



Millstone Co-operative

*vegetarianism and environmental sustainability  
open communication, creativity, communal ownership of property, and social justice*

## Neighborhood Profile: Somerville

The city of Somerville is an urban industrial, 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 with the Red Line and a network of bus routes, the municipality has spearheaded a cultural reform of Davis Square at the western end of Somerville where Millstone is currently housed.

The recent popularity of Somerville, which no doubt maintains a lively cultural and social life in the neighborhood, 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 also displacing the elderly and low-income population. 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, are 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 city with such high housing prices like Somerville depends on targeting the poorer neighborhoods around the McGrath Highway and Broadway Avenue ?such as Winterhill, Ten Hills or 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. Figure 1 shows the location of homes of appropriate size and price that have come on the market during the past year. 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.