

Somerville

Redevelopment Authority

2021 Annual Report

Prepared by the Somerville Office of Strategic Planning and Community
Development – Economic Development Division

November 2022

Somerville Redevelopment Authority

The Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA) was founded in 1956, pursuant to the authority granted by the Massachusetts General Law Chapter 121B, § 3.

Staff and SRA Board member names below reflect the individuals who were in these roles during 2021.

SRA Board

Phil Ercolini, Chair
Ben Ewen-Campen, City Councilor
Iwona Bonney
William Gage
Emily Hedeman (January-August)
Patrick McCormick
Christine Stone (April-December)

Mayor

Joseph A. Curtatone

Mayor's Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development staff to the SRA

George Proakis, Executive Director
Thomas Galligani, Director of Economic Development
Sunayana Thomas, Senior Economic Development Planner (January-February)
Rachel Nadkarni, Urban Revitalization Specialist (May-December)
Eileen McGettigan, Special Counsel

<https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/somerville-redevelopment-authority>

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Introduction

The Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA) has helped revitalize Somerville since its founding in 1956. Over the past six decades the SRA has significantly enhanced the City's neighborhoods, squares and industrial districts by fostering construction of new development in deteriorated and under-used property.

The SRA Annual Report for 2021 reviews the projects under the Authority's jurisdiction during this year. Submittal of annual reports are required by the Commonwealth's Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). This report will be filed and recorded with DHCD.

Background

The SRA has helped revitalize Somerville since its establishment in 1956 under Massachusetts General Laws c. 121B. This law provides the SRA power to declare an area "substandard, decadent, and/or a blighted open area", to prepare an urban renewal plan for redevelopment of such areas and undertake eminent domain takings to implement such plans. Over the past six decades the SRA has significantly enhanced neighborhoods and commercial areas by fostering construction of new development in deteriorated and under-used property.

Meetings & Votes

Meeting date	Type	Vote count
January 20, 2021	Regular	4
February 17, 2021	Regular	3
March 17, 2021	Regular	2
March 31, 2021	Special	2
April 21, 2021	Regular	3
May 19, 2021	Regular	5
June 16, 2021	Regular	3
July 21, 2021	Regular	2
September 15, 2021	Regular	3
October 20, 2021	Regular	2
November 17, 2021	Regular	2
December 15, 2021	Regular	2

2021 Project Highlights

Assembly Square

The jewel in the SRA's redevelopment crown, Assembly Square is Somerville's newest neighborhood, arising over the past decade from a moribund factory district centered around the former Ford assembly plant.

2021 saw Assembly Square further recover from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. In terms of commercial activity, Federal Realty, a main developer of the square, worked to reopen existing businesses throughout the year, and new businesses including Totto Yakitori opened locations. Night Shift Brewing and Smoke Shop BBQ also collaborated on a temporary activation on Block 7 during the summer months. In September, Puma began occupying part of 455 Grand Union (Block 5B), and the former K-Mart space in Assembly Market began to house several new companies—including Tulip (a software company), DMG Mori (a manufacturer), and Ashley Furniture (a retailer).

Development processes also steadily progressed. The developers of 120 Middlesex Avenue received their Special Permit for a lab project in May, with groundbreaking expected in early 2022. The XMBLY project at 5 Middlesex Avenue also progressed throughout the year: the commercial portion of the project was sold to BioMed Realty in January, and construction of the residential portion began. Miscela, a 500-unit apartment building, opened in Block 8, which brought the total number of apartment units constructed in Assembly Square to date to 1,475.

In June, the Office of Strategic Planning and Workforce Development (OSPCD) also released a draft Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan for review.

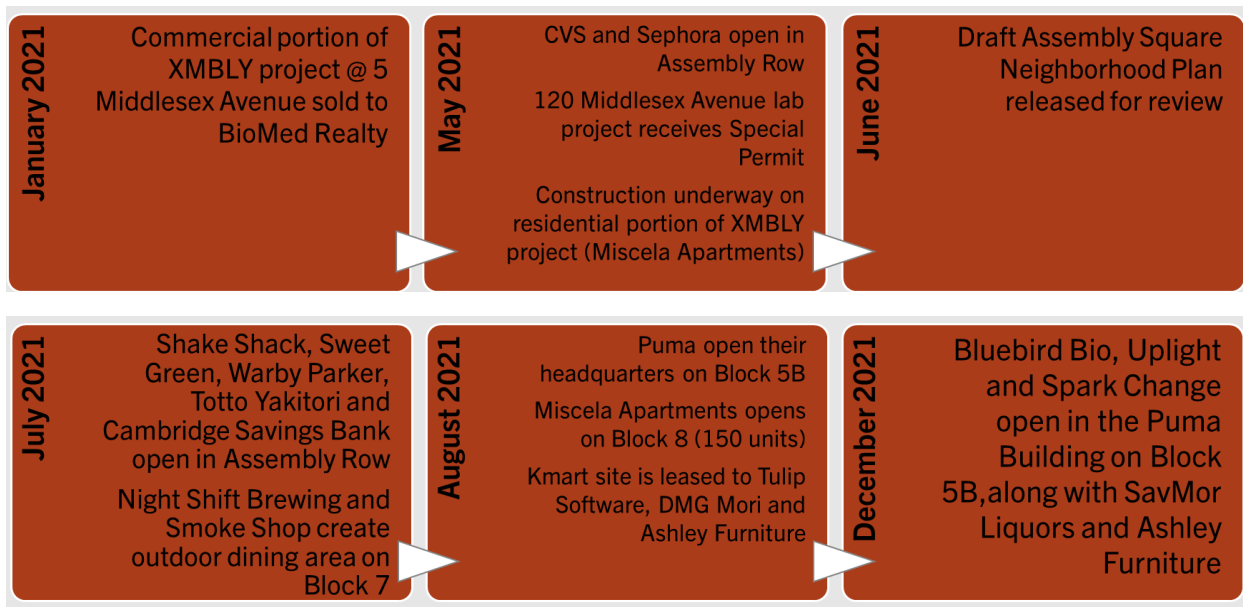


Figure 1: Assembly Square 2021 Redevelopment Milestones

Union Square

Legal and zoning changes completed in 2017 laid the groundwork for implementing the SRA's Union Square Urban Revitalization Plan, allowing for significant development progress in 2018, 2019, and 2020.

In January 2021, the SRA finalized transfer of the D2 Block to Union Square Associates (US2), the Master Land Developer for the Urban Renewal Area at Union Square. US2 then obtained permits for residential buildings on parcels D2.2 and D2.3, and applied for a building permit for the lab space on D2.1. In May, they also started site and utility work on the D2 Block, and then broke ground on the residential buildings on the D2 Block in July, which they have now nearly completed. US2 has also begun working to purchase the remaining portions of the D2 site from private owners, and has privately purchased parcel D3.1 (50 Webster Avenue), with the SRA approving of the inclusion of this parcel in the Master Land Disposition Agreement (MLDA). US2 plans to apply for site plan permits for a commercial structure on the D3 site, and held their first neighborhood meeting for the parcel in August before beginning site designs later in the year.

Work also continued on the Green Line Extension station in Union Square. Although it was hoped that the station would open in late 2021, opening was delayed until 2022. The station elevator was also nearing completion and was scheduled to open along with the rest of the station.

Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen initiated community meetings about redevelopment of 600 Webster Street, which is the current site of Royal Hospitality, a major employer in the area.



Figure 2: Union Square 2021 Redevelopment Milestones

Boynton Yards

Strategically located near Downtown Boston and Kendall Square and walking distance from the new Union Square GLX subway station, Boynton Yards was first redeveloped by the City in the 1990's, when blighted industrial property and brownfields were cleared and replaced with light industrial buildings and a new South Street. Development firm DLJ renewed these efforts in 2019, and has created the Boynton Yards Master Plan to guide up to 1.4 million square feet of mixed-use development on South Street.

In 2021, the City approved this Master Plan, and the firm completed its first building at 101 South Street, where it hosted an Oktoberfest and other outdoor events on a temporary civic space. Later in the year, the City granted permits the second building in the Master Plan, and DLJ applied for permits to build the third structure. At full build out, this project will generate nearly thirty million dollars of community benefits to the City, along with seventy million dollars in infrastructure improvements.



Figure 3: Boynton Yards 2021 Redevelopment Milestones

Winter Hill

In 2019 and 2020, the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development conducted several community meetings regarding redevelopment of the former Star Market site at 299 Broadway, which ultimately led them to draft the Winter Hill Urban Redevelopment Plan (WHURP) for the site in 2020.

In January 2021, the Somerville City Council reviewed the WHURP, and requested a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the SRA to give the Council a greater say in orthodox redevelopment projects. The SRA approved this MOU in March. The City Council then approved the WHURP in April, and the SRA shortly thereafter declared the site at 299 Broadway “decadent,” meaning substandard. In June, the SRA then submitted the WHURP to the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, which approved the plan in July.

With the WHURP approved by the state, Councilor Jesse Clingan then began to host community meetings to gather additional input on how community members wanted the

site to be used, and OSPCD began working to form a Civic Advisory Committee that would use community input to advise the SRA.

Mark Development, a private developer, then moved to acquire privately held properties around 299 Broadway to build a mixed-use development with 190 dwellings, 14,000 square feet of retail space, and 3,000 square feet of civic space. By October, they had both the 299 Broadway site and the adjacent 15 Template Street site under agreement. Mark Development then began petitioning the City Council for a zoning change that would change the zoning designation of the site from MR3 to MR6, which would allow for a total of 280 or more units to be built on the site. These zoning changes were supported by the majority of attendees at several community meetings hosted during the year.

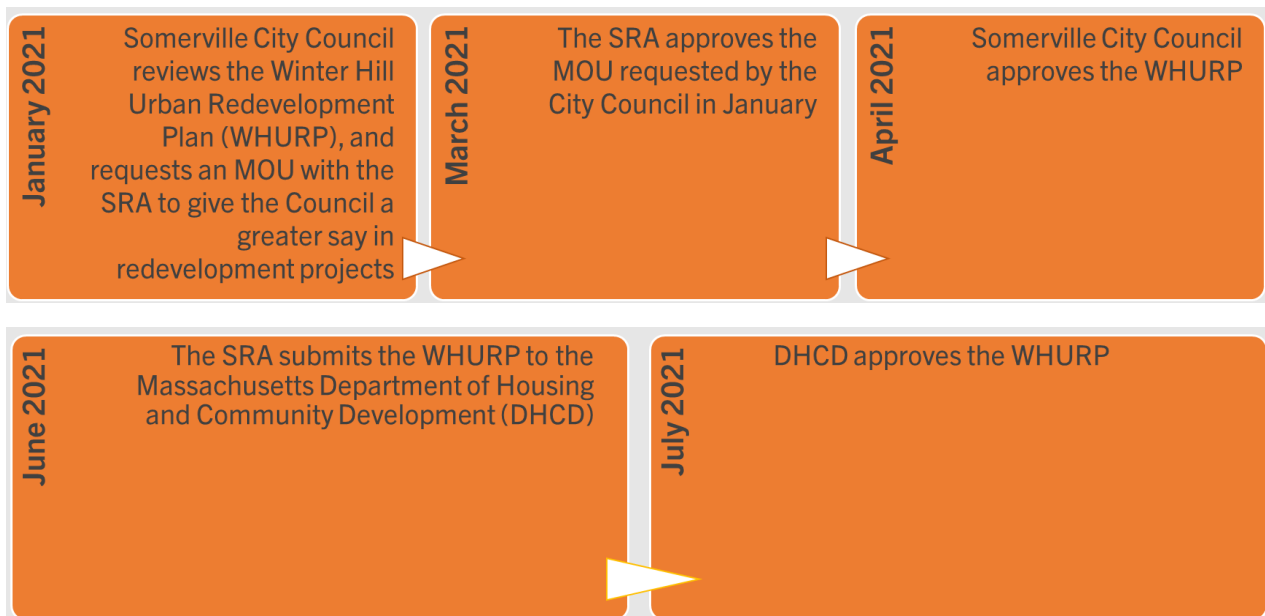


Figure 4: Winter Hill 2021 Redevelopment Milestones

Inner Belt

In late 2018, OSPCD had informed the SRA about the possibility of acquiring a four-acre site at 90 Washington Street that could serve as the site of a new Public Safety Building as well as for associated commercial, residential, and civic development. In 2019 and 2020, the SRA and City Council then each approved several steps in the redevelopment process, including a payment for the taking of the property through eminent domain and the demolition of Cobble Hill Plaza.

In early 2021, a Public Safety Committee was formed and work proceeded on designing the PSB as a standalone project with infill private development on the remainder of the site. An initial community meeting for the PSB was held in March. In June, an

environmental consultant, TRC, was then hired to assess the site. The first public meeting for the non-PSB elements of the site was then held in December, along with an outreach lunch for residents of Cobble Hill Apartments.

In 2019, the City had also entered into a legal battle with Corcoran Jennison regarding the use of eminent domain at 90 Washington, which had been delayed in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In May 2021, however, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ultimately ruled in favor of the City and the SRA.

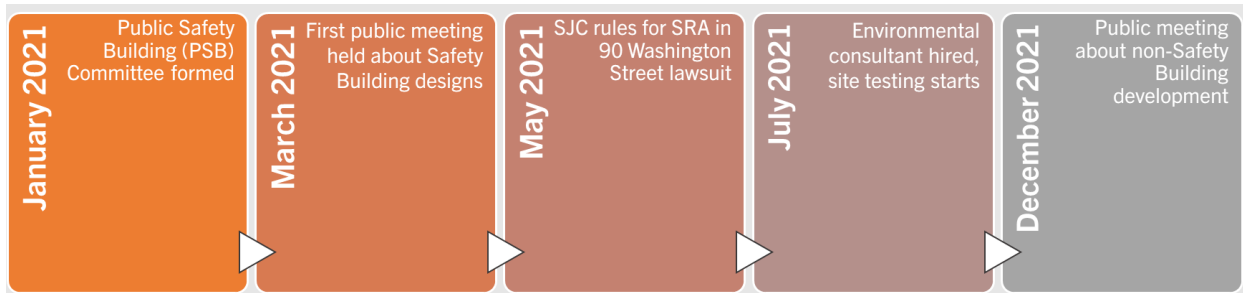


Figure 5: Inner Belt 2021 Redevelopment Milestones