

# Millstone Cooperative

Creativity \* Open Communication \* Environmental Sustainability  
Social Justice \* Communal Ownership

## City Of Somerville Description

The city of Somerville is an urban industrial city, formed in the suburban expansion of the Boston area between 1870 and 1915. Bound by the wealthy city of Cambridge to the south and the suburban towns of Arlington and Medford to the West and the North, Somerville has become an increasingly popular place to live for a diverse group of middle-class residents and students since the beginnings of the 80s. Connected to downtown by the Red Line train and a network of bus routes, Somerville has spearheaded a cultural reform of Davis Square at its western end where Millstone currently sits.

The recent popularity of Somerville has resulted in gentrification. Moreover, the housing market in the Boston Area has caused a severe hike in rents in the city of Somerville, causing an acute shortage in affordable housing while displacing elderly and low-income populations. According to the 2000 census, only 9 percent of the 31,555 total dwelling units in Somerville are deemed affordable as defined by the state formula for affordable housing.

We believe housing cooperatives, like Millstone, create viable alternatives to the city's affordable housing program, which currently faces the threat of "expiring use" for securing affordable housing from volatile market forces.

The financial feasibility of BCC in a stressed city like Somerville depends on targeting the more affordable neighborhoods around the McGrath Highway and Broadway Avenue, such as Winterhill, Ten Hills and East Somerville, where most of the city's large multi-family homes have been placed on the market, likely to be purchased by developers for conversion to condominiums. Although Somerville housing stock is mainly composed of closely built two-family homes and triple-deckers, double-triple deckers and four family homes dominate this area, two typologies we have identified as being suitable for a future cooperative house.

We hope our long-term commitment to community involvement will compensate for any initial contribution made on our part toward the gentrification of our future neighborhood. While hoping to promote cooperative housing in the mentioned neighborhoods, the racial and educational profile of Millstone coop may run the risk of contributing to gentrification by virtue of its presence in what is largely a low-income Hispanic neighborhood. Based on the core values of social justice and open communication, the coop can, alternatively, become a valuable resource for the neighborhood by organizing educational activities and social support programs such as organic food cooperatives. Working with existing community organizations and the city, the coop can affect positive political action to promote the cause of affordable housing, an item on the immediate agenda of the city of Somerville and the Somerville Community Corporation.