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From: Derek DuPont [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, February 25, 2024 5:56 PM
To: Public Comments
Subject: Somerville's ShotSpotter Usage & 2023 Surveillance Tech Report

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Hello city councilors,

I hope you've been able to enjoy this cold yet sunny weekend!

This past week, [WIRED magazine obtained access to a leaked document containing the locations of thousands of ShotSpotter sensors across the country](#). These locations have been kept secret from police departments and the communities they serve. WIRED used demographic information from the latest American Community Survey to determine that "nearly 70 percent of people who live in a neighborhood with at least one SoundThinking sensor identified in the ACS data as either Black or Latine. Nearly three-quarters of these neighborhoods are majority nonwhite, and the average household earns a little more than \$50,000 a year."

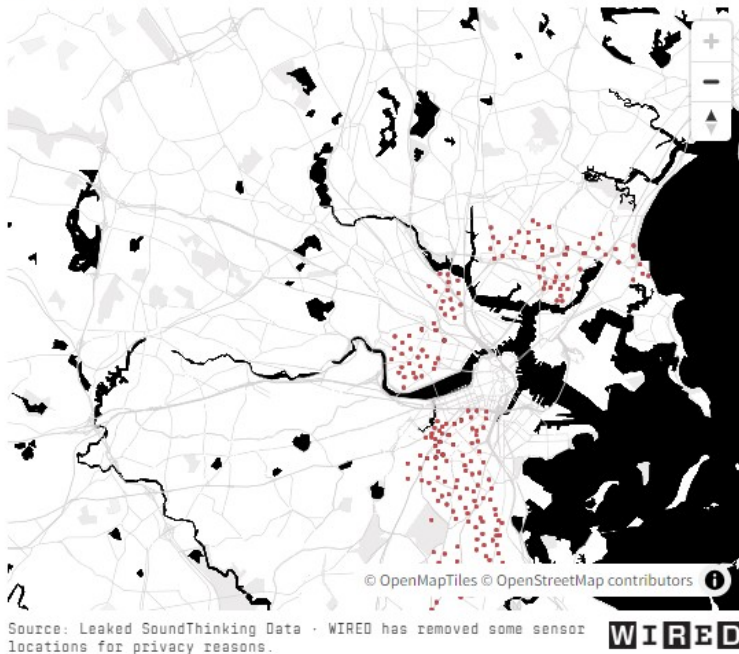
If you are unfamiliar with ShotSpotter technology (or its manufacturer, SoundThinking), it has a notorious reputation:

- ["There is more than enough evidence at this point to conclude that technologies like ShotSpotter do essentially nothing to stop crime," \[U.S. Senator Ron\] Wyden says, "but instead have a well-documented discriminatory impact on marginalized and vulnerable communities."](#)
- Two weeks ago, [Chicago's new mayor announced the city would not renew its ShotSpotter contract](#) because of its cost (both financially and socially) and its ineffectiveness.
- ShotSpotter has received pushback in major Massachusetts cities like [Boston](#) and [Worcester](#).

Knowing this context, I looked for leaked sensor locations in Somerville. There is a clear pattern: **the locations are exclusive to eastern Somerville neighborhoods.**

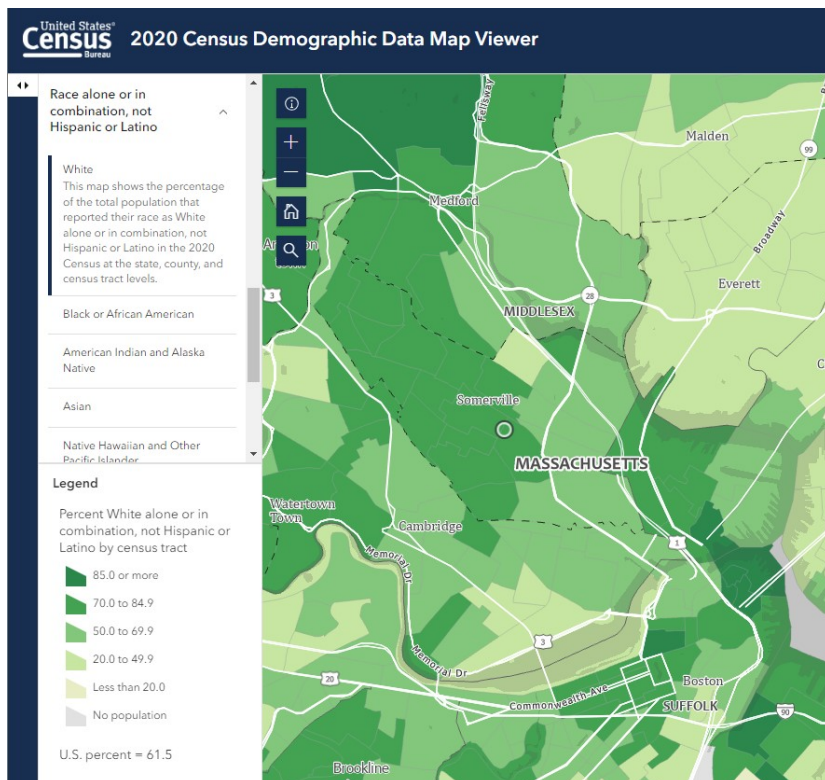
Leaked Locations of SoundThinking's Sensors

A leaked document exposes the extensive reach of the company formerly known as ShotSpotter's network of sensors. It reveals the locations of 25,580 gunshot detection microphones.



(Image: Cropped map from WIRED article showing Greater Boston. Within Somerville, there are sensors placed throughout eastern parts of Somerville.)

If you reference the [latest census data](#), you will see that these are some of the least white communities in Somerville (aligning with WIRED's aggregate findings).



(Image: Cropped map of 2020 census demographic data showing roughly the same region as the previous image. Census blocks are darker green where there is a greater percentage of respondents identifying as "White alone or in combination"

or Latino". The sensor locations are largely in neighborhoods where this percentage is "50.0 to 69.9", whereas this percentage is "70.0 to 84.9" in much of central and western Somerville.)

Somerville's relationship with ShotSpotter is detailed in [this year's surveillance technology report \(page 21\)](#). Notably, the report states that there have been "no complaints received" regarding this technology. **Please consider this correspondence a complaint!** While funding for these sensors comes from the Urban Area Security Initiative and thus does not directly affect our municipal budget, I do not think our police department should be using federal dollars to target our communities of color with an unreliable technology.

The surveillance technology report goes before the Legislative Matters committee this week. To committee members: **I request that you interrogate the administration about its continued usage of ShotSpotter despite its well-reported infamy and ineffectiveness.** Please do what you can to help remove this discriminatory surveillance technology from Somerville.

All the best,
Derek DuPont,
Ward 3