



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE, MAYOR

GEORGE PROAKIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HOUSING DIVISION

Date: October 7, 2019

CONDOMINIUM REVIEW BOARD FY19 ANNUAL REPORT

As per Somerville Condominium Conversion Ordinance (SCCO) Section 7-75, this document serves as an annual report of the business of the Somerville Condominium Review Board for Fiscal Year 2019 (July 1, 2018-June 30, 2019).

Board membership and Organizational Information

As of June 2019, the Condominium Review Board had five members as called for under the SCCO. Members included Board Chair Zachary Zasloff, Board Vice-Chair Patricia Paul, Vikram Kanda, Elizabeth Janiak, and William Medeiros. In November 2018, Board member Zasloff's name was submitted for reappointment by Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone and approved by the City Council. Member Paul's nomination was submitted for appointment by Mayor Curtatone and approved by the City Council in November 2018. Members Kanda and Janiak's names were both submitted for appointment by Mayor Curtatone and approved by the City Council in December 2018.

Condominium Conversion - Summary Information and Process Overview

As of FY 2019 year-end, there were approximately 31,267 total private housing units¹ in Somerville. Roughly 71.6% of all private housing units are rental properties (about 22,407 units). There are approximately 5,574 total condominium units currently in Somerville according to data maintained by the City's Assessing Department, with 3,501 or roughly 62% being owner-occupied. This totals approximately 17.8% of the total private housing units in the City. In FY19, 167 applications (which represents 167 properties) for condominium conversion were submitted, with 290 rental units being removed from the rental market through the condominium conversion process. A total of 312 units (including owner-occupied units) were converted to condominium units in FY19.

Approved applications converting a rental unit to a condominium unit receive a Removal Permit. Approved applications converting a unit that has never been rented (generally a unit that is/was owner-occupied) to a condominium unit will receive a Certificate of Exemption. Applications that have been reviewed by the Board, but are still pending final submission of required documents will receive conditional approval in the form of a Certificate of Approval, conditioned on the completion of the application. An additional 114 units were granted conditional approval in FY19, bringing the total number of units either approved for or conditionally approved for condominium conversion to 426.

¹ This figure does not include public housing units

As called for under Initiative 4 of 10 Housing Initiatives announced by the Mayor in his 2018 inaugural address (and by the Sustainable Neighborhoods Working Group in its 2016 recommendations report), the City revised and updated the Somerville Condominium Conversion Ordinance (SCCO) to provide stronger tenant protections and mitigate displacement due to condominium conversion. The effort to update the ordinance involved extensive debate and a public hearing held by the City Council, and was eventually approved 10-1 by the Council on March 28, 2019. The updated Ordinance was due to go into effect on July 31st, 2019, one month after the close of FY19.

Implementation was delayed slightly due to litigation brought against the City by Stephen Bremis and the Somerville Property Owner’s Coalition (SPOC). A request to postpone the ordinance while litigation was pending was denied on August 22, and the law took effect as of August 23, 2019.

Major Changes to the Ordinance

Notable changes to the SCCO are listed below:

Notice Period for Vacant Rental Units

- There is now a 12 month waiting period to convert a vacant unit that had been previously used as a rental unit
 - This waiting period does not apply to most owner-occupied units and is determined on a unit-by-unit basis

Tenant Notice Period

- The tenant notice period has been increased from two to five years for elderly, disabled and low-/moderate-income tenants
- The notice period remains the same, one year, for all other tenants

Relocation Payment

- The required relocation payment has increased from \$300 or one month’s rent to \$10,000 for elderly, disabled and low/moderate-income tenants and \$6,000 for all other tenants- payment is per unit, not per tenant

Right to Purchase

- The City/nonprofit designee now has a right to purchase if the tenant(s) in an occupied unit waive their right or if a unit is vacant, unless the unit is being sold to family of the owner
- The City/designee will only be able to exercise this right during the same time period a tenant has; no additional time is allotted for the city/designee

Selected Data Patterns

As of June 30, 2019 a total of 1,563 rental units, or roughly 6.9% of Somerville’s current rental housing stock, had been converted to condominium units since 2010. The chart below indicates the number of rental units converted to condominium units by calendar year.

Calendar Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019 ²
Converted Rental Units³	139	111	133	137	131	149	199	131	264	168

² Includes permits granted from January 2019- September 5, 2019

³ These figures do not include Certificates of Approval for granted conditional permits or Certificates of Exemption for owner-occupied units

Of applications submitted in FY19, approximately 71.2% were for properties that were either fully or partially vacant at the time of application submission. The map below shows where FY19 condominium conversions took place across the City.

FY19 Condominium Conversions

