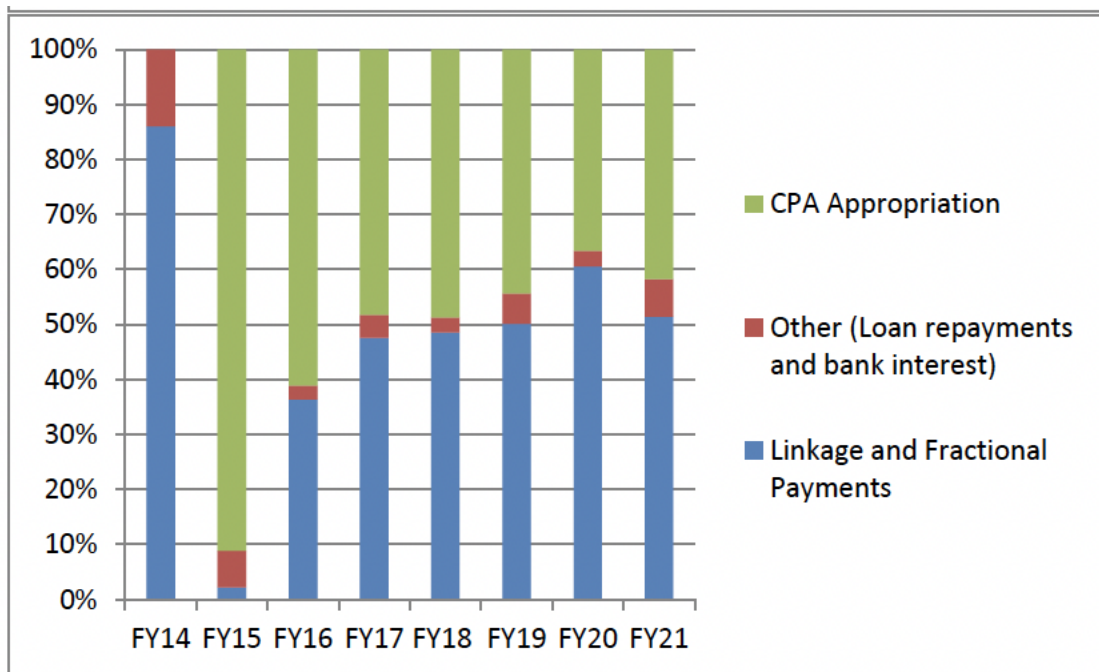
The City of Somerville adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA), through a city-wide vote in November 2012, which generates revenue through a 1.5% local surcharge on local property taxes, and a variable annual distribution from the state's Community Preservation Trust Fund. A minimum of 10% of the CPA funds are required to be spent or set aside for the creation or preservation of affordable housing.

In 2014, the Affordable Housing Trust's strategic vision noted that "Trustees will strongly advocate that the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) designate the Trust as its 'housing arm' with quarterly reporting on the Trust's uses of CPA funds." Per the Trust's 2017 Fiscal Report, the Somerville CPC has made this designation, and agreed to allocate 45 percent of the City's annual total CPA funds to community housing. The current percentage of CPA funds allocated to the Trust is 50 percent. As of 2022, the CPC has allocated more than \$11 million to the Trust. Details on CPA funding by year can be seen in Figure 1, and CPA funding as a percentage of CPA funds, which has increased to 50 percent, has supported the development and preservation of 85 total affordable housing units since 2015.

FY14-FY21 TRUST FUNDING SOURCES BY AMOUNT



FY14-FY21 TRUST FUNDING SOURCES BY PERCENTAGE



WHO DECIDES HOW THE FUNDS ARE SPENT?

The Trust is governed by a nine-member Board of Trustees. Three of the Trustees are ex-officio. Ex-officio members include the mayor or a designee; the President of the Somerville City Council or designee; and the Executive Director of the Somerville Housing Authority or designee.

The mayor appoints all non-ex-officio members to the board, subject to approval by the City Council. The make-up of the remaining board members must include, at least, the following representatives:

- Two Somerville residents (one of whom shall be a tenant whose household is eligible for state or federal public housing programs)
- Two representatives of Somerville non-profit organizations whose primary mission is affordable housing
- One professional in the field of housing or real estate
- One professional in the field of banking or finance

Per the Trust's operating procedures, the board's composition will reflect the City's geographic and ethnic diversity to the greatest extent possible. Members of the Board serve staggered three-year terms.

The Declaration of Trust indicates the Trust should appoint one of the non-ex officio board members as the Managing Trustee. According to the Declaration, the Managing Trustee is responsible for maintaining all financial and other records of the Trust. However, this is not the current practice, as the responsibilities of the Managing Trustee include presiding over monthly meetings, and signing and reviewing documents authorizing the release of Trust funds. The Trust may benefit from clarification or amendment of the Declaration and/or Operating Procedures. The Managing Trustee may delegate responsibilities to an Assistant Managing Trustee. The Trust receives staff support from the Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development. The Trust reimburses the City of Somerville for the costs of City staff time and other administrative expenses.

REPORTING PROCESS

The Trust is tasked with issuing an annual report listing the loans and grants awarded that year and featuring the work of the Trust in supporting affordable housing in Somerville. The Trust completed its most recent annual report in 2022, which detailed Trust activity in fiscal years 2018 and 2019. The Trust also completes semi-annual reports to the City of Somerville's Community Preservation Committee. The Trust has issued these reports since 2016. Additionally, Trust staff will submit an audit of the Trust's funds, prepared by an independent Certified Public Accountant, to the Board of Trustees. In recent years, the accounting firm Powers and Sullivan has completed a select audit of the Trust, including basic revenue and expenses.

APPENDICES

PAST APPLICANT SURVEY SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund Past Applicant Survey was to both learn about the project application process from past applicants, and to learn about public awareness of the Trust's goals and priorities. The survey was sent to all applicants who applied for funding between July 1, 2013, and June 30, 2022. Six people participated in the survey. The survey was active for about two months from early July through late August, 2022. Full responses to all survey questions can be found in the Appendix.

KEY FINDINGS

- Five out of the six respondents were representatives of non-profit organizations, while the remaining one respondent was representative of a private, for-profit entity.
- Past applicants indicated that they found the application process difficult, overall, but that the application process became easier to complete over time.
- Most respondents (83 percent) were aware of the Trust's goals at the time of their application. Additionally, 80 percent of respondents felt that the Trust's goals were made clear to applicants through the Trust's strategic guidelines, website, and project RFPs.
- 50 percent of respondents said they would apply for future funding to support tenant stability or general rental assistance. The remaining 50 percent (3 respondents) said they would apply for development funds.
- 100 percent of respondents would apply for Trust funding again in the future.
- Overall, respondents suggested the Trust continue funding housing preservation, development, and rental assistance with attention to gentrification and displacement trends. 50 percent of respondents advocated for the expansion of rental assistance funding to include short- and medium-term housing subsidies, and ancillary rental costs.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SURVEY RESPONDENTS

The following section summarizes the characteristics of survey respondents, including organizational affiliation, when the respondents applied for funding, and whether funding was awarded. The survey was sent to past Trust Fund applicants, including public sector entities, and private, for-profit, and private, not-for-profit entities. The respondents are representing organizations that applied for funding from the Trust, and therefore were expected to be familiar with the Trust Fund application process in Somerville. Of the six respondents, five respondents were from non-profit organizations and one respondent was from a private, for-profit entity. No responses were received from City staff or public officials, a state department or agency, or from other types of public or private organizations.

Most respondents (about 83 percent) were affiliated with a non-profit organization that applied for Trust funding.

Respondents represented at least one applicant from each of the past eight fiscal years. Overall, a greater number of respondents were recent past applicants, with at least half of all respondents having applied for funding in the past four years. At least two respondents had received full funding awards for each of the

past eight fiscal years, with all six respondents having received full funding awards in the most recent fiscal year, FY2022.

SURVEY TOPICS

All respondents were asked a series of questions about the application process, and awareness of the Trust's goals. Results for each major topic area are discussed below.

Funding Opportunities

Respondents were asked to which Trust funding opportunity they applied to in the past. Among the six respondents, there was an equal distribution of respondents across two of the five funding opportunities. Three respondents had applied for funding for housing development projects. The remaining three respondents had applied for funding for the Trust's Tenancy Stabilization Program. None of the respondents had applied for funding related to rental assistance, leasing differential, or other housing programs.

100 percent of respondents would apply for Trust funding again in the future.

Application Process

Only three of the six respondents submitted responses about the Trust's funding application process.

Past applicants indicated that they found the application process difficult, overall, but that the application became easier to complete over time (according to those that applied for funds in more than one year).

When asked about what changes, if any, could make the application process easier, one respondent suggested that the process have more structure, such as a checklist. Respondents who had applied for multiple rounds of funding indicated that the application process has become easier and simpler over time. One respondent acknowledged that the housing development project applications could be difficult for first-time applicants. A full list of responses can be found in the appendix document.

Awareness of Trust Goals

All six respondents submitted responses about their awareness of the Trust's goals.

The majority of respondents (83 percent) were aware of the Trust's goals at the time of their application. Additionally, 80 percent of respondents felt that the Trust's goals were made clear to applicants.

When asked to explain how the Trust's goals were made clear to applicants, most respondents pointed to the goals' presence on the Trust's website, Trust guidelines, and project RFPs.

Funding Priorities

When asked about future funding applications, 50 percent of respondents indicated that they would apply for development funds to support acquisition, development, or to leverage other funding opportunities. The remaining three respondents would consider applying for funds to implement the Trust's Tenancy Stabilization Program, and to support rental assistance.

Responses about future project applications mirrored the distribution of respondents across past funding applications. 50 percent of respondents would apply for funds to support tenant stability or general rental assistance, while the remaining 50 percent would apply for development funds.

Finally, survey respondents had suggestions for projects that the Trust should fund in the future. Half of the respondents suggested that the Trust continue to fund short- and medium-term rental assistance, including rent subsidies and ancillary rental costs. Two of the six respondents identified a need to address gentrification and displacement through increased homeownership programs, such as a down payment assistance program or a program like the City of Boston's ONE+ Mortgage program. Several respondents noted that the Trust should continue to fund housing preservation and development, including the strategic acquisition of existing affordable housing units, and through partnerships with the Somerville Community Land Trust.

SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

OVERVIEW

The purpose of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund interviews was to learn about the Trust from a variety of perspectives. In total, the project team conducted 16 interviews with the SAHTF staff, relevant City staff, Trust members, and staff from community-based organizations from July 12th to August 30th, 2022. Each interview was one-on-one with a member of the JM Goldson team and was about 30 minutes long.

Interviewees were asked about their association with the Trust, their opinions on what the Trust is doing well and on how the Trust could improve, and their thoughts on the Trust's priorities for the next five years. The results of the interviews are organized into several key themes listed below.

One key point that was raised across the interviews was that the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust is viewed very highly. The interviewees were quick to elaborate on the good work that the program has done and the open-minded and collaborative nature of the Board of Trustees. While the interviewees noted ways that the program could be improved or streamlined, the Trust overall is seen by City staff, other departments and committees, and community organizations as a critical asset to the achievement of Somerville's affordable housing goals.

KEY THEMES

Organization & Governance

The Trust, as an organization, functions well overall. Board members are committed to the Trust, which is reflected in robust Trustee attendance at monthly Trust meetings, and basic organizational systems, such as recording keeping and accounting, are well established. Moreover, the Trust receives good staff support from the City of Somerville. Staff are responsive and provide the Trust with adequate information to support members' understanding of project proposals and community housing trends.

The Trust is a reputable, well-regarded organization within the City of Somerville. The city, the Community Preservation Committee (CPC), and community organizations consider the Trust a good steward of funds, which has made it easier for the Trust to receive funds from the CPC, the City, and from other funders. Following the 2014 Strategic Plan, the Trust developed criteria and processes to review and assess incoming proposals.

The current Board of Trustees is comprised of newer and older board members. The new board members bring new perspectives to project and grant proposals, while the older board members possess knowledge and experience on how to run the Trust and review proposals. While the current iteration of the Board of Trustees is relatively new to working together, and there are some board dynamics that could be improved, there is an overall positive board dynamic.

Improvements Suggested

- **Onboarding:** Onboarding and orientation could be improved and more consistent for newer board members and training, especially on the Conflict of Interest and Open Meeting laws. Also consider paying trustees – many redevelopment authorities pay their boards. This would enhance equity.
- **Recruitment:** The Trust membership should be more diverse and inclusive to reflect the city's population better. The Board of Trustees could have a stronger recruitment process, which would also address issues of tenure and turnover on the board. Board members currently serve on a volunteer basis, and some board members perceive a lack of acknowledgment or respect from the

Mayor's office or the city government more broadly for their service. The project and grant review process presents an opportunity to both educate new board members about how to score projects and to create transparency between the Trust and community members.

- **Timeliness of Meeting Packet:** One point brought up multiple times was the timeliness of receiving meeting materials from the City staff. Trust members do not receive board materials with sufficient time to read and process the materials – much of the time, it seems materials are sent within only a day of the meeting, including the day of the meeting. A minimum time of advance notice, such as one week prior, would ensure that board members can fully review prepared materials.
- **Timeliness of Postings:** Community organizations also observed that notice of the Trust's public meetings is often posted late, making it difficult for these organizations to plan for and attend the meetings.
- **Transparency:** Trust materials should be easy to find – all agenda, minutes, and meeting materials should be online. The Trust should have more transparency.
- **Discussion at Meetings:** Trust meetings lack considered discussion and feel rushed. This can especially affect newer members, reducing their participation in discussions. Ease up on the time restrictions – let meetings go longer so the discussion can be more robust and considered.
- **Remote/In-Person:** Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Trust has held meetings remotely. The online meeting format can be draining for some members, but also increases the likelihood of full board attendance. Hybrid meetings may be helpful.

Funding Delays: Finally, there are significant delays between the announcement of the Trust's funding awards, and actual disbursement of funds to project and grant recipients.

Application Process

Community organizations have different perceptions of the Trust's funding application process. Some organizations found the application process straightforward with a clear Request for Application, and a clear process for submitting questions about the application. Other organizations found the funding process difficult. As one organization said, "It was a tough experience asking for money the first time."

Improvements Suggested

Lack of Consistency: Community organizations also spoke about different application processes. Some organizations completed a written application, while other organizations submitted a Letter of Intent and gave a presentation to the Trust. Meanwhile, other organizational representatives commented that the Trust had too many documentation requirements, which prevented some organizations from applying for funds. Overall, organizations advocated that the Trust continue to simplify and standardize the application process. A consistent and predictable annual application process would be beneficial.

Public Participation

The Trust grapples with how to effectively engage the public. While the Trust recognizes the value of public participation, public attendance adds a layer of complexity to Trust meetings and makes meetings longer. Meanwhile, community organizations are interested in greater public participation. Some organizations perceive the Trust's processes as covert and difficult to navigate, underscored by perceived late notices for public meetings.

Another aspect of public participation relates to the Trust's ability to engage residents in its affordable housing programs and to receive feedback from the community about its work. For example, one organization gave the example of a family who wanted to sell their apartment, and ensure its affordability, but were not sure how to achieve both aims.

Improvements Suggested

One interviewee suggested that the Trust create a guiding document. This document could build on existing Trust documents, such as the 2014 Strategic Plan, and would be an external-facing document to help orient residents and organizations, alike, to the work of the Trust.

Perceptions about Unspent Funds

The Trust has had a steady and increasing cashflow in the past eight years. As the availability of funds from the Community Preservation Act and linkage payments has grown, the Trust has been able to fund increasingly diverse types of projects and organizations. The Trust has become a reliable funding source for critical housing services and has institutional familiarity with the landscape of Somerville's housing service providers.

The Trust faces financial and legal obstacles to expanding its funding opportunities. For example, several of the Trust's major funding sources have use restrictions. As a result, the Trust cannot fund applications that don't adhere to these use restrictions, resulting in unspent money. While organizations have become increasingly familiar with these use restrictions, there have been external misconceptions about unspent Trust funds, particularly given the demand for the services and development projects funded by the Trust. The Trust also grapples with this dynamic.

Improvements Suggested

From the board's perspective, funding requests are often branded as emergencies. For example, the Trust will receive funding applications for an acquisition opportunity that would be lost if the Trust deliberated over the application for too long. The Trust could benefit from a prioritization strategy, or an accelerated project review process, so that the Trust can fund projects swiftly and strategically.

Finally, there are also discrepancies in public understanding of how the Trust approaches funding requests. The Trust wants to encourage organizations to use Trust funds as leverage for other funding opportunities, however many organizations apply to the Trust as their sole funding source. Community organizations would benefit from greater clarity over what the Trust can fund, and how funding requests should be structured. The Trust can also do more to learn from community organizations, and to educate the City about the costs of housing development and acquisition in current market conditions.

Coordination

As the Trust is one vehicle of many addressing housing affordability in Somerville, coordination is critical to the Trust's mission. Overall, community organizations see the Trust as a good collaborator. However, there is room for improvement, especially between the Trust and the City's Community Preservation Committee (CPC).

Improvements Suggested

Better communication and greater collaboration between the Trust and the CPC would ensure that the City of Somerville is both maximizing available CPA funds for affordable housing and using CPA funds most effectively to achieve shared goals.

Reporting and Data

City staff and community organizations perceive that the Trust is doing great work. However, the Trust's inconsistent publication of annual reports and program data undermines the perception of the Trust's impact and effectiveness.

Improvements Suggested

The Trust has been receptive to feedback on improving its reporting and has worked with other public committees, such as the CPC, to improve and simplify its reporting templates. As CPC members and community organizations noted, annual reports help build transparency over the use of Trust funds, measure impact, and build institutional knowledge on what programs have received funding in years past.

Future Priorities

Many interviewees felt that the Trust should provide more funding to service providers and distribute funding to a more diverse range of services. This will require greater advocacy to pass the Trust's Home Rule Petition. While some interviewees expressed interest in eviction services, there was greater agreement that there should be more funding for eviction/homelessness prevention, tenant stability, and wrap-around support services.

Another common theme was helping the Trust deploy money more quickly and in more innovative ways. There is enthusiasm and support for the Trust's Early Acquisition Fund. Many interviewees expressed interest in the Trust's provision of pre-development funding to support early action proposals. This would move the Trust away from the mentality of Trust funds as the "last money in." Other innovative proposals might include property tax incentives for landlords who rent units at below-market rates, or the development of in-law units.

Support for homeownership and property acquisition came up often as tools to prevent community displacement, help low-income households build wealth, and to ensure the long-term affordability of the City's housing stock. There was also broad support for the Trust continuing to fund housing development, particularly housing for extremely low-income households, low-income and moderate-income households.

Several interviewees noted the importance of partnerships, and advocacy for the successful implementation of projects, and for the adoption of pro-housing policies. The Trust could build stronger relationships with regional partners, national affordable housing developers, and with local developers. These partnerships would also help the Trust learn about best practices in other communities and other states, which could be applied to their work locally.

Finally, there was interest in the Trust developing a more informed sense of the City's housing needs based on income, race, age, and household size.

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