



City of Somerville

HOME-ARP Allocation Plan

February 2023

DRAFT for Public Review and Comment

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HOME-ARP Allocation Plan

Introduction

The City of Somerville has been allocated a total of \$1,626,742 in HOME-ARP funds. This HUD program provides a one-time award of funds, which are dedicated to addressing specific housing and service needs of homeless households and others who face an elevated risk of homelessness and housing instability.

HUD requires jurisdictions to conduct a thorough community exploration and to produce a complete Allocation Plan, as a condition of gaining access to HOME-ARP funds. This document serves as the City of Somerville's HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

Somerville, MA, a densely-built city of 81,000 residents, is part of Boston's metropolitan region. Somerville abuts Cambridge, MA, and students attending the many universities in the area have long made local housing conditions costly and competitive. Recently linked directly to the public transit system, Somerville is experiencing a tremendous economic upheaval, with proliferating "life science" office towers as well as market-rate and luxury housing and commercial development.

Thus, Somerville's lower-income residents already faced a sharply higher risk of homelessness and housing instability. The further instability experienced by all people, everywhere, related to two-plus years of pandemic-related uncertainties, brought many more households into the vulnerable conditions prioritized for assistance through HUD's HOME-ARP program.

Consultation

In accordance with Section V.A of the Notice (page 13), before developing its HOME-ARP allocation plan, at a minimum, a PJ must consult with:

- CoC(s) serving the jurisdiction's geographic area,
- homeless service providers,
- domestic violence service providers,
- veterans' groups,
- public housing agencies (PHAs),
- public agencies that address the needs of the qualifying populations, and
- public or private organizations that address fair housing, civil rights, and the needs of persons with disabilities.

Consulting Process Summary

In preparation for HOME-ARP's community process, the City hosted a virtual meeting of community stakeholders and providers on March 18, 2022. Additional consultation took place

in the fall and through the winter, with another virtual stakeholder meeting on December 5, 2022.

The City developed and issued a survey in December 2022, which asked Respondents to identify the Qualifying Populations with whom they worked (as well as others), presented eligible HOME-ARP activities, asked Respondents to prioritize among the options as well as to discuss how and why they prioritized as they did. The survey – presented in **Appendix A**– was sent to 85 people, with 20 responses received.

On January 18, 2023, the City met again with providers and survey Respondents, to update them on the results of the survey, needs assessment/gaps analysis progress, and to present the City’s proposed approach to allocating its HOME-ARP funds, as developed in response to community consultations and data analysis.

Organizations Consulted:

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback/notes
Somerville Homeless Coalition, Inc.	Nonprofit serving QP – Homeless Service Provider	Virtual Roundtable 3/18/22, 12/5/22, 1/18/23, and survey	Unsheltered homeless continues to be an issue in Somerville, especially around Davis Square and East Somerville, including the salt piles under rt. 93. Theft among the unsheltered population a significant issue. SHC currently using ARPA funds for an engagement center which will allow for greater outreach and additional resources for homeless population. Further funding supportive services would prevent households from facing a “cliff effect” to their housing assistance, and funding case management/street outreach would help leverage existing funding sources for housing assistance.
Office of Housing Stability – City of Somerville	Public agency that addresses the needs of QP	Virtual Roundtable 3/18/22, 12/5/22,	Noted many instances where a household will pay one month’s rent, but does not have the ability to pay in subsequent months due

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback/notes
		1/18/23, and survey	to lack of income-hoping to access new resources to address this issue. Identified continued funding for rental assistance as a critical priority.
Somerville School Department	Public agency that addresses the needs of QP	Virtual Roundtable 3/18/22, 12/5/22, 1/18/23 and survey	Critical need for supportive services to address homeless issues, particularly for substance abuse and other areas of long-term care. Language access has also been a barrier to addressing these issues. Many families in school system are living in overcrowded apartments, and have few options to better their housing situation
Somerville Housing Authority	Public Housing Authority	Virtual Roundtable 3/18/22,12/5/22 and survey	Identified rental assistance and supportive services as high and critical priorities.
Respond	Nonprofit serving QP-Domestic Violence Service Provider	Virtual meeting with Housing Division (12/16/22) and virtual roundtable on 3/18/22 and 1/18/23, and survey	NCS is a priority with additional funding sources-especially if supportive services for the NCS is included with that funding. Would like to see NCS continue as COVID funding is no longer available. Identified Supportive Services and Rental Assistance as critical priorities.
Michael Kannensohn	Funding Consultant working a Nonprofit serving QP	Virtual Roundtable 12/5/22	Did not provide comments at 12/5 meeting
Veteran Services – City of Somerville	Public agency that addresses the needs of QP-Veterans’ group	Conversation regarding needs of Veterans and Virtual Roundtable 1/18/23	Identified housing options and supportive services as critical need for Veterans
Fair Housing Commission-City of Somerville	Public agency that addresses fair housing	Survey	Identified development of affordable rental housing as a critical priority

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback/notes
Commission for Persons with Disabilities	Public agency that addresses the needs of persons with disabilities	Virtual Roundtable 1/18/23 and survey	Identified affordable housing which could accommodate tenants with disabilities as a critical need. Also noted the importance of training agencies in collaborative efforts on the needs of those with disabilities.
Health and Human Services-City of Somerville	Public agency that addresses the needs of QP	Virtual Roundtable 3/18/22, 12/5/22 and 1/18/23	Did not provide comments at either meeting or complete survey
Somerville Police Dept.	Public agency that addresses the needs of QP	Virtual Roundtable 1/18/23	Additional staffing would help with better inter-agency coordination.
Volunteers of America	Non-profit homeless service provider/agency who addresses the needs of QP	Virtual roundtable 12/5/22 and survey	Identified all eligible use of funds as high priority.
Somerville Community Land Trust	Non-profit agency that addresses the needs of QP	Virtual roundtable 12/5/22 and 1/18/23, and survey	Identified supportive services and rental assistance as critical priorities.
Greater Boston Legal Services	Non-profit agency that addresses the needs of QP	Virtual roundtable 12/5/22	Increase in evictions since moratorium ended-often personal belongings are kept in locations far away from where previous housing was, and it is unclear where those evicted are rehoused. In Somerville, many cases where several tenants are overcrowded, and once primary tenant moves out or is evicted, remaining tenants are unable to pay rent.
Community Action Agency of Somerville	Non-profit homeless service provider/agency	Virtual roundtable 12/5/22 and 1/18/23,	Noted importance of additional staffing for case management and interagency cooperation, identified capacity building as a

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback/notes
	who addresses the needs of QP	Individual Discussion 2/13/23	high priority. Encouraged involving people with lived experience in future planning discussions.
Somerville Community Corporation	Non-profit homeless service provider/agency who addresses the needs of QP	Virtual roundtable 12/5/22 and 1/18/23, and survey	Identified expediting the development of affordable housing as a critical priority,
Catholic Charities	Non-profit homeless service provider/agency who addresses the needs of QP	Survey	Identified residents with Section 8 vouchers who have difficulty finding housing in Somerville, and rental/utility assistance as highest priorities.
Just-A-Start	Non-profit homeless service provider/agency who addresses the needs of QP	Virtual roundtable 12/5/22 and 1/18/23, and survey	Identified preventing housing destabilization through rental assistance and access to affordable housing as critical priorities.
Veterans Benefits	Agency who addresses the needs of QP -Veterans' services	Individual Discussion	Received invitation but did not attend 12/5/22 or 1/18/23 meeting, did not complete survey
Housing Division, OSPCD-City of Somerville	Public agency that addresses the needs of QP	Virtual roundtable 3/18/22, 12/5/22 and 1/18/2023	Identified Supportive Services as the best way to use available funds to address needs of each QP
Somerville YMCA	Agency who provides SRO housing and addresses the needs of QP	Virtual roundtable 1/18/2023	Identified affordable rental housing as a critical need.
Balance of State Continuum of Care/DHCD	CoC serving the jurisdiction's geographic area	Virtual meeting 1/11/23	Acknowledged importance of Supportive Services, which were identified as a critical need during the process for Responding to the recent special NOFO for unsheltered homeless programs/services. The need for Supportive Services and additional

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback/notes
			affordable units are the most consistent needs identified by providers in the local CoC (Balance of State). Also suggested including data on those in family shelters within the CoC who identified Somerville as their home.
Member, Somerville Affordable Housing Trust Fund	Public entity provides combine local/state funds for projects and programs	Individual meeting, 02/08/2023	Critical, long-standing need for additional units of housing. Need skilled partners to leverage City's investment in housing with other funds, and need to increase focus on long-term affordability. Concerned about households reaching "cliff" as rental assistance ends, with few community resources. Wants to see a holistic community response that builds economic/employment support into basic needs services.
SafeLink	State-wide domestic violence hotline	Email exchange for relevant data	Data on requests from Somerville residents, 2020-2022
Commonwealth Anti-Trafficking Task Force	State-wide multi-agency task force	Email request for data on Human Trafficking	No data available at community level
MA Attorney General's Office	State-wide law enforcement agency	Email request for data on Human Trafficking	No response to email request received
Middlesex District Attorney's Office	County-level law enforcement agency	Email request for data on Human Trafficking	No additional data produced as a result of email exchange
Wayside	Non-profit service provider who addresses the needs of QP	Invited to attend meetings and respond to Stakeholder Survey	
Heading Home	Non-profit service provider who addresses the needs of QP	Invited to attend meetings and respond to Stakeholder Survey	

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback/notes
Maloney Properties	Private real estate organization which partners with public agencies and non-profits who serve QP	Invited to attend meetings and respond to Stakeholder Survey	
We Soldier On	Agency who addresses the needs of QP -Veterans' services	Invited to attend meetings and respond to Stakeholder Survey	
Baycove Human Services, Inc.	Non-profit service provider who addresses the needs of QP	Invited to attend meetings and respond to Stakeholder Survey	

Summary of Input from Consultation:

In direct discussion and through survey responses, the City received consistent feedback in several areas related to housing and the housing needs of vulnerable Somerville residents. Comments included:

Need for affordable rental housing – Providers and survey Respondents noted that while affordable rental housing was the most pressing need in Somerville, the modest award would produce or contribute to only a small number of units given rapidly rising construction costs. With other housing-production funds available, the consensus was not to use HOME-ARP funds for rental housing.

Need for additional supportive services – Providers and survey Respondents spoke directly to the need for additional supportive services. While the City and its community agencies have stabilized hundreds of economically fragile households by providing financial assistance and time-limited rental assistance, the need for additional housing-oriented case management and services designed to assist households in managing the end of assistance was stated as a priority. Others spoke more generally about the economic dislocation of families who cannot keep up with rising rents and costs, and the need to reach and provide them with stabilization supports.

Concern about winter conditions and street outreach to assist unhoused persons – Providers and survey Respondents also noted the need for “winter warming” capacity as well as expanded

street outreach supports for a growing number of unhoused individuals who appear to be living outdoors.

Public Participation

In accordance with Section V.B of the Notice (page 13), PJs must provide for and encourage citizen participation in the development of the HOME-ARP allocation plan. Before submission of the plan, PJs must provide residents with reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment on the proposed HOME-ARP allocation plan of **no less than 15 calendar days**. The PJ must follow its adopted requirements for “reasonable notice and an opportunity to comment” for plan amendments in its current citizen participation plan. In addition, PJs must hold **at least one public hearing** during the development of the HOME-ARP allocation plan and prior to submission.

PJs are required to make the following information available to the public:

- The amount of HOME-ARP the PJ will receive, and
- The range of activities the PJ may undertake.

Throughout the HOME-ARP allocation plan public participation process, the PJ must follow its applicable fair housing and civil rights requirements and procedures for effective communication, accessibility, and reasonable accommodation for persons with disabilities and providing meaningful access to participation by limited English proficient (LEP) residents that are in its current citizen participation plan as required by 24 CFR 91.105 and 91.115.

Public Participation Process:

- ***Date(s) of public notice: 2/15/2023***
- ***Public comment period: start date -2/24/2023 end date -3/17/2023***
- ***Date(s) of public hearing: 2/23/2023***

Describe the public participation process:

The City built out its existing operating framework for Public Comment and Public Hearings, extending outreach efforts specifically to connect with members of the community who are struggling with rising rents and a very competitive housing market.

Efforts to broaden public participation:

The City worked across various departments to ensure the broadest outreach possible for the public participation process. The City's web team posted the notice of the public hearing and the draft plan on the City's website. Translated versions of the notice of the public hearing in Spanish, Portuguese, Haitian Creole, Nepali and simplified/traditional Chinese were provided by the City's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

The English and translated versions of the notice of the public hearing were advertised by the City's Communications Department. This process included placing the notice in the Somerville Times, and advertising on Somerville Community Access Television. The notice was also circulated via email by City staff to local Somerville providers and stakeholders, members of the Somerville Affordable Housing Trust, and to the Renter's Committee supported by the Community Action Agency of Somerville.

A video recording of the public hearing is available on the City's YouTube channel. Links to the video recording can be found on the City's website, and is provided below:

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rKjtC1cBqT4>)

Comments and recommendations received:

During the public hearing, questions were asked by attendees using the chat function in Zoom. Questions from attendees during the hearing are listed in italics and have been edited for clarity. Response information from the project team follows each question.

- *What is the source of data on the number of affordable units in Somerville?* Information on existing affordable units and affordable units in the project pipeline is tracked and was provided by the City's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development, through its Housing Division. Additional data on housing was provided by the Community Housing Assessment Survey (CHAS), and data from the American Community Surveys, surveys which are conducted in-between censuses by the federal government. Data from these sources were included based on guidance from HUD.
- *Do we have a strategy to address needs that are not met by the proposals put forth by local nonprofits? Is the idea that we'll expand municipal services in addition to grants and contracts for nonprofits?* There is currently an application process for ARPA funds dedicated to services that are not included in the HOME-ARP allocation plan. Additionally, the City is planning to use ARPA funds to launch a Municipal Voucher Program which will address the need for affordable rental units, notably targeting households with limited access to other housing resources. The proposal in the draft allocation plan is meant to strengthen the non-profit driven service delivery system. The plan sets aside some funding for non-profit operating expenses and capacity building.

Providers during the consultation process identified better coordination and training among non-profit agencies as a way to use HOME-ARP funds effectively. Non-profit capacity is something that the current mayoral administration is focused on, and is evaluating on a large scale. If during the initial RFP process for HOME-ARP the conclusion is drawn that we are not meeting local needs for non-profit capacity building, a second request for RFP's may be issued based on the information provided during the first round of evaluating proposals (while staying within the 5% cap in each optional funding area).

- *What kind of gaps in the service delivery surfaced in this allocation plan?* There are some new facilities opening intending to help unhoused populations, including Somerville Homeless Coalition's engagement center in Davis Square and a community and behavioral health center operated by the Cambridge Health Alliance. Helping providers to link clients with resources such as these is one way the plan hopes to address gaps in service delivery that can move people toward housing solutions. Another high priority identified in the allocation plan is how providers can work together to identify and reach out to qualifying population households receiving time-limited assistance, including increasing funding supportive services to identify those individuals or households facing a cliff effect and working with them on next steps to stabilize their housing.
- *How will you ensure that the funds will be allocated without discriminating against any of the eligible qualifying populations? For example, will a lack of identifying information which may lead to a lack of accurate data result in funding not being allocated to serve survivors of domestic violence?* HUD gives communities the option to create preferences in their allocation plan. However, the City decided that it would be beneficial not to include preferences in its Allocation Plan until further community-wide analysis and planning can take place. Preferences can be created and added later through a Substantial Amendment if needed to respond to community needs. If preferences are not included, HOME-ARP explicitly says projects and programs will provide resources on a first come, first basis. This will ensure that despite some of the data for qualifying population three (domestic violence survivors and other victims of sex crimes) not being as complete as data for other qualifying populations, households within all qualifying populations will be able to access program and services funded by HOME-ARP.

Summarize any comments or recommendations not accepted and state the reasons why:

No comments or recommendations made during the Public Hearing or Public Comment period were not accepted.

Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis

The City of Somerville worked with community and state partners to assemble data for its needs assessment and gaps analysis. The data helps illuminate the size and composition of each of the four Qualifying Populations, describes existing resources for each QP, and identifies unmet needs and system gaps.

Current/expiring resources are described in relevant sections throughout this narrative, while **Appendix B** lists out specific housing and services available to QPs in Somerville.

QP1: Somerville’s Homeless Population

Somerville has seen an increase in the average number of literally homeless persons since 2016. Based on recent PIT Count data, the number of unsheltered persons has remained fairly consistent over the past couple of years. Local providers report an increase in non-English-speaking recent immigrants among the unsheltered population. Many in this group report serious health concerns as well as having left informal roommate situations, presenting additional barriers to housing and economic engagement.

Size and Composition

In 2019, the Somerville/Arlington CoC merged into the Massachusetts Balance of State CoC. Community agencies and volunteers remain very involved in local collaborations and in conducting a community-level point-in-time (PIT) count.

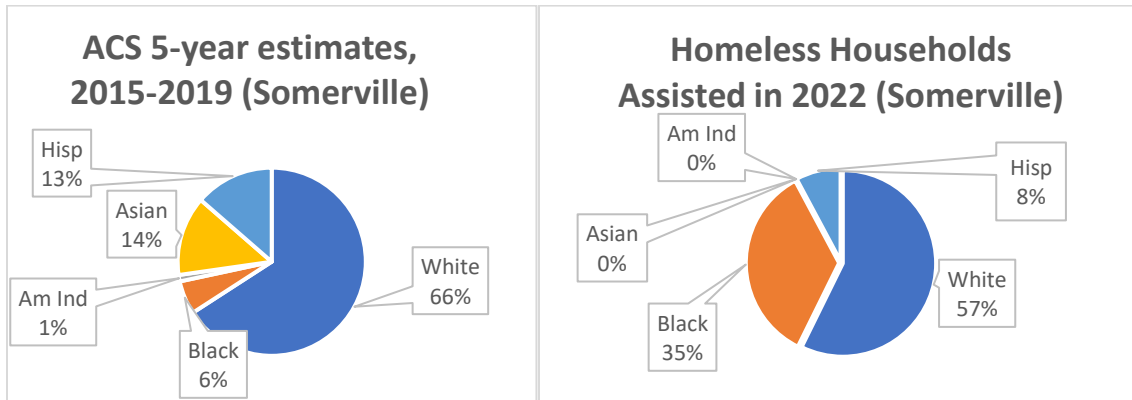
The most recent PIT count, conducted on January 25, 2023, identified 15 unsheltered homeless persons in Somerville on the night of the count. As noted above, there is a general sense within the city that there are more unhoused persons in the community than in previous years, and for the first time this year, unhoused people are sleeping in front of an East Somerville church.

Table 2 provides information about homeless households who accessed shelter services or were seen in the street outreach program during the calendar year, including those in several subpopulations – veterans, unaccompanied youth, and survivors of domestic violence.

Table 2: Unhoused Persons in Somerville					
	Homeless Population		Homeless Subpopulations		
	In Family Household (w/at least 1 child)	In Adult Household (w/o child)	Veterans	Unaccompanied Youth 18-24	DV Survivors
Sheltered	8	98	<5	<5	18
Unsheltered (Street Outreach)	0	82	<5	0	

Source: MA BoS HMIS analysis of Somerville population as of 1/23/2023

As in many communities, a comparison between the demographics of Somerville's general population and its unhoused population indicates that non-white households are disproportionately affected by homelessness.



Sources: MA BoS HMIS analysis of Somerville population as of 1/23/2023; ACS 2015-2019 5-Year Estimates; * Hispanic persons may be of any race

Existing resources

Somerville currently has two emergency shelters (39 beds) for adults without children in the household. One accepts women into its shelter using a daily lottery, and also operates transitional housing for women. Another accepts adults of all genders. The oldest adult shelter, operated by the Somerville Homeless Coalition since 1985, is open year-round. Meals and supportive services are provided onsite and shelter residents are referred for other needed services through an active referral network.

During the pandemic and at other times of severe weather, the Coalition has placed some unhoused adult clients temporarily in hotel rooms. In January 2023, Somerville Homeless Coalition began operating an Engagement Center, providing unsheltered homeless persons with links to needed services as well as seasonal aids (such as sleeping bags and hand warmers).

Additional resources supporting unhoused persons include the Community Behavioral Health Crisis Services Center recently opened by the Cambridge Health Alliance. The center provides mental health and substance abuse services in a timely manner to those who may otherwise not have access to those services. The Somerville Homeless Coalition recently received an ARPA grant to open an Engagement Center and the city's first Warming Center.

The City currently has one shelter for families, operated by domestic violence provider T. This 8-unit facility provides shelter for families as well as individuals. Until late 2021, the City had another family shelter which had a capacity for five families. This shelter had to close when the church where it was located decided to use the space for its own uses – and no comparable space was affordable.

Somerville families experiencing homelessness without immediate domestic violence elements are referred to a state-wide network of family shelters, known as Emergency Assistance (EA). In calendar 2022, a total of 22 families reported last living in Somerville before entering the shelter system. While shelter placement is assured (Massachusetts is a right-to-shelter state), families may be disadvantaged when placed in shelters far from their original communities.

The MA Law Reform Institute website states that, “EA is available to many persons with legal status, including refugees, lawful permanent residents, Cuban/Haitian entrants, and persons residing in the U.S. under color of law...If any member of the household has one of these statuses or is a U.S. citizen, the entire household meets this requirement and is eligible for EA.”

Somerville’s rapid rise in immigrant households suggests that a growing number of family households may meet the housing elements of HUD homeless guidelines, but may not be eligible for placement in an EA-funded shelter. During 2022 and into 2023, Massachusetts has had an influx of migrant households, and Somerville anticipates additional members of this population arriving and requiring housing and supportive service resources.

Three transitional shelters are currently in place in Somerville. Wayside Youth and Family Network operates its ShortStop program in Somerville, which provides transitional housing and supportive services to homeless young adults, 18 to 24 years of age. Volunteers of America operates the Massachusetts Bay Veterans Center in Somerville, providing transitional housing as well as supportive services to homeless veterans. Catholic Charities operates its transitional program at St. Patrick’s Church along with its emergency shelter and provides beds for homeless women.

In addition to emergency and transitional shelters, there are Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing resources in Somerville. Somerville Homeless Coalition provides PSH to formerly homeless, disabled individuals and families. Vacancies are filled through the Balance of State’s Coordinated Entry System. SHC also provides Rapid Re-Housing by leveraging several sources of funding (including at the federal and local level) to help with monthly rent, start-up costs, and curing rental arrears in order to stabilize the housing situation of individuals or families at risk of homelessness. Respond operates a Rapid Re-Housing program for victims of Domestic Violence, funded through the Balance of State CoC. Other Balance of State (BoS) Continuum of Care, (CoC) providers operate Permanent Supportive Housing.

Information about shelters, transitional housing and housing units dedicated to the unhoused appears in Table 3 and in greater detail in **Appendix B**.

Table 3: Homeless Housing Inventory Chart							
	Total Inventory				Subpopulation Inventory		
	Family		Adults Only		Vets	Unaccompanied Youth	DV
	# beds	# units	# beds	# units	# beds	# beds	# beds
Emergency Shelter	18	8	38		0		18
Transitional Housing	0	0	41		22	9	0
Permanent Supportive Housing	36	14	94		7		0
Other Permanent Housing	12	4	9				0
Rapid Rehousing	11	4	6				10

Source: 2022 Housing Inventory Chart

Unmet Needs

As noted throughout this Plan, Somerville’s economic growth and the resulting rise in rents have placed lower-income and unhoused tenants at a disadvantage in the competition for affordable units. This is evident in the small number of RRH units located in the community; households that qualify for RRH must look in areas farther from Boston in order to afford rent. Also as noted above, the City lacks a general emergency shelter for families, and its adult shelters have limited capacity and/or target specific groups like survivors of Domestic Violence. Additionally, as described in greater detail in other sections of the Allocation Plan, both the City and non-profit providers have been looking for opportunities to create Non-Congregate Shelters (NCS), without success. The need to better coordinate and expand Supportive Services was noted through each part of the consultation process.

QP2: Somerville Households At-Risk of Homelessness

Under the HOME-ARP program, HUD follows HEARTH Act guidelines, defining those at risk of homelessness as individuals and families with an income at or below 30% of the area median income (AMI)¹, who do not have sufficient resources or support networks to prevent them from becoming homeless, and who show specific indications of housing instability. These include:

- Moving 2 or more times within during the last 60 days due to economic reasons
- Living in another’s home due to economic hardship
- Living in overcrowded housing

¹ Somerville’s median household income is \$108,896, thus households with income at/below 30% AMI make no more than \$32,669, while those with incomes at/below 50% AMI make no more than \$54,448.

