



Free and Low-Cost Meals

“So many people don’t have kitchens and can’t cook. We might have people who come home from work at 4pm and need to pick up food, then go back to work at 9pm. We have a lot of people who are doubled up – multiple families in one apartment, with only one kitchen.”

– Representative of Food4All Pantry

“We have a small population of folks that [receive delivered bags] at the YMCA. These folks live in a more dorm life-style. So, they do not have the ability to cook large meals. They do not have full size refrigerators. Because of this we give them canned goods, [including soups, tuna, chicken, chili, or protein shakes]. We also give them produce that does not need refrigeration [and that can be cooked in a microwave if needed, like bananas or potatoes].”

– Manager of Elizabeth Peabody House Pantry

Ready-made meals are helpful in supporting low-income residents with limited ability to cook.

Somerville has several prepared meal options for residents, although gaps remain.



Monday Night Meal: Weekly near Davis, operated by the Somerville Homeless Coalition.



Come to the Table: Weekly in East Somerville, operated by Connexion Church.



Dormition Family Table: Weekly in Spring Hill, operated by Dormition of the Virgin Mary Church.



Hearty Meals for All: Monthly near Davis, operated by Hearty Meals for All.



Rescued meals at Community Fridges: Food rescue organizations distribute ready-made meals to Community Fridges and Somerville pantries, including Elizabeth Peabody House and Somerville Homeless Coalition’s Project SOUP.



HS Culinary Partnership: Participatory Budgeting (PB) funds support the High School to produce ready-made meals. Meals are distributed by OFAHC to community fridges, HHS case managers’ clients, and veterans living at Mass Bay Veterans Center.



East Somerville Meal Voucher Program: Grant and now City funding support East Somerville Main Streets to offer \$15 vouchers for food at local restaurants to residents in need.

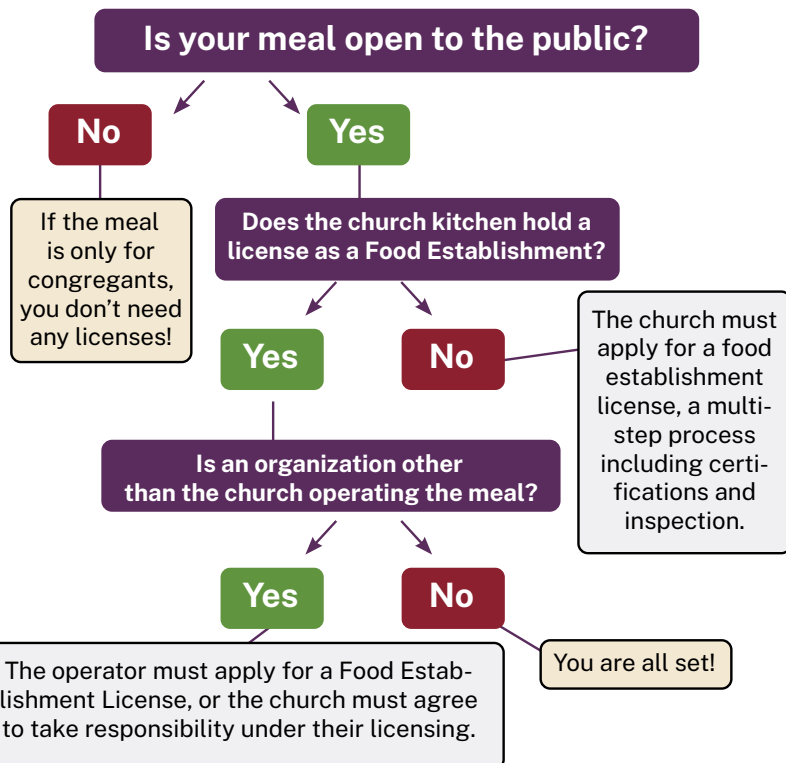


Community Cooks: Community Cooks organizes volunteers to cook home-made meals for partner organizations, such as shelters, day programs, and other spaces that support people experiencing food insecurity.

- There are **existing underused kitchens**, largely in places of worship, that could be optimized for versatile use, such as educational workshops and social events.
 - » This would provide an additional benefit in creating **incubator space** for mission-driven prepared food entrepreneurs.
 - » Potential meal program operators face challenges navigating the licensing and permitting process.
- City officials and stakeholders can **influence development processes**, and these processes could provide opportunities for incorporating shared kitchen space.



The Licensing and Permitting Process for Community Meals at Church Kitchens



KEY RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO READY-MADE MEALS

- Create, promote, and maintain updated **summary guides on how to navigate the permitting and licensing process** to support innovative food access initiatives.
- Help organizations with **underutilized kitchen space** to identify new opportunities for meal preparation and community gatherings.
- Find ways to **replace the discontinued Heat-n-Eats frozen meals** to maintain access to ready-made meal options.
- Financially support East Somerville Main Street's **restaurant meal voucher program to increase access** to prepared meals while **boosting local restaurants**.
- In collaboration with the City's Strategy and Development Department, **leverage community benefit negotiations** in the development process to better support food programming.

Want to learn more?
Find the full
assessment here:

