

partially offset the cost of one month's rent, but we have always been a last resort, a short-term solution to a large-scale, systemic problem: Somerville's housing crisis.

Mutual aid will only get us so far.

MAMAS, as a collective, is a group of neighbors contributing to each others' lives, often via financial support to meet emergent needs and fill the gap between what the city and state can provide, and what is left of our neighbors bills. Staff from the City and SPS frequently refer their clients to MAMAS for rent assistance because they know that MAMAS, unlike traditional means-tested aid programs, will not turn anyone in Somerville away. In 2022, we redistributed \$120k in the form of groceries assistance and direct cash, and we are proud of the neighborly solidarity this fact demonstrates. However, mutual aid projects like MAMAS are not a replacement for increased sustainable and significant rental assistance in Somerville. That goal must be met by the city's government, using the city's much vaster resources.

With this year's Free Cash, Somerville has an opportunity to provide assistance that would make a consistent difference in people's lives. The SRC has even provided a suggested budget for how to allocate these funds. Of the minimum \$12M in their demand (30% of the available Free Cash), the SRC wants to see 50% invested into short-term housing solutions, and 50% into long-term solutions.

Short-term solutions include \$3M to flexible rental assistance, for continued support of low-income and immigrant tenants facing eviction and displacement, as well as being able to support newcomers. The SRC proposes \$3M to be invested in the new Municipal Voucher Program (MVP), potentially adding 20 more vouchers to the current [30-35 vouchers estimated to be funded by the program](#), for a total of 50-55 vouchers. We believe the City could do even more to support more families; we suggest that the city provide funds for *35 additional vouchers*, to support a total of 65-70 vouchers in the MVP program. Investing in long-term solutions requires allocating at least \$6M million to the Affordable Housing Acquisition Trust Fund to increase the supply of permanently affordable housing and land in Somerville.

We care deeply for our neighbors in Somerville. We want to make sure our neighbors can afford to stay in their homes. We ask that our City's elected officials take advantage of this moment to support the SRC's Free Cash Campaign and implement the suggestions provided here.

Should you have any questions, please contact us at askyourmamas@gmail.com.

In Solidarity,

The Coordinators of Mutual Aid Medford and Somerville ("MAMAS")