MAYOR's OFFICE OF HOUSING STABILITY – DRAFT BUSINESS PLAN
October, 2018

I. Agency Background

The City of Somerville and the Greater Boston region are facing an acute housing crisis, with soaring rents and home prices resulting in staggering waitlists for the City's existing supply of affordable housing. As demographic trends show that more and more area residents are seeking housing in Somerville and other cities and towns in the urban core where they have ready access to jobs, transportation and cultural and other amenities, this crisis continues to grow. At risk of displacement are some of Somerville's most vulnerable residents including immigrants, persons with disabilities, families, seniors and all persons of low and moderate income.

Displacement jeopardizes individual families and disrupts stable communities. In 2018, in recognition of the growing housing crisis and the City's commitment to working to prevent the involuntary displacement of Somerville's most vulnerable residents, in his Inaugural Address, Mayor Joseph A. Curtatone put forward a ten point affordable housing agenda. While some components of this agenda offer medium and long term strategies for increasing the supply of affordable housing and enhancing the rights of tenants to remain in their homes, the Administration looked for a strategy to address the immediate needs of Somerville residents facing displacement. Toward this end, the Administration called for the establishment of a new Office of Housing Stability (OHS) within its Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development.

As conceived, the OHS will assist residents at risk of displacement and develop policy and programmatic initiatives to fight displacement and prevent homelessness. An initial mid-year funding request was made in January, 2018 to hire an OHS Director who could then assist in guiding the development of the new OHS. As conceived, the OHS would be both a one stop center for residents in the community needing housing related assistance and a forum for identifying best practices for combatting displacement. Extensive outreach was conducted to receive input into development of this plan. Almost universally, those interviewed recognized that individual service work is critical to preventing displacement but alone cannot successfully combat the driving market forces leading to displacement. Polices aimed at increasing the supply of affordable housing, targeting more affordable housing resources to those at imminent risk of displacement, and protecting tenants' legal rights to remain in their homes and improving access to legal representation are critical components of an effective anti-displacement strategy.

MISSION STATEMENT/OBJECTIVES

The Office of Housing Stability (OHS) seeks to prevent the displacement of Somerville residents who are (1) in the process of eviction or other form of displacement or (2) at significant risk of displacement due to rent burden or other market forces. The OHS also seeks to assist those who are homeless or need to relocate to find appropriate shelter and/or permanent housing. The OHS will offer information and advice to all Somerville residents regardless of income and will prioritize residents of low and moderate income, seniors and persons with disabilities for its more in-depth services. The OHS will also work in partnership with other city departments, community service organizations, and housing agencies to identify and implement policy and programmatic initiatives designed to increase the supply of affordable housing, enhance tenants' rights, and prevent the displacement of families and disruption of communities in Somerville.

II. Community/Stakeholder Engagement

The OHS Director engaged in an extensive process of outreach to obtain input from the community and stakeholders regarding (1) gaps in existing resources within Somerville to address homelessness prevention and rehousing and (2) policy and programmatic priorities for the OHS. Meetings were held with each Alderman, City staff, and grass roots community groups and non-profit agencies working on housing and homelessness prevention issues. A full list of those persons interviewed is included in Appendix (A).

Sample of Feedback Received

Comments regarding services and resources needed to prevent displacement:

- *We need one place where tenants can turn to get housing needs addressed.*
- *We have insufficient resources within the non-profit community and city services for housing search and ongoing tenant stabilization.*
- *We need increased funding for legal services to represent tenants facing eviction and tenant associations; we need a dedicated lawyer for Somerville.*
- *We need to provide financial literacy (budgeting) and credit repair to help tenants to get approved for rental and homeownership opportunities.*
- *We need the OHS to produce a simple matrix of where to refer people for housing services*
- *We need flexible funds to be available to prevent evictions.*
- *We need housing search to include search for rooms for immigrant households who often cannot afford apartments.*
- *We need to provide immigrants training around housing and "public charge" issues [how receipt of public housing and other benefits might affect immigration status].*
- *We need to be aware of the particular needs of elderly renters and homeowners.*
- *We need family shelter that is not limited by DHCD criteria (non-EA shelter beds).*

- *We need resources for landlords to pay for bed bug and other exterminations and for tenants to get new furniture if needed.*

Comments regarding strategies for preventing displacement:

- *We need to do more landlord/realtor outreach to encourage landlords to rent to residents with rental subsidies and/or below market rents.*
- *We need short term rent subsidies for to pay rent during temporary loses of income.*
- *We need to update the Tenants Handbook to make it a resource for all residents and providers.*
- *We need to address the fact that market rents are much higher than Section 8 payment standards. People with Section 8 vouchers can't stay in the City [note: this was the single comment most frequently heard during interviews and refers to tenant-based rental vouchers funded by the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development].*
- *We need to work with those with connections in the immigrant community to build trust when offering resources.*
- *If the OHS makes referrals there needs to be clear communication with agencies being referred to follow up as to results, we need to see cases through to the end.*

Comments regarding proposed OHS policy initiatives and data collection:

- *Why can't we build denser housing near Davis Square? There should be more equity in zoning.*
- *We have an insufficient number of two bedroom apartments for seniors needing more than one bedroom (disability related, needed live in aids, etc.).*
- *It is insufficient for the OHS to address individual needs without addressing the systemic reasons for market driven displacement.*
- *We need to better target existing affordable housing resources in Somerville to those about to be displaced.*
- *We need to consider implementing a vacancy tax when units remain vacant.*
- *We need to do more to prevent displacement due to condo conversion.*
- *Stronger condo laws won't help that much because landlords can just develop unaffordable luxury rentals.*
- *We need a way to collect more data about displacement.*
- *We need families who are homeless and that commute back to school in Somerville to retain residency preference for all affordable housing programs.*
- *We should do heat mapping to see where evictions are happening.*
- *We want an easy way to see if there are any City restrictions on rent (e.g. deleading or rehabilitation programs). All Affordable Housing Implementation Agreements ("AHIPs") should be recorded at the registry of deeds.*
- *The OHS should identify best practices and work on larger policy solutions to displacement.*

III. Data relating to housing instability

Multiple factors are leading to the increased risk of displacement in Somerville. The MBTA's Green Line Extension, increasing population[1], low vacancy rates, rapidly rising rents and home prices and increasing wealth inequality are all factors which increase the threat of displacement of low and moderate income residents in our City.

Perhaps the most salient facts demonstrating the extent of the need for both additional affordable housing and services to prevent displacement are (1) the percentage of Somerville families who are "severely rent burdened" and (2) waitlist data relating to the demand of Somerville residents for affordable housing.

a. Rent and Cost Burdens for Somerville Residents

According to the 2015 Somerville Housing Needs Assessment[2] (HNA) there were approximately 20,947 households renting in Somerville. 17.8% of these renter households, or **3,722 households,** were paying more than 50% of their income for shelter costs and thus, were considered "severely rent burdened." Renters who are severely rent burdened are generally considered to be at serious risk of displacement.

Somewhat surprisingly, the 2015 HNA showed a similar percentage, although a smaller number of homeowners were similarly cost burdened. According to the 2015 HNA there are 11,239 owner occupant households. Of these Somerville households, 19%, or **2,134 households** were paying over 50% of their income for their mortgage and other housing expenses ("severely cost burdened")[3]. This places approximately 2,134 homeowners at serious risk of displacement**.** It is possible that this number overestimates the number of Somerville homeowners at risk of displacement as the demographic trend since 2013 has been higher income homeowners and/or investor owners replacing those of relatively lower income[4].

b. Waitlist data for affordable housing

Another critical piece of data to help determine the scope of need for housing related assistance in Somerville is the number of Somerville families on public housing, Section 8 and subsidized housing

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[1]/ The 2015 HNA indicates projected population growth of 5.9% from 2010-2020 and a 7.1% projected increase in "household growth." This disparity reflects lower numbers of residents per household. CAAS, in its 2017 Needs Assessment finds a 6% increase in population growth between 2010 and 2015 making Somerville the second fastest growing city in the state.

[2]/The most recent completed study of the Housing Needs of Somerville was performed in 2015. The City is in the process of issuing an RFP to contract for a vendor to complete an updated Housing Needs Assessment.

[3]/ HNA, Table 21, p. 33.

[4] /Community Action Agency of Somerville, Inc., Community Needs Assessment, July 10, 2017 p. 16 documenting increasing median household income in Somerville since 2000.

waitlists. As of the fall of 2017 there were approximately 2,494 Somerville families on the Centralized Section 8 waitlist[5] and 2,269 Somerville families on Somerville Housing Authority's public housing waitlists[6]. State public housing waitlists are currently closed for one, two and three bedroom family units. Federal public housing waitlists are closed for one bedroom and three bedroom family units. Public housing waitlists remain open for applicants meeting specified emergency criteria.

When applications were open for Somerville Community Corporation's thirty-five affordable units at 181 Washington St., Somerville, approximately 3,400 applications were received.

Both the number of Somerville renters and homeowners who are severely cost/rent burdened and the unmet demand for affordable housing in Somerville point to the critical need for services and policies which promote housing stability in Somerville.

IV. Target Population –Who will OHS serve?

The OHS will provide housing related information and advice to all Somerville residents regardless of income. More in depth OHS services will be prioritized for those of low and moderate income, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Contracted services and referrals to community partners may be limited to those meeting income and other eligibility criteria set by those agencies. It is anticipated that a contract for legal services will increase income eligible guidelines for provision of legal services from 150% of poverty to 60% of Area Median Income[7] to enable OHS to serve a somewhat broader range of tenants facing displacement than would otherwise be possible. The goal of the OHS is to place as few barriers as possible to Somerville residents seeking its assistance.

V. Existing Resources to serve households at risk of displacement and the homeless:

There are an array of services within the City and non-profit organizations that serve both the homeless population and those at risk of homelessness in Somerville. Navigating these services, the who-does-what-for-whom and at what "stage" in the eviction timeline can be complicated as intake opens and closes for some organizations, and there are different eligibility criteria and different services provided by each organization. The OHS will be a first point of contact for those seeking advice or assistance in housing related matters.

Somerville is extremely fortunate to have excellent community non-profits and existing City departments that share the mission of the OHS to prevent homelessness. The OHS will be able to refer to and collaborate with the following non-profit agency partners who provide services to prevent homelessness: [**Note: these are very brief descriptions of some homelessness prevention**

[5] /Data provided at 2017 Resident Advisory Board meeting by the Somerville housing Authority. Section 8 vouchers serve residents up to 50% of Area Median Income or $53,900 for a family of four.

[6] /Federal public housing is open to serve residents up to 80% of Area Median Income or $81,100 for a family of four.

[7]Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services' current income eligibility guideline is 150% of poverty, a far lower figure than 60% of AMI. For example, for a family of three at 150% of poverty in 2018 earns $31,170/year and at 60% of AMI is $58,260/year.

programming in Somerville and do not include all services provided or every agency providing such services]:

Community Action Agency of Somerville (CAAS): CAAS offers advocacy for tenants who have income below 125% of the federal poverty limit who are going through the eviction process. CAAS receives eviction complaints from the Somerville District Court after the complaints are entered. CAAS affirmatively reaches out to households in the eviction process. CAAS (1) assists with landlord/tenant negotiations and advocacy pre-Court and at Court as lay advocates (2) helps tenants to apply for largely Somerville based public and subsidized housing options and does limited housing search (3) assists with applying for public benefits.

Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS): CASLS, an office of Greater Boston Legal Services, provides legal advice and representation to low income families and individuals up to 150% of the federal poverty level in housing related matters including eviction, termination of housing subsidies and denials of eligibility for public and subsidized housing. CASLS also represents Somerville residents in state and federal public benefits matters including TAFDC, EAEDC, SSI, SSDI and SNAP.

Community Legal Services and Counseling Center (CLASCC): CLASCC will soon begin providing "lawyer of the day" services in the Eastern Division of the Housing Court sitting in Cambridge District Court in Medford. Services provided will be primarily "day of" or "limited representation" services and not full representation for Somerville residents. In addition, most Somerville eviction cases are still filed in Somerville District Court. CLASSC will not be providing lawyer of the day services to tenants in Somerville District Court eviction cases.

MetroHousing Boston: MetroHousing Boston is the regional non-profit funded, in part, through the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development and HUD to provide affordable housing and homelessness prevention services in the Greater Boston area. MetroHousing Boston is physically located in Boston but "co-locates " by providing limited staffing in areas outside Boston including one day per week at the Somerville Homeless Coalition. MetroHousing Boston runs the RAFT program which provides emergency financial assistance for rent and utility arrears for households with income under 50% of Area Median Income.

Somerville/Cambridge Elder Service (SCES): SCES provides protective services for persons over 60 including referral and case management to avoid homelessness. SCES does some amount of housing search with seniors facing displacement and funds legal services to provide representation in evictions of seniors from public or subsidized housing. SCES houses a mental health outreach team that specializes in reaching hard to serve seniors.

Somerville Community Corporation (SCC): In addition to being a developer of affordable housing, SCC provides employment-related services, first-time homeowner programs, financial literacy training (group and individualized) including budgeting counseling and advice regarding credit repair. SCC participates in many community organizing efforts including Union United, and Jobs for Somerville. SCC also staffs the Affordable Housing Organizing Committee (AHOC) which is a coalition of Somerville

residents and representatives of non-profit agencies seeking policy solutions to Somerville's housing crisis.

Somerville Council on Aging/ Health and Human Services: HHS and the Council on Aging provide application assistance (housing, benefits) and case management for persons 60 and older to avoid homelessness.

Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC): The SHC (SHC) runs a wide range of homelessness and prevention services with multiple funding sources which will not all be mentioned here . Some relevant services include the PASS program which is a temporary housing subsidy program (1-2 years) that can be used to keep Somerville residents in their homes or move to new homes within Somerville and administration of a variety of financial assistance programs that can help pay for rent arrears, housing start-up costs and other purposes needed for homelessness prevention.

Somerville Public Schools (SPS): The SPS homeless liaison assists homeless families with children in the Somerville public schools with school transportation, referrals and assistance.

SomerViva: SomerViva provides outreach to immigrant communities on city initiatives and provides advice and referral to the immigrant community on a wide range of issues including housing stabilization and homelessness prevention. SomerViva also provides interpretation and translation for City events and materials.

Veterans' Services: Assists eligible veterans with obtaining VASH and other housing subsidies and the full range of state and federal Veteran's benefits.

VI. OHS Direct Services Component

The OHS will provide information and homelessness prevention/advocacy services including those described below. These services are designed primarily to fill gaps in services provided by non-profit and City departments, and to increase service capacity where necessary to meet anticipated demand. The OHS will also contract with third party agencies to provide prevention/re-housing services that currently do not exist in the City or that exist with insufficient capacity to meet the anticipated demand for OHS services.

OHS direct services will include but are not limited to:

- Providing information to Somerville residents (tenants, landlords and homeowners), City staff, and non-profit agency personnel regarding a wide range of housing issues regardless of income
- Providing referrals to partner agencies and a wide range of community resources (See Appendix B for services available for referral)
- Providing in person workshops, and on-line resources regarding tenants' rights

- Providing educational workshops regarding housing search and access to affordable housing options in collaboration with contracted agencies
- Providing case management necessary to obtain services needed to stabilize tenancies
- Providing direct advocacy with landlords, community agencies and others to resolve landlord/tenant matters
- Helping residents and service providers understand, navigate and access the various services and housing resources provided by Somerville's full range of providers
- Helping residents to access a wide range of financial resources to prevent eviction in collaboration with partner agencies
- Assisting residents seeking information and advocacy regarding the City's housing related programs, and other affordable housing programs. The OHS will assist residents in completing housing applications.
- Engaging in landlord outreach to encourage landlords to work together with the OHS wherever possible toward preserving tenancies and expanding housing opportunities for low and moderate income tenants

VII. OHS Contracted Services

[See Section XII below for rationale]

- Legal advice and representation for tenants facing eviction, termination of subsidies or denials of public and subsidized housing;
- Individualized housing search and stabilization services for those seeking housing including housing in the private market for tenants with or without tenant based subsidies and those looking for rooms or other co-housing situations
- Tenant organizing capacity

VIII. OHS Programmatic and Policy Initiatives

The OHS will form an ***OHS Advisory Group*** to support OHS' start-up and early implementation phase during the first year of operation. It is anticipated that the Advisory Group will be composed of community resident(s) living in affordable housing and/or engaged in housing advocacy, housing policy or services experts and community homeless and/or homelessness prevention providers. The purpose of the Advisory Group is to help identify OHS policy and programmatic priorities and recommended implementation strategies.

At present, the OHS anticipates (subject to adaptation after formation of the OHS Advisory Group and fuller assessment of capacity) engaging in the following initiatives:

- Working with other City staff, Aldermen, and community partners for passage and/or implementation of policy initiatives identified by the Sustainable Neighborhood Working Group and/or Mayor Curtatone's Affordable Housing Agenda. These initiatives include (1) passage of

an updated Somerville Condominium Conversion Ordinance (2) passage of legislation to allow Somerville to implement a Real Estate Transfer Fee; (3) passage of Right to Purchase legislation; and (4) participation in the Community Land Trust Task Force. Initiatives requiring state legislative approval are likely to require multi-year strategies and broad coalition building.

- Identifying and evaluating new programmatic and/or policy initiatives to (1) increase and/or preserve the supply of affordable housing ; (2) strengthen tenants' rights; (3) better target existing affordable housing resources to those at imminent risk of displacement; and (4) strengthen efforts to prevent homelessness**.** Decisions regarding priorities for advocacy will take into consideration the time and resources required, likelihood of passage, scope of the impact and other considerations as they become identified.

- Developing criteria through engagement with community partners for establishing and implementing (subject to available funding) an Emergency Stabilization Fund. The OHS will consider direct administration of funds or contract out for administration. To date, community engagement has identified the following programmatic priorities (1) flexible funding for prevention of eviction and/or rehousing which is not subject to the same restrictions as other forms of prevention funding and (2) formation of a Section 8 incentive program to increase utilization of Section 8 vouchers in Somerville.

- Engaging in affirmative outreach to homeowners and landlords with one or more of the following goals: (1) informing homeowners who are planning to sell about the option of selling their building to a non-profit (2) informing realtors/landlords about possible incentives for renting to families with Section 8 vouchers and/or keep rents stable for tenants living in units already leased up with Section 8 vouchers if such an incentive program is funded; (3) asking larger landlords to provide tenants receiving eviction notices ("notices to quit") with flyers regarding services available at the OHS; and (4) supporting landlords willing to voluntarily rent at rents below market.

- Identifying and implementing a strategy for very short term temporary emergency shelter for families who are likely to be eligible for family shelter through the Department of Housing and Community Development but cannot access shelter without "being in a place unfit for human habitation."

- Evaluating possible benefits of developing a high risk team within the City/non-profits to collaborate on a comprehensive strategy for those at high risk of homelessness similar to known domestic violence high risk task forces.

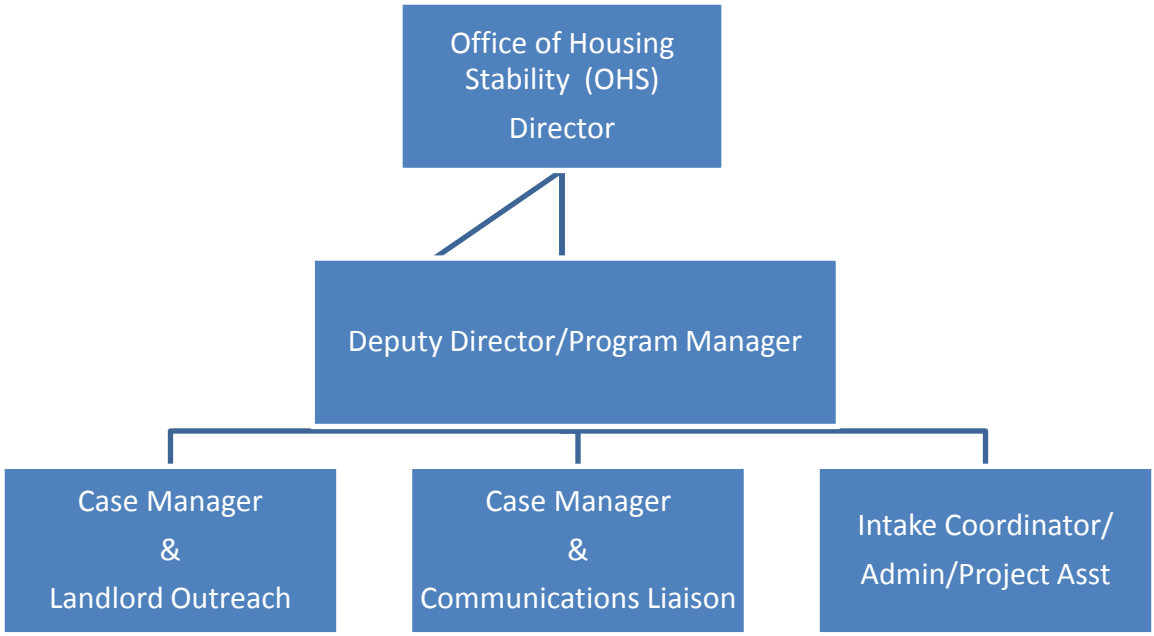
- Participating in the Somerville Housing Authority "Resident Advisory Board" process to obtain relevant data and provide comment on SHA federal housing policies as they relate to anti-displacement efforts in Somerville.

- Gathering court eviction data at least annually to determine number, location, causes and outcome of evictions in Somerville

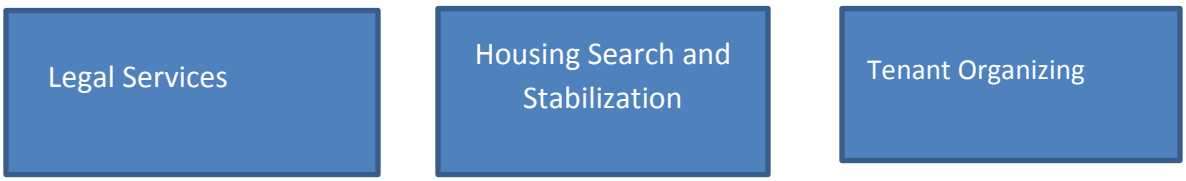
- Collaborating with academic institutions on additional data collection to better inform the OHS and the City in developing its anti-displacement programs and priorities.

IX. Proposed Operational/Organizational Staffing Chart for OHS

The OHS proposes a staff structure consistent with that presented to the Board of Aldermen by the Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development in the spring of 2018. Job titles and descriptions have been modified to assist in implementation of the OHS' proposed initiatives.



Third party contracts for direct services



The OHS, once staffed, will provide direct services to Somerville residents at risk of displacement and to those who have been displaced and who seek shelter and/or new housing. Through its services,

the OHS seeks to (1) enhance resources available in the community for homelessness prevention; (2) close gaps in existing homelessness prevention service networks; and (3) increase the capacity of our community partners to deliver and expand their services to the at-risk population. In addition, OHS will work with the city's Housing and Human Services Divisions to accommodate certain services and activities of those offices within OHS (see below) to (1) centralize housing inquiries at the OHS where expertise in homelessness prevention can be highly concentrated and (2) allow the Housing Division to have additional time to focus on its primary mission of developing, funding and implementing affordable housing programs to directly increase the supply of affordable housing available to Somerville residents; and (3) allow the Human Services division to have increased capacity to provide non-housing services for residents including connecting them to a wide array of services, benefits and other non-housing resources. OHS and Human Services will collaborate closely on client assistance, particularly when services beyond those directly relating to housing are necessary for households to avoid homelessness and achieve long term stability.

X. Volume of Requests for Housing information and Services in City Departments

In 2017, the City's Housing Division fielded 1,359 tenant inquiries about different aspects of its inclusionary program. In addition, the Housing Division fielded another 218 inquiries about housing issues unrelated to its inclusionary housing program. It is anticipated that many of these contacts will be routed to the OHS once staffed and fully launched. This will allow the Housing Division to be able to have additional time to focus on the development of new housing and management and oversight of existing housing programs.

In 2017 the HHS Social Worker had a case load of 102 clients of which 70 identified housing related concerns as one issue leading to instability. It is important to note that in most of these cases housing was not the only issue of concern identified and the Social Worker provided resources and referral to address multiple service needs. It is intended that once the OHS hiring is complete these housing related inquiries and requests for services will be routed by HHS to the OHS for timely follow-up. In addition, it is the goal of the OHS to screen those with whom we work in an on-going manner for ways in which the household can increase income and/or decrease expenses to assist with long term stabilization. It is anticipated that OHS case managers will be routinely identifying other non-housing needs for services from the City staff including (1) connecting tenants with clinical services, (2) connecting tenants with representative payee and similar services necessary for homelessness prevention and (3) information and advocacy on a wide range of benefit programs. These new service needs would be in addition to the inquiries and requests for assistance on a wide range of substantive issues that the Social Workers currently receives from city departments, residents, and area non-profits.

In 2017, the Council on Aging worked on 102 housing related issues. It is anticipated that the COA will continue to provide housing related assistance to community members over age 60 years of age but that inevitably some of these calls will transition to the OHS once it has greater visibility. In addition, the OHS remains available to provide technical assistance to COA housing advocates and others in the City working on housing issues when questions arise.

Finally, SomerViva staff had approximately 136 housing related inquiries in 2017. It is unknown at this time how many of these cases would have generated referral to the OHS.

XI. OHS Staffing Structure

Management Team:

As described above, the goals of the OHS include both a direct service component and engagement in policy and programmatic advocacy – each of which are necessary to prevent displacement. The following are brief descriptions of the proposed functions of each OHS position. More complete job descriptions are included as Appendix C. As this will be the first year of OHS operation job descriptions are preliminary and responsibilities may shift due to newly identified needs or priorities.

OHS Director: The management structure of the OHS is designed to give the Director primary responsibility for (1) policy development and advocacy at the City and statehouse on Somerville initiatives; (2) participation in existing legislative advocacy coalitions on housing and homelessness; (2) formation and management of the OHS Advisory Board; (3) maintaining external relationships with city, regional and statewide allies including participation in coalitions; (4) keeping up to date on housing laws, programs and resources ; (5) researching best practices in anti-displacement and evaluating possible new program areas; and (6) having overall responsibility for ensuring the quality of OHS services including supervision of the Deputy Director. Given the specific expertise of the OHS Director, the Director will also be responsible, as necessary, for substantive staff training and on/going substantive mentoring of OHS staff.

Deputy Director/Program Manager: The Deputy Director will have primary responsibility for most of the Administrative Management tasks relating to the running of the OHS including but not limited to (1) staff supervision, development of goals, and evaluation; (2) selection of a data base and data management ; (3) negotiating, drafting and monitoring contracts for services; (4) financial management; (5) development and oversight of internal OHS policies, forms and procedures; and (6) initiating and participating in interdepartmental collaborations on housing issues.

Staff Positions:

Housing Intake Specialist/Administrative and Project Assistant: The Intake Specialist will (1) perform intake functions at the OHS by phone and in alternate locations as needed due to requested accommodations; (2) assist homeless callers in locating available shelter options; (2) maintain up to date information regarding available referrals (3) perform administrative tasks such as entering data, ordering supplies, submitting invoices and arranging interpretation; (4) follow up on referrals to obtain data necessary to track program outcomes; (5) update information regarding openings and closings of waitlists, lotteries and other regional affordable housing opportunities; and (5) collect data on evictions on an annual basis and assist on other projects as directed.

Case Managers/Housing Specialists: There will be two case managers responsible for providing direct services to those seeking assistance from the OHS. Case managers will (1) perform research and provide advice and information to landlords, homeowners and tenants; (2) evaluate needs of OHS clients and develop and implement plans for housing stabilization and income maximization; (3) make and follow up on referrals to contracted and other agencies; (3) engage in advocacy with landlords, agencies and others to resolve landlord/tenant matters (4) assist residents with applying for and accessing affordable housing resources and financial assistance for homelessness prevention or re-housing; and (5) provide trainings or solicit others to provide trainings on tenants' rights and housing search/accessing affordable housing.

It is anticipated that each case manager will also have one of the following two secondary job responsibilities:

(1) **Landlord outreach** – one case manager will be primarily responsible for landlord outreach in furtherance of OHS programs; and
(2) **Communications** – one case manager will be primarily responsible for updating web content, maintaining social media accounts, generally publicity and advertising of events.

XII. Need for Contracts for Legal Services, Housing Search and Tenant Organizing

a. Contract with legal services for legal advice and representation in evictions, subsidy terminations and administrative cases to prevent displacement:

In Fiscal Year 2017, 469 summary process eviction cases were filed in Somerville District Court. While Somerville District Court serves the City of Malden as well as Somerville, the vast majority of cases are evictions from Somerville properties.

There are glaring discrepancies between the percentage of landlords and the percentage of tenants that are represented in summary process actions in the Commonwealth. In 2017, the Trial Court Department published data which looked at the percentage of litigants in housing court that were unrepresented. This data indicates that on average statewide ***93% of all tenants were unrepresented in eviction actions in housing court[8].*** By contrast, only 33% of landlords in the state were without counsel in eviction cases. A local non-profit, Cambridge of Somerville Legal Services, has done multiple one month snapshots in time to obtain data about levels of representation in eviction cases in Cambridge District Court. These snapshots found similar levels of representation for tenants and significantly higher levels of representation for landlords. Although no data on levels of representation in Somerville District Court is presently available, it is the OHS Director's best estimate that as with District Court in Cambridge, at least 90% of landlords are represented and fewer than 10-15% of tenants are represented.

[8]https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2018/10/01/2018%20Housing%20Court%20Self-Represented-Represented%20Litigants%20by%20Court%20Location.pdf.

In 2012, the Boston Bar Association undertook a pilot study in Quincy District Court in order to determine how important legal representation for tenants was to case outcomes. Results showed that tenants that received full representation compared to a control group fared **twice** as well in retaining possession of their apartments than unrepresented tenants and almost five times as well in terms of rent waived and monetary awards[9]. It is critical to note that in many cases time to move and/or money damages is a critical component of a tenant being able to successfully relocate into either subsidized or private housing within their community or elsewhere. This study confirmed the critical role that attorneys play in preventing displacement. In recognition of the importance of legal services to anti-displacement efforts there have been increasing calls for a right to counsel in eviction cases. San Francisco and New York were the first two municipalities to enshrine and fund this right. Last, municipalities and grassroots organizations working on anti-displacement have incorporated funding for legal representation into their strategies.[10]

Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services (CASLS) – an office of Greater Boston Legal Services – provides legal services to six cities and town including Cambridge, Somerville, Arlington, Belmont, Winchester and Woburn and is the primary provider of legal services to Somerville residents[11]. CASLS recently had a large increase in its contract funding from the City of Cambridge which significantly increased the number of Cambridge housing cases CASLS is required to perform. By necessity, CASLS prioritizes provision of services to those that are specifically grant funded. Without a contract that allows CASLS to expand its number of attorneys and/or increase its grant funded services specifically to be provided in Somerville, few resources will be available to serve Somerville residents referred by the OHS.

Together, the City of Cambridge, the Massachusetts Legal Assistance Corporation (MLAC) and CASLS have developed a highly successful model of preventing homelessness by combining legal services, case management and financial assistance administered by the City. A similar prevention model can be established in Somerville with legal representation, OHS and Human Services case management and submission of requests for financial assistance to appropriate agencies.

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[9]/ The Importance of Representation in Eviction Cases and Homelessness Prevention, Boston Bar Association Task Force on the Civil Right to Counsel. (March, 2012)

[10]/ Mayor Walsh includes funding for legal representation in anti-displacement agenda) https://www.boston.gov/news/mayor-walsh-unveils-anti-displacement-legislative-agenda; http://www.acgov.org/cda/hcd/documents/FINALDisplacementServicesRFP080717.pdf (Alameda County Development Agency funds legal services for renters and homeowners as part of its Anti-Displacement Plan); https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/08/nyc-ensures-eviction-lawyer-for-every-tenant/536508/ (New York City guarantees right of legal representation to tenants facing eviction.

[11]/ Harvard Legal Aide Bureau occasionally provides representation to Somerville residents but its focus is Boston Housing Court and it closes over vacations and in the summer. In addition, Community Legal Services and Counseling Center (CLASSC) was funded to do a one year pilot to provide limited representation in court of tenants facing eviction in cases heard in the Eastern Housing Court. It is anticipated that CLASSC will have very limited capacity to provide full representation to Somerville residents and will not represent any tenants who cases are heard in District Court. As of this date the vast majority of Somerville evictions are heard in Somerville District Court.

b. Contract for individualized housing search assistance and stabilization

Many Somerville tenants, including those with Section 8 vouchers and those in private housing who are facing displacement due to rent increases, no fault eviction, condo conversion, building sales, changing household size or the like will need to relocate to new housing. Relocation may be forced upon tenants or initiated by tenants themselves when units are too small for growing families, there is medical need for a different type of apartment, or an apartment becomes unaffordable. While some tenants are able to navigate an independent housing search others face many barriers to a successful search. Frequently tenants who must relocate are computer illiterate or don't have regular access to a computer, have limited English proficiency, have few skills to effectively approach landlords or realtors and have difficulty understanding how Section 8 rent limits work in multiple cities and towns. Comprehensive housing search services can be the key to preventing homelessness for these families.

1. Housing search need in Somerville:

The categories of households likely to be in need of housing search services in Somerville in a given year:

a. Housing search need: Section 8 voucher holders

In the fall of 2017, the Somerville Housing Authority (SHA) reported that it had approximately 1193 tenant based vouchers[12]. The number of these vouchers leased in Somerville was as follows:

- 768 Section 8 housing choice vouchers with 344 leased in Somerville (45%)
- 48 Family Unification Program (FUP) vouchers with 12 leased in Somerville (25%)
- 4 Homeownership Vouchers with 1 in Somerville (25%)
- 187 DHAP vouchers (persons with disabilities) with 60 leased in Somerville (32%)
- 118 Project Based vouchers all in Somerville (100%)

Based on this data it can be determined that there were approximately **417 families with Section 8 mobile** vouchers from SHA then residing in Somerville. Given the disparities between market rents and allowable Section 8 rents,[13] it is likely that some percentage of these families will be in need of housing search services.

In the twelve month period prior to its fall 2017 report, SHA had issued **fifty (50) "moving vouchers**" to tenants with Section 8 vouchers who needed to relocate. Of

[12] / In addition to SHA vouchers, MetroHousing Boston, Cambridge Housing Authority, Boston Housing Authority and others have an undetermined number of Section 8 mobile vouchers leased in Somerville.

[13]/ Current SHA payment standards for apartments with all utilities included are $1421 for a one bedroom; $1,740 for a two bedroom; $2,182 for a three bedroom; and $2370 for a four bedroom. The Somerville Homeless Coalition conducted a rent study in 2016 finding average rents of $2458 for a one bedroom, $3,212 for a two bedroom and $3,776 for a four bedroom.

those fifty families with vouchers, twenty one lost their vouchers because they were unable to find any alternate housing. Only six were able to be successfully leased up in Somerville. Remaining families leased up outside Somerville. In addition, SHA reported that 101 of its families in the Section 8 program **were paying more than 40% of income** for shelter expenses. These families are vulnerable to eviction and/or need to move in order to meet their non-housing expenses.

b. **Housing search need: Households paying more than 50% of their income on shelter costs**

As described in Section III (a), p. 4 above, it is estimated that 3,722 Somerville renter households are at severe risk of displacement due to shelter cost exceeding 50% of household income. Some percentage of these households will, in a given year, need housing search services due either to displacement or the need to relocate to more affordable housing.

c. Housing search need: Condo conversion

Over the eight year period from January, 2010 through December, 2017, approximately 1,130 rental units were converted to condominiums[14]. The vast majority of these conversions were in two and three family buildings and in FY17, 85% of these units were delivered vacant[15] . Conversions generally require tenants to vacate their units and to locate and secure new rental housing accommodations. At times, this happens before a permit is sought and prior to a building sale. Less frequently this occurs when tenants are housed at the time a conversion permit is sought. In cases where tenants being displaced are low or moderate income, elderly or disabled they will likely be in need of housing search assistance.

d. Housing search need: Eviction

469 eviction cases were filed Somerville District Court[16] in FY2017. Although Somerville data is not available for the number of filed cases which resulted in eviction, we do have useful data from the City of Boston. Data from the Boston Housing Court indicate that for 2016, executions for possession[17] issued in 38% of eviction cases and in 2015, executions for possession issued in 43% of the eviction cases filed. Using the lower figure of 38% and assuming that 400 of the 469 Somerville District Court cases were Somerville cases, this would mean that approximately 152 families needed to relocate

[14]/Draft Condominium Review Board FY18 Annual Report.
[15] /See Condominium Review Board FY17 Summary Information.
[16]/ Less than 100% of the cases filed in Somerville District Court are evictions from buildings located in Somerville. Eviction cases for Medford are also brought in Somerville District Court. In addition, Somerville eviction cases can now be brought in the Eastern Housing Court sitting in Cambridge District Court in Medford.
[17]/ An execution for possession issues when judgment has entered for the landlord. The execution can then be given to the constable to physically remove the tenant from his/her home.

as a result of court eviction. In addition, many families move when told they need to do so, without court involvement and regardless of whether they have in fact found other appropriate permanent housing. At present there is no way to accurately determine how many families relocate involuntarily prior to eviction[18].

2. Gaps in housing search assistance in Somerville

Successfully navigating the complicated subsidized and private rental market in the greater Boston area is substantively difficult (even for advocates), requires computer access and skills, language skills and is very time consuming. This difficulty is compounded for tenants with Section 8 and other tenant based vouchers who often have imperfect understanding of the subsidy lease up process. At present there are almost no individualized housing search services available in Somerville[19] for those tenants (1) with subsidies that need to relocate (2) those seeking apartments, or rooms, on the private market both in Somerville and elsewhere and (3) those seeking affordable housing in cities and towns outside Somerville. Some agencies will assist tenants in applying for primarily Somerville based affordable housing only but not all have a thorough understanding of how to evaluate or document program priorities and preferences. Most homelessness prevention providers in the area have identified individualized housing search as an essential missing service in the City of Somerville[20]. To be successful, a housing search will need to have a few components: (a) housing search workshops (b) intensive individualized housing search assistance and (c) cultivation of realtor/landlord relationships and incentives.

c. ***Contract for tenant organizing***

A key component of a successful anti-displacement strategy is tenant organizing. Many anti-displacement efforts grounded in principles of racial and economic equity nationwide have identified tenant organizing as a key component of successful anti-displacement campaigns[21]. Long time tenants' rights organizers at City Life Urbana in Boston employ what has been an effective strategy of fighting

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[18] /The Boston OHS worked for passage of the Jim Brooks Stabilization Act which would have required that landlords send copies of notices to quit to the Boston OHS. This piece of home rule legislation did not pass in the Statehouse. It would be the intent of the Somerville OHS to continue to explore avenues for mandatory and/or voluntary compliance with a similar notice requirement.

[19] /Somerville Homeless Coalition provides limited housing search assistance for its Emergency Solutions Grant recipients under 30% of Area Median Income only. CAAS, COA, SCES will provide some application assistance to those in their caseloads needing to apply for subsidized housing programs in Somerville. This is in contrast to housing search services for homeless families and individuals which are provided by a variety of Somerville agencies including the Somerville Homeless Coalition, RESPOND, Short Stop and other homeless providers.

[20]/The Cambridge Multi Service Center provides group housing search workshops which are open to Somerville residents. In my experience group led workshops without individualized follow-up assistance are insufficient to successfully rehouse most tenants.

[21] /See "Equitable Development: The Path to an All-In Pittsburg" at www.policylink.org/all-in-cities/pittsburgh; "Tenant Organizing for the Right to the City" by Dawn Phillips, Gentrification News, RTC updates https://righttothecity.org/tenant-organizing-for-the-right-to-the-city; "Resisting Displacement in the Southwest Bronx: lessens from CASA's Tenant Organizing" May 2017.

displacement through a combination of tenant organizing, legal representation and access to city services and programs. Boston's Housing Director Sheila Dillon in a meeting with the OHS Director named tenant organizing as one of the more successful strategies to bring landlords to the table for negotiations around rent increases. The City of Boston provides funding to the Community Economic Development Assistance Corporation (CEDAC) which in turn provides funding to various tenant organizing initiatives which both prevent displacement and empower low income residents. All-In-Cities, a coalition of groups nationwide seeking new tools to prevent displacement and empower residents identifies increasing the political voice and power of impacted communities in decision making.[22] OHS' funding of tenant organizing assistance will build capacity for organizing tenants in buildings facing, or at risk of, displacement and enable low and moderate income tenants to be a more effective voice in the development of city and state policies relating to housing and affordability. The OHS Director has previously worked as an attorney on anti-displacement efforts in Cambridge during a time where there was a successful tenants' rights organization with funded staff. Campaigns to stave off rent increases or building sales to investors were significantly more likely to find success if there was an organized tenant group with professional organizing support. Without sustained technical assistance tenant organizations often falter over time and/or they lack the expertise to maintain the type of momentum necessary to fend off displacement. For these reasons, the OHS will contract for third party tenant organizing support to work with community volunteers to target at risk buildings or buildings housing a significant number of immigrants, seniors or persons of low or moderate income. Attention will also be given to multifamily rental properties having a mix of higher income tenants and lower income tenants to foster a base of solidarity[23] with regard to occupancy issues to be negotiated with the property's ownership.

XIII: Proposed Goals and Objectives for Year One:

The first year of OHS operation (from official public launch in approximately) will by nature by a year of setting up and evaluating program components and searching for best practices for preventing homelessness. The following is a best estimate of first year goals and objectives:

#1: Year One Goal **HIRING**
Hire Asst. Director (AD)
Hire Case Manager #1/Communications Assistant
Hire Case Manager/LL outreach #2/Housing search
Hire position #3 – intake/admin
Training new staff in house and provide for external training opportunities

[22]/ http://allincities.org/where-we-work/anti-displacement-policy-network/network-activities.

[23]/ Noting the example of Millbrook Lofts which underwent conversion to condominiums, a combination of a strong tenant organization, legal resources, Aldermanic support and support from the Housing Division led to a largely successful outcome for building tenants and prevented the displacement of all fifteen households in Inclusionary Units.

#2 Year One Goal **Identifying and Implementing Office procedures**
#3: Year One Goal **THIRD PARTY CONTRACTS**
Develop RFP and/or contract for legal services
Develop RFP and/or contract for individualized housing search services and stabilization informal resolution of evictions (with search services and reporting to continue until permanent housing is located)
Develop RFP and/or contract for tenant organizing
#4: Year One Goal **CITYWIDE OHS LAUNCH**
Develop Communications and outreach strategy
Implement Communications Strategy including translation of important documents
Develop web content and plan for Web launch
Develop and maintain necessary Forms for OHS services
Identify and train staff to provide on-going OHS social media content
Determine scope of OHS data to be collected and set up systems for collection
#5 Year One Goal **Client services**
Provide advice, referral, advocacy and case management services
Assist tenants with housing applications
Monitor services provided by contracted agencies
Initiate group workshops
#6 Year One Goal **Develop Emergency Rent Stabilization Program proposal**
Evaluate gaps in existing financial assistance programs
Engage stakeholders in planning process
Draft program/funding proposal and review with community partners and City staff
Present proposal to Somerville BOA
#7 Year One Goal **Develop Plan for landlord outreach regarding renting to voucher holders**
Identify and obtain necessary data to determine level of need
Develop promotional materials on Section 8 incentives (if funded)
Develop communications plan including social media, promotional materials to promote renting to Section 8 voucher holders
#8 Year One Goal **Develop a short term emergency option for families needing to access EA shelter**

Determine method (hotel placement v. emergency placement location in non-profit) – set up systems based on method chosen
Develop systems for providing follow up shelter access support services
#9 Year One Goal **Develop a matrix or chart currently available homeless prevention resources in Somerville**
#10 Year One Goal **Work with others to better target existing affordable housing resources to those at imminent risk of displacement**
#11 Year One Goal **Develop link on website or other website content with up to date information about local affordable housing waitlist openings and closings**
#12 Year One Goal **Develop content for tenants' rights and housing search presentations**
#13Participaton in Integrated Affordability Strategy Project
#14 Obtain a database that will suit the needs of OHS and, if possible, housing and human services programs.

d. Evaluation Measures for Year One

It is extremely difficult to establish accurate service targets in this first year of program development with incomplete knowledge as to funding levels and prior to subsequent negotiations with third party service providers. Evaluative measures will include (1) the number of tenants, landlords and agency personnel serviced by the OHS and its partner contracted agencies with advice, advocacy, referral or financial assistance; (2) the number of tenancies retained; (3) the number of units obtained; (4) the number of persons attending OHS workshops and (5) the number of affirmative contacts made with realtors or landlords.

A very rough estimate of anticipated services for the twelve month period after the OHS is fully staffed and/or after contracts are executed with appropriate agencies as applicable: (1) the OHS will provide advice and/or services to at least 275-375 households; (2) the OHS will perform four tenants' rights presentations; (3) the OHS will perform four housing search presentations; (4) legal services will provide direct services in fifty cases, including direct representation (with at least 80% of the cases resulting in a tenant remaining in their home, and/or a tenant retaining their housing subsidy or transitioning into alternate appropriate permanent housing) and requests for legal advice and perform three trainings for OHS staff and invited guests based on an estimated $80,000 annualized funding; (5) housing search and stabilization services will be provided to at least sixty households with at least 75% of such households finding appropriate housing and/or avoiding homelessness; and (6) tenant organizing support will be provided to tenants in buildings at risk of rent increase, sale or conversion.

XIV. Medium and Long Term Goals

Anticipated medium and long term goals: [these goals and objectives are preliminary as the OHS plans to organize an Advisory Committee to assist in defining OHS goals and initiatives]. Current thinking as to medium and long term goals are as follows:

a. Research, identify and where possible implement innovative strategies for the prevention of displacement
b. Identify new non-municipal sources of funding where available to the OHS and/or its partner agencies for funding anti-displacement work. Look for possible collaborations with academic institutions that may be helpful in developing pilot projects.
c. Work with the city's Housing Division and non-profits toward targeting of Somerville affordable housing resources to those at imminent risk of displacement
d. Be available to convene stakeholders to strategize around difficult housing/shelter/homelessness issues that might have programmatic or policy solutions
e. Determine appropriate database for the OHS and specific other City divisions to share data and information
f. Consider developing a "high risk of homelessness" team in Somerville modeled after the high risk domestic violence task force that brings together agencies and resources as needed for difficult to help/house families [e.g. mental health, homelessness prevention, school departments, social services, housing programs, legal services].
g. Explore possibilities for how to fund one or more "Non-EA funded" shelter bed or apartment for homeless families
h. Develop systems for staying updated as to regional housing opportunities
i. Develop additional staff capacity to assist with legislative initiatives at the state and federal level.
j. Expand capacity for data gathering and analysis

APPENDIX A

Interviewed as part of OHS outreach regarding program goals and priorities:

1. Somerville Board of Alderman, each individually
2. City of Somerville
    a. Tim Snyder – Mayor's office – Director of Intergovernmental Affairs
    b. Annie Connor – Mayor's office – Legislative Liaison
    c. Skye Stewart – Mayor's office – Chief of Staff
    d. Doug Kress – Director of Health and Human Services;
    e. Michael Glavin – Director Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development
    f. Nancy Bacci – Director of Human Services;
    g. Luciana Quintanilla – Human Services social worker;
    h. Regina Bertholdo, Director of Parent Information Center and Homeless Liaison
    i. Cindy Hickey – Director Council on Aging
    j. Natalia Naim – Council on Aging social worker
    k. Ashley Speliotis – Council on Aging social worker
    l. Michael Feloney – Director of Housing
    m. Kelly Donato – Assistant Director of Housing
    n. Hannah Carrillo – Sustainability Coordinator – Housing Division
    o. Denise Taylor – Director of Communications
    p. Adriana Fernandes, Somerviva - Immigrant outreach worker
    q. Irma Flores, Somerviva – Immigrant outreach workers
    r. Brian Bishop – Veterans Services Director

3. External groups and agencies involved in homelessness/housing issues

    a. Cambridge and Somerville Legal Services – Susan Hegel, Deb Filler, Lee Palmer (attys)
    b. Community Action Agency of Somerville – David Gibbs, Executive Director
    c. Somerville Homeless Coalition – Erin Bradley, Executive Director, Lisa Davidson, Director of Housing Programs
    d. Somerville Community Corporation – Danny LeBlanc, Executive Director, Meredith Levy, Assistant Director, Renee -
    e. Right to Counsel Coalition: Annette Duke, MLRI and Russell Engler - Suffolk Law School
    f. Our Revolution Housing Committee
    g. Affordable Housing Organizing Committee (upcoming meeting)
    h. Welcome Project – Ben Echeverria – Director

APPENDIX B

Sources of Referrals for OHS Clients

(not a complete list)

- Somerville Homeless Coalition for emergency financial assistance, on-going rental subsidies through PASS and comprehensive services for homeless households
- MetroHousing Boston for hoarding [Note COA provides hoarding services for seniors]
- MetroHousing Boston for intensive housing search for those most at risk [very limited capacity, triaged for urgency, limited identified housing resources outside of Boston]
- CAAS for benefits assistance and housing advocacy in evictions, terminations, assistance with applications for subsidized housing
- Legal services: HLAB and CASLS for housing. HLAB closed in summer and over holidays. Services are mostly provided in Boston Housing Court. Some limited legal services will soon be available in the Eastern Housing Court in Cambridge that covers Somerville evictions. GBLS for family law, political asylum, child care, state and federal benefits
- SCC: financial literacy, credit counseling and budgeting
- COA for housing applications, referrals and case management for those 60 or older
- Health centers for social workers/case coordinators
- Somerville Human Services Department for benefits advocacy, engagement with medical and a wide range of other services; short term case management
- Housing Division for its housing programs and fair housing issues and complaints
- SomerViva for advocacy and outreach within the immigrant communities
- CAPIC (in Chelsea) and CASCAP (Somerville) for representative payee services; Rent Secure for automatic bill payment [often necessary for resolution of cases where there is a history of non-payment of rent
- Parent Information Center – homeless liaison and school based parent liaisons for advocacy and transportation for homeless
- COA and SCES for housing related and other services for Somerville seniors including applications, protective services for seniors facing eviction
- CEOC for MassHealth applications and advocacy and tax preparation assistance
- Cambridge Human Services for fuel assistance.

APPENDIX C

JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Primary duties of the Director of OHA: As conceived (and if the position of Assistant Director is funded) the primary duties of the Director include, but are not limited to:

- Oversees the office of Housing Stability to ensure that high quality services are being provided to those seeking housing related assistance from the OHS
- Makes overall decisions about OHS scope of work
- Provides substantive training and on-going substantive mentoring to OHS staff
- Directly supervises the Deputy Director
- Develops and works with a Community Advisory Board to identify policy and programmatic priorities to prevent displacement and homelessness;
- Participates in external substantive coalitions such as the Housing Coalition, EA coalition and Metro Mayors Task Force
- Researches and maintains awareness of best practices in anti-displacement work done by municipalities in the state, nation, and internationally
- Works in collaboration with other City agencies, community and regional partners to seek passage of legislative priorities
- Convenes local stakeholders to engage in problem solving around specific housing/homelessness issues that are unaddressed by current systems and that are identified by relevant stakeholders and the community at large
- Works to develop systems both within City programs and with other non-profit housing providers to better target existing affordable housing resources to persons at imminent risk of displacement
- Acts as a spokesperson for the City on anti-displacement issues, and where appropriate , provides information to Board of Alderman and other decision makers on local anti-displacement issues
- provides testimony and/or advocacy on anti-displacement measures at the State House
- Works with others in the Mayor's office to develop and implement strategies for passing top priority home rule legislation or other legislation critical to the success of the City's anti-displacement efforts
- Participates in existing advocacy coalitions working on expanding the supply of affordable housing or increasing the rights of tenants to remain in their homes or avoid homelessness

Primary duties of the Deputy Director:

- Develops and maintains systems for tracking data regarding the activities of the OHS

- Oversees maintenance of a database of locally available affordable housing opportunities and familiarity with similar databases in the Greater Boston area
- Negotiates contracts for services with outside agencies and monitors compliance with these contracts
- Provides supervision of staff including development of goals and evaluations
- Responds, along with the Director, to requests for information from the Board of Alderman and other City agencies
- Develops and implements OHS policies and procedures
- Works together with the Director on policy initiatives as capacity allows
- Convenes homelessness prevention workgroup in the City
- Attends meetings of the OHS Advisory Group
- Monitors assignment of work functions to case management and intake staff
- Oversees landlord outreach
- Ensures consistency of departmental operations
- Maintains interdepartmental relationships and organizes meetings between departments on housing issues
- Oversees budget management and purchasing

Primary duties of housing specialists/case managers:

- Perform intake functions (both over the telephone and in person and alternate locations as needed to accommodate disabilities)
- Make necessary referrals and do follow up on all referrals made
- Answer questions, perform research or otherwise take steps to answer questions of callers
- Obtain relevant documents and releases for assessment of housing issues
- Develop plan for informal resolution of housing matter [negotiate with landlords, seek reasonable accommodations, advocate with agencies, assist in obtaining appropriate clinical services, etc.]
- Identify ways for residents to increase their income and/or decrease expenses
- Assist clients in applying for housing related financial assistance
- Assist with completion of applications for affordable housing – work with contracted agency to develop housing search plan
- Coordinate clinical services as needed in conjunction with legal services
- Provide trainings on landlord tenant law and housing search
- Spearhead landlord outreach efforts (Case Manager/LL Outreach)
- Develop OHS social media content and to supplement City wide communications efforts in coordination with City Communications Department (Case Manager/Communications Liaison)
- Update website content (Case Manager/Communications Liaison)

- Provide advice to landlords and advice and assistance to tenants in buildings undergoing condominium conversion

Primary duties of housing intake specialist/administrative and project assistant:

- Provide customer service and serves as initial contact for those seeking OHS services
- Responsible for data entry and maintenance of client data base
- Provide information and referral to services to Somerville residents
- Help OHS clients navigate service systems in collaboration with housing specialist/case managers
- Assist in maintaining up to date information on waitlist openings and available affordable housing resources
- Help coordinate response to emergencies and assist in trying to locate temporary shelter as needed
- Perform administrative functions such as ordering supplies, submitting invoices, arranging for interpretation, assisting with mailings, maintaining equipment
- Assist in coordination of outreach to landlords, realtors and others
- Follow up on referrals to obtain outcome data for program evaluation
- Collect and share data from Somerville District Court and Eastern Division of the Housing Court about evictions on at least an annual basis