

Somerville Fair Housing Commission Engagement Update

September 25, 2025

Agenda

Overview: Where We Are in the Project

Landscape Analysis

- Update on relationships cultivated
- Themes and findings from conversations

Community Engagement Plan

- Outline of Community Engagement Plan
- Discussion and reflections

Project next steps

Closing

Project Timeline Overview

Phase	Evaluation of Existing Activities (Apr-May)	Landscape Analysis and Engagement Plan (Jun-Sep)	Pop-up and Targeted Engagement (Oct-Apr)	Project Close Out (May)
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attended FHC's 2 Fair Housing Month events • Conducted 1:1s with 4 Commissioners & 2 City staff to the Commission 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic and protected classes data analysis and Landscape Analysis brainstorm • 1:1 Landscape Analysis conversations (Connexions, SOIA, ESMS, COA, CAAS, SPS) • Develop engagement plan to reach priority groups, compiling list of potential pop-up and targeted engagement opportunities from 1:1s 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To come: Create educational materials</i> • <i>To come: 5-7 Pop-up and Targeted engagement opportunities</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>To come: Follow up with CBO partners and participants</i> • <i>To come: Synthesis of engagement findings and further resources</i>



Landscape Analysis Findings

Landscape Analysis

The purpose of a Landscape Analysis is *to identify key potential partners, opponents, and community resources* that have an interest in or influence over the project and any proposed changes. The analysis integrates multiple different perspectives in order to understand local community context. The information gathered can be applied again in future initiatives.

Landscape Analysis - Approach

Demographic and Reporting Data

Identify priority groups for engagement:

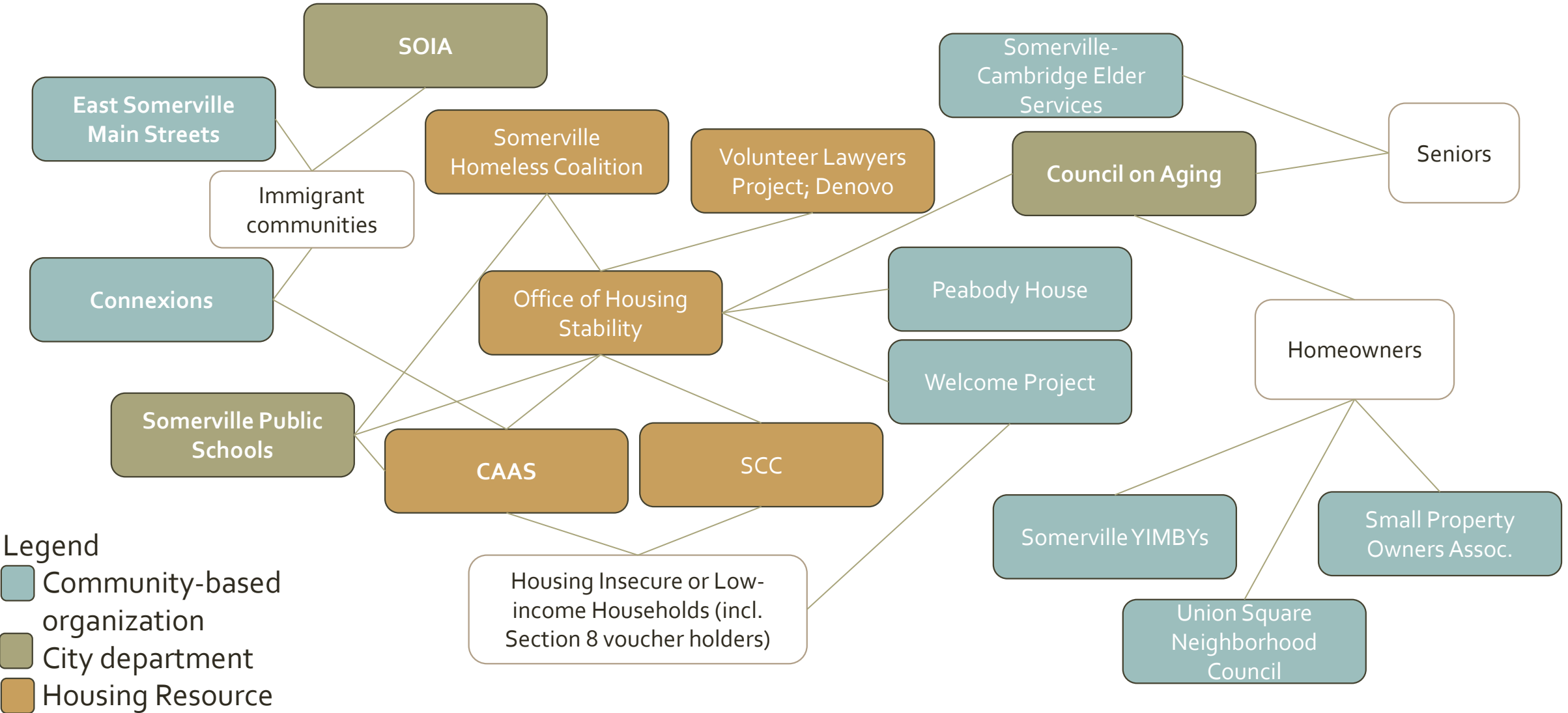
- Section 8 Voucher Holders
- Seniors
- Individuals Living with Disabilities
- Landlords

Community 1:1 Conversations

Identify existing community resources and begin to cultivate long-term institutional relationships

- Connexion
- SOIA
- East Somerville Main Streets
- Somerville Council on Aging
- CAAS
- Somerville Public Schools

Landscape Analysis Map



Landscape Analysis Themes and Findings

Findings about Community Dynamics from 1:1s

- Context of **housing affordability** heightens the risk of all situations related to discrimination (especially if documentation status is unclear)
- Distrust between priority communities and government, leading to **lack of reporting**
- Sense of fear in **current national political climate**, fed by misinformation
- Importance of **meeting people where they are** linguistically and with clear, actionable information
- **Landlords** also have a dynamic of distrust with the city and a misunderstanding of funding programs for housing

Landscape Analysis Themes and Findings

Implications for Engagement Work

- Our engagement should be **clear and actionable**—dispel misinformation and build trust by providing useful and usable information
- Meeting people where they are is important—both going to **places where people are already gathering** and speaking in their **languages**
- We need to develop messaging that is **tailored to both renters and landlords**



Community Engagement Plan

Community Engagement Goals

What

What do you need to educate or keep the community informed about? What power do community members have over decision making?

Improve **awareness** of the Fair Housing Commission and **education on housing rights** to tenants and landlords in Somerville.

Who

When you say “community” who exactly do you mean? Who are the priority community groups or stakeholders you will engage?

Tenants, especially those most impacted by housing discrimination, and **landlords**

How

What are the principles by which you plan to approach the community engagement work? How will you enact values like accessibility, transparency, equity, etc.?

- Focus on **relationship building** with municipal departments and community-based organizations
- **Meet people where they are** through language access, going to trusted partners, etc.

Community Engagement Plan Outline



What is the message?

Awareness of the Somerville Fair Housing Commission as a resource



Audiences we want to reach

Community-wide

Priority Groups:
East Somerville residents, seniors / disabled, youth, Spanish & Portuguese speakers



Methods to reach those audiences

Awareness-building at community events (e.g., ArtBeat, Carnaval)

Asynchronous Engagement
(e.g. display/activity at the library on what makes Somerville home)

Weekly Facebook posts

Flyering with general information about Fair Housing (at Library, COA)

Holding office hours at East Somerville restaurants (e.g., Los Tritos, Posteleria)

Community Engagement Plan Outline



What is the message?

Education on Fair Housing rights and requirements



Audiences we want to reach

Landlords

Most-Impacted Protected Classes: Race, Disability, Section 8 voucher holders, etc



Methods to reach those audiences

April Fair Housing Month Events

Presentations to priority groups
(e.g., COA, Somerville YIMBY)

April Fair Housing Month Events

Presentations to priority groups
(e.g., CAAS Movement Meetings, Somerville Nonprofit Collaborative, Padres Latinos)

Training with amplifiers (e.g., SCC training, City social workers training)

Community Engagement Materials Development Plan

Next Step: Create a library of materials with versions tailored to different audiences to test at engagement events identified in the plan.



"Identify the
FH Violation"
boards



Election
Questionnaire



Color of Law film +
discussion
questions



Section 8
discussion
questions



Training
Materials

Discussion and Sign-ups for Engagement Events

- What stood out to you about the community engagement plan? In what ways do you see this echoing or enhancing the engagement you already do?
- What is missing? Are there priority groups we aren't reaching? Types of conversations not reflected in the plan outline?
- What other educational materials would be useful to the Commission?
- What level of commitment is each Commissioner able to make in staffing these engagement events?

Next Steps

- ☐ Build out the community engagement plan and share around for feedback
- ☐ Develop a timeline of engagement events and share with Commissioners to sign up
- ☐ Work with MAPC Housing team to build out engagement materials