Developing Affordable Housing
Along Somerville’s Rail Corridors

Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning
For Somerville Community Corporation

Field Projects Team #9

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Executive Summary

Somerville, Massachusetts is the most densely populated city in New England and the fifth most densely populated in the United States. At over 19,000 people per square mile, residential space in Somerville is at a premium (Demographia 2003). In addition, the Boston metropolitan area has experienced a rapid rise in housing prices over the past few decades. Currently, even people of middle incomes often find it difficult to purchase, or even rent, quality housing in the area. Partially due to these factors, high density and a strained housing market, undeveloped and underdeveloped land is extremely difficult to locate and obtain in Somerville. The Somerville Community Corporation has recognized that of those parcels that meet their criteria for affordable housing development, many exist along two of the railroad corridors that run through the city. Furthermore, these areas are already undergoing transformation from industrial to residential uses. With little land available anywhere else in Somerville, SCC has targeted these areas for potential projects.

The MBTA has added some urgency to SCC’s efforts to obtain land along the two railroad corridors. Plans to extend the Green Line through Somerville and Medford could potentially cause gentrification in those areas, increasing housing costs, increasing demand tensions on the housing market, and further reducing the availability of affordable housing. Obtaining properties and earmarking them for affordable housing before the extension of the Green Line would help to ensure that property would be retained for affordable housing if and when those property values do increase.

The major purpose of this project is to identify land parcels along Somerville’s existing rail corridors which would have the greatest potential for affordable housing. This information is meant mainly for SCC, but could potentially be used by the City of Somerville, or by other entities interested in developing affordable housing in the city.

Working in partnership with SCC, we, a team of Tufts University Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning graduate students, have identified and analyzed parcels along Somerville’s two major rail lines, the Lowell and the Fitchburg lines. This analysis has resulted in 27 parcels which we are recommending as sites to be targeted for affordable housing projects. Each of these parcels is analyzed according to site specifications, zoning, access to services, and economics. These resulting 27 parcels provide real opportunities for affordable housing projects within Somerville, a city which needs such development desperately.

Background

Somerville Community Corporation

The Somerville Community Corporation’s Mission Statement is as follows:

Somerville Community Corporation (SCC) is a membership organization that provides leadership for sustaining the city of Somerville as a vibrant, diverse and tolerant community. We develop and preserve affordable housing. We offer services and lead community organizing that supports low and moderate-income Somerville residents in their efforts to achieve economic stability and increase civic participation.
SCC develops both rental and ownership properties in Somerville. The organization currently owns and operates 86 rental units and over the next five years aims to build or renovate 100 additional housing units. The process for finding suitable properties or parcels varies by situation, but in general, SCC tries to identify a property and negotiate an agreement before it hits the market. SCC draws funding for its housing projects from a diversified group of sources, including grants, contracts, rent payments, donations, and private investment through Low Income Tax Credits and private mortgage debt. SCC also receives funding from both the city of Somerville and the state of Massachusetts. (SCC Annual Report 2003-2004)

Project Goal

As agreed upon in the Memorandum of Understanding, the Somerville Community Corporation asked the Tufts graduate student team to complete a land-use inventory along the Boston-Lowell and Fitchburg rail corridors and produce a schedule of immediately abutting and nearby properties. For properties with development or redevelopment potential, the Field Projects Team was asked to complete more in-depth analyses of development potential. The Team also produced GIS land-use overlay maps of Somerville zoning and the recommended parcels, among others. The goal of producing such documents was to identify and illustrate parcels most suitable for siting affordable housing, paying special attention to access to public services.

Somerville Overview

With only four square miles of land and over 77,000 residents, Somerville sits squarely in the Boston Metropolitan Area. Somerville’s status as one of the densest cities in the United States has already been established. In part because of the high density and demand to live and work in Boston and Somerville, the availability of housing has decreased significantly in recent decades, causing housing prices to skyrocket and making it difficult for many to afford to live in the city. Many sections of Somerville have become gentrified, pricing long-time residents, especially blue collar workers, out of their former neighborhoods. One of the ways the city addresses its housing issues is through its zoning practices. Among other objectives, article 13 (Inclusionary Housing) of Somerville’s Zoning Ordinance is intended to increase and preserve housing opportunities for low and moderate income people, ensure that the housing is affordable over the long term and prevent the displacement of low-to-moderate income Somerville residents. The inclusionary zoning regulation states that rental units should be affordable to low-income (up to 50% of Boston’s median household income) and low moderate-income households (51-80%). Inclusionary ownership units should be affordable to low-moderate (up to 80%) and moderate-income (81-110%) households. (Somerville Zoning Ordinance, Article 13) Somerville Community Corporation is concerned with creating households for all of these income levels. SCC rental housing typically serves households below 60% of adjusted mean income (AMI), with at least 30% set aside for 30% AMI or below. Homeownership projects typically target households of 80% AMI,
but often include the moderate-income tier for financial feasibility.

Somerville Rail Corridors

Rail Corridors and Industry in Early Somerville

In studying the Lowell and Fitchburg lines today, it is helpful to have historical background as to how those and other corridors have coincided with the city’s development. Like many other New England cities and towns, Somerville witnessed the impact of the railroad and its symbiotic relationship with early industrial development. Before the Industrial Revolution, Somerville was mostly a grazing area for the livestock of residents of neighboring Charlestown (DHCD). But after the creation of the famous mills in Lowell and Waltham in the early 1800s, great advances were made in canal and railroad freight transportation. Somerville’s position between Boston and industrial sites in the Merrimac Valley facilitated the placement of several major rail lines through its land.

Somerville experienced its own industrial development during the nineteenth century. After incorporating itself as a town in 1842, population tripled within eight years and further doubled every 10 years until 1880. The surge of population was accompanied by companies that fabricated brass tubes, iron, steam engines, and glass. Food processing, meat packing plants and bricklaying soon followed. Streetcars were integral in fostering Somerville as a then-suburban city. At the apex of its population in the 1940s, over 105,000 people lived in Somerville, producing a population density surpassing Calcutta, India (DHCD).

With greater suburbanization and a growing technology sector in the Boston area, people and skilled labor jobs left Somerville after World War II (the people moved to the suburbs and the jobs went overseas). The businesses and factories along the rail corridors soon folded up and remained vacant for many years. The Boston & Maine, the company that ran one of the major lines that still runs through Somerville, suffered heavy losses due to the collapse of heavy industry in New England and from competition from freight trucks. The B&M abandoned freight service altogether in 1960 leaving the rail corridors underutilized.

However, resurgence in the urban lifestyle, an investment in public transportation, and the economic spillover from neighboring major universities in the last few decades breathed new life into Somerville. The MBTA – which acquired the failing B&M in 1973 – established commuter rail service along both the Lowell and Fitchburg lines. The MBTA also extended the Red Line from Harvard Square through Davis Square in Somerville.

Although the rail lines themselves are currently being better utilized than in the past, many of the properties that lie next to the corridors are not. Since redevelopment of heavy industry is very unlikely along the rail corridors, there is potential for conversion of old and underutilized industrial and commercial properties into residential uses.
Future Plans for Rail Corridors

As part of a mitigation agreement resulting from the construction of the Central Artery/Tunnel Project, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts vis-à-vis the MBTA is required to provide additional transit services to municipalities affected by greater traffic flow along Interstate 93. Somerville is included among these municipalities. The MBTA has proposed to extend the Green Line light rail service from Lechmere Station in Cambridge through Somerville, along the Lowell line, to the commuter rail stop in West Medford. Proposed stops include Washington Street, Gilman Square, Union Square, Lowell Street, College Avenue/Tufts University, and Winthrop Street. According to Mayor Joseph Curtatone, this project will cost approximately $350 million. There are no plans to alter service along the Fitchburg line at this time.

The extension of the Green Line has the potential to spur transit-oriented development akin to the renaissance seen in Davis Square. It would also provide a one-seat ride for many commuters heading to Boston, Cambridge, Brookline, or Newton. But the future of this project is uncertain. The Commonwealth has cited financial constraints as a reason to delay the project, perhaps indefinitely. According to the mitigation agreement, the Commonwealth must complete the Green Line extension by 2011 unless it can provide an engineering-based reason for its unwillingness to finish the project. The Conservation Law Foundation and several municipalities, including Somerville, are currently investigating legal options to ensure that the extension begins as soon as possible.

Why Build Affordable Housing Near Rail Corridors?

Several factors make rail corridors attractive for possible affordable housing. First and as previously mentioned, these corridors contain many of the remaining vacant or underused parcels in the city. Secondly, many of these properties, because they lie physically along railroad tracks, because they may be or may be adjacent to brownfield sites, and because many are underutilized, are less expensive than parcels in other areas of the city. In addition, because rail corridors are often flanked by major roads, zoning is more conducive to building higher density residential properties. Finally, if the MBTA follows through with its promises, proximity to the lines, most notably the Lowell line, will mean easier access to jobs, commercial centers, and services for those living near the corridor.

Transit Oriented Development

Transit oriented housing development has long been a popular system of development and has become a major planning tool during the past two decades. This sort of development allows for local commuters to walk to public transportation, rather than using individual vehicles, easing congestion. Such neighborhoods, planned around transit “nodes,” save the residents money by negating the ownership of two vehicles, often needed in suburban households. TOD also improves the environmental impact of development in that people are less dependent on
automobiles, and thus, burn less fossil fuel. Businesses also flourish in transit-oriented areas due to the high foot traffic from those using the public transportation system.

For reasons of convenience, property around transit areas tends to be much more expensive than in the surrounding areas. These high prices often cut off low-income families from the convenience of living near well planned public transportation. This is unfortunate, because, as Anne Canby states in her article, “Affordable Housing and Transportation: Creating New Linkages Benefiting Low-Income Families,” “…after housing, transportation is now the second biggest expense for America’s families.” She also claims that because of the aforementioned necessity of owning one or multiple vehicles, homeownership is unattainable for many low-income families. This effect is severely detrimental to communities because homeownership is the easiest instrument for a family to increase their wealth. In Canby’s article, she includes a graph of U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics information published by the Consumer Expenditure Survey in 2001. This chart graphs the percent of income (after taxes) spent on transportation by different income groups. This chart demonstrates that as income level rises, the percent of income spent on transportation decreases. Households with an after-tax income of $0- $13, 908 spend 39.1% of their income on transportation while households earning $71,898 and more after-tax income only spend 12.4%. These statistics further emphasize the need for more affordable housing near affordable public transportation. Canby states, “Access to

reliable and affordable public transit can be the difference between staying in poverty and realizing economic opportunity.”

The high burdens of transportation costs on a family’s budget and their link to affordable housing are often not addressed by transportation policy makers. It is important for community groups, such as the Somerville Community Corporation, to recognize this need and to anticipate transit-oriented development.

Denise Provost, Somerville Alderman-at-large, addresses the question “Doesn’t Somerville Have Enough Affordable Housing Already? Or, Why I Believe in Public Support for Affordable Housing,” in one of her e-newsletters. She discusses the possible Green Line extension by stating that “While Somerville needs and deserves improved mass transit, improvements like the Green Line extension will further increase the desirability and value of Somerville real estate.” This statement reinforces Canby’s claim that affordable housing around transit areas is often difficult to develop and maintain because of the high resident demand to live by public transportation.

In her newsletter, Provost quotes Stephanie Pollack, a former Conservation Law Foundation employee who writes that, “even in communities that welcome Transit Oriented Development, with its increased densities of buildings and people, ‘you have to be concerned about the other “D” word: displacement.’” With improved mass transportation and the accompanying increase in land values, people are often forced to move out of
their home communities. For these reasons, and in anticipation of the extension of the Green Line by the 2011, Somerville must begin now to counteract the increased housing prices that may accompany these changes. By isolating potential affordable housing sites along rail corridors, Somerville Community Corporation would fortify accessibility to this affordable transportation mode for those low and moderate-income residents of Somerville. In doing so, SCC has the opportunity to help provide them with the possibility for increased economic mobility.

Methodology

Definition of Terms

In completing our project, it was necessary to define three key terms that are central to our research. These terms are “underutilized,” “redevelopment potential,” and “affordable housing.” We defined these terms with the help of Somerville Community Corporation and by using our personal knowledge of what these terms meant and how they related to the goals for our research.

The first term, “affordable housing,” is a generally used term. Because so much of our efforts are based on the idea for a need for affordable housing, it is necessary to define the term here. Though, as stated above, Somerville stipulates several different levels of what the city considers affordable, we will be using the term “affordable” in describing housing that is designated for those persons with incomes under 80% of the median income. We are using this definition as provided by the Somerville Community Corporation.

The second term, “underutilized,” is used in our research in order to help determine which parcels we are recommending to redevelop. We have defined “underutilized” to mean those parcels that are being used for a low property value use or unsightly use, such as automotive repair and sales, commercial uses that do not include small store fronts and strip malls, or other lower-value, small industrial uses.

Finally, it is necessary to define “redevelopment potential” because this is the term used to isolate those parcels that we chose as ideal places to build affordable housing. This term has been specifically defined for the purposes of our research in conjunction with the SCC. We have defined a parcel with “redevelopment potential” as one that is 8,000 square feet or larger, is not host to a single or two-family dwelling, and has not been built or renovated in the past twenty years. More specific criteria for redevelopment potential are mentioned in the following section.

Parcel Schedule Completion

The first step in our research was to organize an inventory of possible developable sites along each of the aforementioned rail corridors. In doing so, we used GIS data from the Tufts University GIS lab to identify all land parcels along both the Lowell and Fitchburg corridors. During the process, we generated a 500 foot buffer along each rail line. Coordinating the buffer with Somerville GIS data, each rail corridor yielded over 1,300 possible parcels. We then excluded parcels according to our definitions of development potential. Only sites of
8,000 or more square feet were kept. Those sites built or rehabilitated within the past 20 years were excluded, as were parcels occupied by single or two family homes. Finally, we excluded sites currently containing the few schools, hospitals, and other vital public service buildings found within the buffer. We then submitted this list to Kristin Blum of the Somerville Community Corporation. Using her extensive knowledge of the city and its real estate, Kristin reviewed this list and removed all of the parcels that SCC was not interested in or knew were not available. This yielded parcel inventories of 44 properties along the Lowell line and 70 along the Fitchburg line, for which we completed two schedules.

These final parcel schedules include information on the following:

- Street Name and Number
- Owner Information
- Year Built
- Sale Date
- Price at Sale Date
- Use Description
- Zoning Information
- Brownfield Status
- Land in Acres and Square Feet
- Gross Area
- Living Area
- Total Assessed Value
- Land Value
- Building Value
- Land Value per Square Foot
- Building Value per Square foot of living area

Most of these categories of information came from the GIS data. Assessment data was obtained from the Somerville assessor’s data. Brownfield status was obtained from the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection. When GIS and the assessor’s data conflicted, we used the more recent assessor’s data. This occurred most often with recent sale dates, and in the majority of the land area calculations. Finally, we calculated Land Value per Square Foot and Building Value per Square Foot of Living area. These schedules are contained in Appendixes A and B of this report. Please note that outbuildings, such as garages and fences are not included in building assessment, but are in total assessment.

Analysis of Recommended Parcels

In the final portion of our analysis, we analyzed each of the 114 properties on the schedules. This process included reevaluating the plots according to the Somerville assessor’s site, utilizing brownfield information, visiting and taking pictures of the sites, reviewing zoning regulations and neighborhood characteristics, and doing a general cost analysis. Each parcel was then classified as Not Recommended, Recommended, or Highly Recommended. For those not recommended, the major reasons for our decision to Not Recommend them are noted on the parcel schedule. For those parcels which we deemed recommended or highly recommended, we completed an in depth analysis of the site, its development potential, and possible challenges.

Each analysis of a recommended parcel was completed using a common template. At the top of each is a picture of the property and information regarding its current use, lot size, zoning, brownfield status, and cost of
land and building(s). Level of recommendation is also noted in bold. Each analysis section contains the following subheadings: Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses, Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation, Economic Impact of Redevelopment, and Overall Recommendation. Each subheading is briefly explained below:

- **Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses**

  This section details the site in terms of specifics of its current use, its physical characteristics, its relationship to surrounding properties, and distance from the rail tracks. The section notes zoning status and briefly discusses what type of housing can be built in such a zone, and if and how the zoning might need to be changed to accommodate affordable housing development. In doing so, we used Articles 6 and 7 of Somerville’s zoning ordinances. These were accessed at http://www.ci.somerville.ma.us/section.cfm?org=clerk&page=197. In general, this section highlights why the location of each parcel is deemed appropriate for affordable housing development.

- **Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation**

  Each parcel is then analyzed in terms of accessibility. One of the most important criteria for locating any housing is access to services. This becomes even more important in looking at developing affordable housing, in that residents may or may not have access to personal vehicles. Though there are few parts of Somerville where access to either commercial centers or public transportation are especially difficult, some areas are more accessible than others. This section also contains analysis of how close recommended sites are to proposed transportation, specifically the Green Line Extension discussed in Section 3.

- **Economic Impact of Redevelopment**

  The Economic Impact section of each analysis provides a very basic discussion of how developing affordable housing on the specific site would impact the city’s tax base and the surrounding neighborhood. In Somerville, the tax rate for commercial property is $20.29 per $1000. For residential property, the rate is $10.75 per $1000, not including a partial exemption for affordable housing or a residential exemption for owner-occupied housing units. Because we cannot predict what the assessment value of an unbuilt building is, it is impossible to say for sure what the impact of transitioning other uses to affordable housing would be. Therefore, we attempt to compare a similar sized SCC project to what the current tax on a similar property is. The three comparison sites we used were: One 8-unit homeownership property with units valued at $146,600; one 42-unit rental property with an assessed value of $133,176.19 per unit; a 19-unit rental property with individual units assessed at $108,973.70. These values were provided by SCC. These tax analyses should be viewed as approximations, intended to provide a general sense of what residential redevelopment might do to tax revenue. It is not meant to provide an exact tax figure for each property. A more in-depth tax analysis should be
performed on desirable parcels, perhaps using more extensive reports on affordable housing structure assessment within the city. It should also be noted that there is some intrinsic value in affordable housing which cannot be completely quantified. Diversity of income levels within a community has value to that community. It can be also said that there is value in simply providing adequate housing for those who work in or near a community. It is difficult to quantify these ethical values, and we have not attempted to do so here.

- **Overall Recommendation**

The overall recommendation provides a holistic analysis of why the parcel has been chosen for recommendation. The most significant criteria for each parcel are incorporated and highlighted in these sections. The section finally provides a level of recommendation, either *recommended* or *highly recommended*, depending on how strongly those criteria suggest the site is an ideal development site.

Admittedly, there is a subjective aspect to these final recommendations. After sorting the parcels by objective criteria such as zoning, size, price, and brownfield status, we believe that some level subjective analysis is not only appropriate, but necessary in recommending parcel sites. In the end, visiting each site and asking subjectively if affordable housing could work on each was one of our most valuable criteria tools. For that reason, those sites which are recommended below contain both objective data and our educated opinions about how well affordable housing would fit on each site. The site analyses follow below.
Boston-Lowell Corridor Recommendations

**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 270 Cedar Street  
Current Use: Commercial  
Lot Size: 14,810 ft$^2$ / 0.34 Acres  
Zoning: RB  
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $266,800  
- Buildings: $53,500  
- Total: $532,400

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<th>Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:</th>
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270 Cedar Street is currently being used as a Curves fitness center. Cedar Street runs directly off of Broadway, a main road that runs through Somerville, and is located in the Ball Square area near the Lowell corridor. Cedar Street is situated in a residential area, though the road it is located on is fairly busy. This parcel is located across from the Trum Playground and Trum Field. The property is zoned RB which allows for residential buildings of no higher than 3 stories. According to Somerville zoning regulation, this particular lot is large enough to hold 14 units. Lastly, the current use includes a small parking lot with spots for approximately 15 cars, which would be beneficial for potential residential construction.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

This property is less than ½ mile from local retail, supermarkets, and restaurants located on Broadway. Walking to and from these shops is convenient. Cedar Street is also close to the Somerville bicycle path, which allows for easy access to shops and the Red Line stop in Davis Square.

Cedar Street is easily accessible by car and train, being immediately off of the main road, Broadway, and near the bikepath. Because it is located in Ball Square, bus stops are prevalent nearby (80, 89, 90, 101 bus lines). The parcel is currently closest to the Davis Square T stop on the Red line. The Lechmere stop on the Green Line and the Sullivan Square stop on the orange line are both accessible by buses. The proposed Ball Square stop along the Green Line would be easily accessible from Cedar Street.
Economic Impact of Redevelopment:

Transition from a commercial use to an affordable housing structure would possibly add to the city tax base. If, for instance, 10 new units were built, similar to SCC’s Linden Street development, each unit would be assessed at an estimated $133,000. At the current residential rate, that would yield $14,000 annually, compared to the current property revenue of $10,800. The parcel can be said to be underutilized in that the very small one story business does not conform to the otherwise residential area. An affordable housing development would reinstate the consistency of the residential neighborhood and would also be a more visually appealing use than the slightly run down business.

Overall Recommendation:

270 Cedar Street is a small parcel located in a residential area and close to commercial and retail services. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot, bus, and train service. The primary downfall of this site is its relatively small size. The proximity to the playground and Trum field, however, makes it an ideal location for families with young children. It is not difficult to imagine an affordable housing development on this property as high-density residential housing currently surrounds it. However, this would have to be a very small development project. The value of $18.01 per square foot makes this property financially attainable. For these reasons, this property is recommended.
163 Glen Street is currently being used by the American Legion as their meeting/central location. Glen St runs directly off of Broadway, a main thoroughfare. Though very close to this main road, 163 Glen Street is situated in a quiet residential area. The parcel is zoned RB which allows for residential building of no higher than 3 stories. This particular lot is large enough to hold 30 units, according to zoning regulation. The Lowell line runs closest to this property. Lastly, the current use includes a large parking lot with spots for approximately 25 cars, which would be beneficial for potential residential construction.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

This property is one block from the Michael E. Capuano Early Childhood School and less than three blocks from the Somerville Community School. It is less than one half mile from local retail, supermarkets, and restaurants on Broadway. Walking to and from these shops is easy and safe as the route consists of only residential roads. Highway 93 is also very close, allowing for easy access to stores and services not immediately in the area.

Glen Street is easily accessible by car, as it is so close to the highway and immediately off Broadway. Bus stops are also prevalent nearby (86, 87, 88, 90, 91, and 101 bus lines). The parcel is currently closest to the Sullivan Square T stop on the Orange Line and the Lechmere stop on the Green Line. However, these stops are currently rather inaccessible. One would most likely need to take a bus to get to both of these stops. The proposed Washington Street and Gilman Square stops along the Green Line, however, would be easily accessible from Glen Street.
Economic Impact of Redevelopment:

Transition from a commercial use to an affordable housing structure would most likely add to the city tax base. According to zoning regulation, this parcel is large enough to build 30 affordable housing units. A structure this size would yield approximately $35,000 per year in taxes as compared to the approximate $10,800 per year generated by the current use. The parcel can be said to be underutilized in that the American Legion Lodge is inefficiently utilizing the 0.69-acre land with a one-story building. A new affordable housing development would reinstate the consistency of the residential neighborhood and would also be more visually appealing than the run-down lodge and empty parking lot. Because more than one affordable housing structure could potentially be built on this land, the changes should have a positive, rather than negative economic impact on the surrounding neighborhood.

Overall Recommendation:

163 Glen Street is fairly large parcel in a quiet residential area, close to commercial and retail services. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and possibly by future train service. The primary downfall of this site is that it is not immediately abutting a current T stop, however, the proximity to two public schools makes the location ideal for families with young children. It is not difficult to imagine an affordable housing development on this property as it is currently surrounded by high-density residential housing. Its low land value per square foot, $13.30, and reasonable building value per square foot, $24.17, also makes this property financially attainable. For these reasons, this property is highly recommended.
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 229 Lowell Street
Current Use: Commercial Warehouses
Lot Size: 31,098 ft² / 0.71 acres
Zoning: RC
Brownfield: Yes

Assessed Value:
- Land: $647,100  Land Value/Lot Size: $20.81/ft²
- Buildings: $417,500  Bldg.Value/Living Area: $15.11/ft²
- Total: $1,064,600

Address: 231 Lowell Street
Current Use: Commercial Warehouse
Lot Size: 14,440 ft² / 0.33 acres
Zoning: RC
Brownfield: No (adjacent site: yes)

Assessed Value:
- Land: $414,300  Land Value/Lot Size: $28.69/ft²
- Buildings: $147,500  Bldg.Value/Living Area: $12.54/ft²
- Total: $561,800

Description of Site and Relationship with Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

This pair of properties includes commercial warehouse/light industrial businesses situated in a dense residential neighborhood. Except for two abutting properties – also commercial warehouses – virtually all surrounding properties are multi-family homes. The zoning designation RC does allow this type of land use combination, but the potential noise and particulate pollution is deleterious to the surrounding residential properties.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

The properties are within walking distance (< ¼ mi) from numerous shops along the Highland Street corridor, including corner markets, banking centers, and restaurants. Highland Street is served by several MBTA bus routes.
The properties lie on Lowell Street, a major north-south thoroughfare. However, the bridge that currently crosses the rail corridor has been closed to vehicle traffic for the last 3 years. Estimates for its repair are not yet known. Due to the closed bridge, the site lies on a *de facto* cul-de-sac; direct access to the northern end of the street is only possible by walking.

The properties lie within 100 feet of a transit stop along the proposed MBTA Green Line extension (versions 1a-1c), which would connect it to the MBTA subway/rapid transit system. One proposed alternative (version 3) would place a Lowell/North Station line commuter rail stop at the site in place of a Green Line station. The Commonwealth, through mitigation agreements, is required to complete construction on this extension by 2011. This date is not yet confirmed due to the Commonwealth’s re-prioritizing of transit infrastructure projects and potential lawsuits.

**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

The loss of business revenue would be greatly outweighed by the increase of land and building values of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Furthermore, a transition to affordable housing is likely to increase property tax revenue from the site. With any increase in land values, the potential for gentrification is possible.

In addition, the proposed rapid transit and/or commuter rail stop at Lowell Street is likely to increase land values and reduce congestion in the immediate area.

**Overall Recommendation:**

Given its proximity to high-density residential properties, this property combination would be an ideal site for conversion to affordable housing. The removal of the current and neighboring non-residential land use would greatly benefit the land values of the surrounding properties. The brownfield status of 229 will increase costs of conversion to residential buildings, but there is an environmental benefit to all surrounding properties of addressing the contamination. If the two surrounding properties can also be converted, the entire neighborhood will benefit from a consistent land use pattern. Therefore, these properties are *highly recommended.*
**RECOMMENDED**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Address: 1 McGrath Highway</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Use: Car Wash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lot Size: 16,553 ft² / .38 Acres</td>
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<td>Zoning: IA</td>
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<td>Brownfield: No</td>
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<td>Assessed Value:</td>
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<td>• Land: $734,000</td>
<td>Land Value/Lot Size: $44.34/ft²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Buildings: $53,900</td>
<td>Bldg. Value/Living Area: $16.84/ft²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Total: $813,400</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address: 13 McGrath Highway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Use: Store/Shop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size: 16,117 ft² / .37 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning: IA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brownfield: No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessed Value:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Land: $729,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Buildings: $237,300</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Total: $1,006,200</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address: 35 McGrath Highway</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Use: Commercial Warehouse</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lot Size: 20,473 ft² / .47 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning: IA</td>
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<td>Brownfield: No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assessed Value:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Land: $802,400</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Buildings: $604,600</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Total: $1,449,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Address: 51 McGrath Highway
Current Use: Factory
Lot Size: 23,087 ft² / .53
Zoning: IA
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $837,700  Land Value/Lot Size: $36.28/ft²
- Buildings: $1,050,200  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $22.76/ft²
- Total: $2,017,700

Address: 61 McGrath Highway
Current Use: Vacant Land
Lot Size: 16,553 ft² / .38
Zoning: IA
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $322,200  Land Value/Lot Size: $19.46/ft²
- Buildings: $0  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $
- Total: $330,600

**Relationship with Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:**

These properties are situated on a major artery in a busy commercial/industrial area. The parcels fall into IA (Industrial District) zoning, which is intended “to establish and preserve areas for industrial and related uses which are not incompatible with commercial uses; uses which are most appropriately located as neighbors of industrial uses including living and studio space for artists; and uses which are necessary to service the immediate needs of industrial establishments in those areas, and accessory uses to industrial uses such as day care centers, cafes, health facilities, and the like” (Somerville Zoning). Residential uses are not permitted in IA zones, so a change in zoning or a 40B development would be required.
**Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:**

The McGrath Highway parcels are located within one half mile of a number of elementary and preschools. The properties are located across the street from the Twin City Plaza, a shopping center which contains a grocery store, pharmacy, office supply store, etc. The properties are less than two miles from the Cambridgeside Galleria mall.

The properties lie on McGrath Highway, a major artery which is served by two MBTA bus routes (90 & 88), and easily accessible to the current location of the Lechmere Station.

These properties would be affected by the North Point development, “…Spaulding and Slye’s large scale 48 acre, $1.2 billion development proposal for a new mixed use ‘urban village,’ which includes the relocation of the Lechmere Green Line T station, and high density, pedestrian oriented residential, office and retail development” (City of Somerville webpage).

**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Somerville’s zoning regulations specify that because of their acreage, these five McGrath Highway parcels could accommodate between 16 and 23 units each. To use one of the properties as an example, because of its size and Somerville’s zoning regulations, 35 McGrath Highway could accommodate approximately 19-20 units of housing. Compared to an existing SCC property with 19 units, it would be reasonable to estimate that an affordable housing structure of this size would generate approximately $22,257 per year in taxes, as compared to the approximately $29,400 per year generated by the current use.

**Overall Recommendation:**

After considering this site in its current status, located on a busy major artery, amidst primarily commercial/industrial uses, it would be difficult to develop desirable housing on these parcels. The city of Somerville states on its website, that “the corridor’s greatest strengths, proximity and access, create its greatest weaknesses, unfriendly pedestrian environment and overall safety. Intersections along McGrath Highway operate poorly and create dangers for the pedestrian and the auto. During morning peak hours, traffic heading into Boston and Cambridge experience serious traffic delays. Traffic issues are a major concern for the corridor and represent a larger regional traffic problem Somerville faces” (City of Somerville website).

Despite concerns about traffic and pedestrian access to these parcels, because of plans for North Point, and the assumption that the surrounding area will change and improve as a result, we **recommend** a more in-depth analysis of the McGrath Highway parcels.
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 297 Medford Street
Current Use: Auto Repair
Lot Size: 14,375 ft² / .33 Acres
Zoning: BA
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $468,300  Land Value/Lot Size: $32.58/ft²
- Buildings: $206,100  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $23.21/ft²
- Total: $692,800

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

297 Medford Street is currently an auto repair shop located in a commercial district surrounded by residentially-zoned areas. The parcel itself is in an area zoned BA (Commercial Districts), which allows for small-scale residential development and larger numbers of units with special permits. Somerville zoning code dictates that this parcel size could support approximately 14 units.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

297 Medford Street is situated within one quarter mile of the Somerville Public Library and two schools, including Somerville High School, located just up the hill from the parcel on Somerville Avenue. The parcel is located near small shops and restaurants, and is just under 1.5 miles from Porter Square shopping center, and 1.7 miles from Cambridgeside Galleria Mall. 297 Medford Street is also located just under one half mile from two supermarkets, Star Market and Market Basket.

Medford Street is accessible to MBTA bus route numbers 88 and 90 which service a stop on Highland and Walnut Avenues (.12 mile from the parcel). The parcel is within a half mile of four additional bus routes. The parcel is closest to the Lechmere T stop on the Green Line and would also be close to the proposed Washington Street and Gilman Square stops along the Green Line.

Economic Impact of Redevelopment:

The existing use contributes approximately $14,056 per year in taxes to the city of Somerville (20.29% commercial tax rate) and a residential use would likely contribute more. Compared with similar SCC projects, if 14 or more units were developed, this
property could yield $20,000 yearly. Also, with the proposed Gilman Square T stop nearby, this Medford Street neighborhood would only improve. The existing structures would need to be demolished to build housing on the parcel.

**Overall Recommendation:**

In addition to relatively easy access to commercial centers, this site is also accessible to Somerville High School and Public Library. The site is accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and possibly by future train service. A building dedicated to affordable housing is being developed across the street from this parcel, which could indicate that the neighborhood has shown support for these types of projects in the past, which would make it easier for SCC to develop housing in the area. For these reasons, this property is *highly recommended.*
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 350 Medford Street  
Current Use: Municipal  
Lot Size: 48,352 ft² / 1.11 Acres  
Zoning: BA  
Brownfield: No  

Assessed Value:

- Land: $713,800  
- Buildings: $672,900  
- Total: $1,445,300

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Land Value/Lot Size:</th>
<th>$14.76/ft²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bldg. Value/Living Area:</td>
<td>$16.12/ft²</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

350 Medford St. is currently a municipal building located in a commercial zone that borders a residential district in Gilman Square. The parcel is zoned BA (Commercial Districts), which allows for small-scale residential development and larger numbers of units with additional permits. The rear of the building directly abuts the Lowell line, and the other sides are surrounded by residential and commercial properties. The relatively large lot size could support approximately 40 units.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

350 Medford Street is located within one half mile of a number of schools, including preschools, charters, junior highs, and at least two high schools (Somerville High School and Full Circle High School). The parcel is also located near a number of small shops and restaurants. The closest major supermarket chain is Star Market, located on Broadway, one third of a mile away from the parcel. The parcel is located approximately 1.22 miles from the Porter Square shopping center, and within two miles from the CambridgeSide Galleria.

Medford Street is serviced by MBTA bus route number 80, and is within a half mile of four additional routes. The parcel is currently closest to the Lechmere T stop on the Green Line. The proposed Washington Street and Gilman Square stops along the Green Line would be very convenient to this parcel on Medford Street.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

This property is located in Gilman Square and with the proposed T stop, the neighborhood would only improve. 350 Medford Street’s lot could accommodate approximately 40-42 units of housing. By comparing it to an existing SCC development, it is possible to estimate that if converted to housing, this parcel would contribute approximately $60,000 per year in taxes to the city.

**Overall Recommendation:**

The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and possibly by future train service. The current building shell could also potentially be retained and renovated in a development project on this site. Because of its location, lot size, price per square foot and potential impact of the Green Line extension, this property is *highly recommended.*
**RECOMMENDED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address:</th>
<th>14 Murdock Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Use:</td>
<td>Apartments (8+ Units)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size:</td>
<td>14,440 ft² / 0.33 acres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoning:</td>
<td>RB</td>
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<td>Brownfield:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Assessed Value:

- Land: $750,000  Land Value/Lot Size: $34.58/ft²
- Buildings: $1,035,100  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $49.25/ft²
- Total: $1,785,100

Description of Site and Relationship with Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

This property is a 30-unit apartment building situated in a medium-density residential neighborhood. The rear of the property immediately abuts the rail corridor. Most of the surrounding properties are multi-family homes. A substantial amount of off-street parking spaces are available on the property. Some commercial warehouses lie adjacent to the property. These warehouses are not compatible with the surrounding land uses. The property is zoned RB, which allows multi-family homes and small to medium-sized apartment buildings.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

The property is within walking distance (< ¼ mi) from numerous businesses in Ball Square, including corner markets, banking centers, and restaurants. Pedestrian access is facilitated by adequate sidewalks and crosswalks. The property is also accessible to several larger commercial centers by car.

The property lies off of Cedar Street, a minor north-south thoroughfare between Broadway and Highland Avenue. The property is located near, and easily accessible to, limited-access roads including Interstate 93 and Route 28/McGrath Highway.

The property lies within ½ mile of a transit stop in Ball Square along the proposed MBTA Green Line extension (versions 1a-1c), which would connect it to the MBTA subway/rapid transit system.
Economic Impact of Redevelopment

Conversion of this apartment building to affordable housing could negatively affect tax revenue for the city. Assuming the current design is kept constant, land values should see minimal change.

Overall Recommendation:

The decrease in taxable property from conversion to affordable housing may cause some difficulties in acquiring permission from the city. Unlike 229-231 Lowell Street, neighboring non-compatible land uses are not clustered close enough to allow for the possibility of their subsequent acquisition, i.e. it will be more difficult to achieve a consistent land-use pattern in that area. However, political challenges and negative impact from neighboring properties notwithstanding, the property’s current design, availability of parking, and proximity to public transportation and major roadways makes this property worth acquiring. Therefore, the property is recommended.
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 255 Pearl Street
Current Use: Parking Lot
Lot Size: 8,134 ft² / .19 Acres
Zoning: BA
Brownfield: No

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>$116,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Buildings</td>
<td>$ 0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$118,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

A parking lot currently occupies this parcel. The lot is owned in conjunction with a service station located on Bradley Street. The site is relatively small, and is located between the service station on one side and a piano company on the other. It is zoned BA and can be developed for housing without any zoning changes. The site is relatively small, but could accommodate up to nine units. One or two three to four story dwellings would fit snugly. The parcel lies in a mixed use area, and is surrounded by both residential and commercial properties. Though the site is currently a parking lot, building housing on the site would leave little room for parking. For that reason, and because both properties are owned by the same entity, both 255 Pearl Street and the adjoining, 91 Marshall St. property would likely have to be acquired together. The site is not currently listed as a brownfield site. Conversion of the site(s) into affordable housing would have a positive impact on the neighborhood, as it is now underused, occupies a strategic parcel near a major throughway, and would fit in with the mixed use neighborhood.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

255 Pearl Street lies just off of Medford Avenue and five blocks from McGrath Highway. Commercial centers are currently best accessible to the east by car. However, some limited services, including a restaurant, corner store, and gas station, are available in the immediate vicinity and within walking distance.

Bus routes are readily accessible on Medford Street. The T, however, is currently a beyond walking distance. Davis and Sullivan Squares, and Lechmere are all more than 10 blocks away. The proposed Gilman Square stop on the Green Line would be directly across the street from the parcel, making it potentially quite convenient and close to the train. Currently, bus transit is the most convenient.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Whereas the property is currently underused as a parking lot, conversion into housing would increase the city’s tax base. If the Marshall Street property were acquired as well, it could yield more units, and a higher per year property tax. An existing SCC-owned property of 8 units, similar to that which could be built on this site yields $1103.17 per unit per year in property taxes. That amounts to around $8,800 per year, compared to the estimated $2,400 currently paid by the service station.

**Overall Recommendation:**

The parcel at 255 Pearl Street provides potential for a smaller project. The current size of just over 8,100 square feet does provide challenges, especially in providing parking for potential residents. It would be prudent to acquire the Bradley Street property as well. In doing so, the housing complex could be built up to the street with parking behind on the current service station site. Located on a side street, just off of a major thoroughfare, and with access to transportation, 255 Pearl Street’s location is ideal. For a relatively low primary investment and no brownfield cleanup necessary, the location provides opportunity for a quality development. This parcel is *highly recommended.*
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 50 Tufts Street  
Current Use: Commercial Warehouse  
Lot Size: 51,111 ft² / 1.17 Acres  
Zoning: BB  
Brownfield: Yes

Assessed Value:
- Land: $722,200  
- Buildings: $368,100  
- Total: $1,105,400

Land Value/Lot Size: $14.13/ft²  
Bldg. Value/Living Area: $17.87/ft²

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

50 Tufts Street is currently a commercial warehouse/light industrial business on the edge of a residential neighborhood. Tufts Street runs between McGrath Highway and Washington Street, along the Lowell corridor. Though situated close to these major roads, Tufts Street itself is a quiet, mostly residential street. The parcel is zoned BB, which allows for residential development and includes over an acre of land. With parking taken into account, 40 or more units could be built on the parcel, which directly abuts the Lowell line on one side and is surrounded by residential and commercial properties on the others. According to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection, the parcel is a brownfield site.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

This property is two blocks away from major commercial centers on and near McGrath Highway. Local and national retail, supermarkets, and restaurants can be most easily accessed by car. Walking to and from these centers from Tufts Street, though, is nearly impossible.

Tufts Street is easily accessible by car with major thoroughfares on each side, Washington Street to the south and McGrath Highway to the west. Bus stops are also prevalent nearby. The parcel is currently closest to the Sullivan Square T stop on the Orange Line and the Lechmere stop on the Green Line. However, these stops are currently rather inaccessible. One would have to either walk along McGrath Highway, or pass around a large industrial complex and a rail yard. The proposed Washington Street and Gilman Square stops along the Green Line would be easily accessible from Tufts Street.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Transition from a commercial warehouse to an affordable housing structure would likely raise the city tax base in that the total assessed value is likely to be significantly higher than the current value. The parcel can be said to be underutilized in that the warehouse currently takes up over an acre of land with a one story building. The current property owners pay approximately $22,428 per year. In comparison, the existing 42 unit SCC rental property pays approximately $1,431 per unit, or $60,129 total. Well-designed affordable housing would add to the Tufts Street neighborhood, replacing neighbors’ current views of a blank, white wall, with a residential scene. Such changes should have a positive, economic impact on the surrounding neighborhood. The site is a brownfield site, possibly creating prohibitive costs on redevelopment.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is well situated in a residential block, close to commercial and retail services. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and possibly by future train service. The challenges of the site include its direct abutment to the rail line and its brownfield status. This site would take some imaginative thinking and high front-end costs to develop. However, because of its unique location and relatively low assessed value of $14.13 per square foot, a feasibility study would be worthwhile. For this reason, this property is recommended.
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 20 Vernon St.
Lot Size: 179,348 ft² / 4.12 Acres
Zoning: IP
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $1,770,200, Land Value/Lot Size: $9.87/ft²
- Buildings: $2,913,900, Bldg. Value/Living Area: $13.15/ft²
- Total: $4,920,400

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

20 Vernon Street is an industrial factory in the midst of a residential neighborhood. The property lies on Vernon Street, between Highland and Medford Streets, along the Lowell Corridor. The site is very large (4.12 acres) and currently, the building houses a foam factory and artist lofts. The building is rectangular and made of brick with numerous large windows on each floor. The south side of the building faces Vernon Street, while the northern side faces the rail tracks. A large parking lot already exists to the east of the structure, along the rail tracks. The parcel is zoned IP and is not a brownfield site. If the parcel zone were changed to RC, BA, or BB, 50-100 units could be created within the existing structure.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

This property is two blocks away from both Medford Street and Highland Avenue which offer a variety of shops, stores and restaurants. Ten schools are within ½ mile of the property, including Somerville High School and Next Wave Junior High School. Porter and Davis Squares are each less than one mile away and the site is within ½ mile of several food markets.

In addition to being surrounded by thoroughfares on either side, 20 Vernon Street is accessible to bus and train transit. Several bus lines are available at Highland Avenue and Medford Street. The Davis Square T station is also within walking distance.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Transforming the current factory into affordable housing would have significant economic impact. The property currently incurs a property tax of nearly $100,000. If assessed at a value similar to current larger SCC projects, 80-90 rental units would have to be built to equal the tax revenue. Furthermore, the site is not currently underused, and such a transition would cause the relocation of the workers currently employed at the factory. If the company were to move out of Somerville, it would cause economic stress on the city. If Majann Inc. were to sell, the current assessed value is quite low at under $10 per square foot. With the potential for perhaps hundreds of units, purchasing the land at such a low price seems a good investment.

**Overall Recommendation:**

20 Vernon Street provides an interesting opportunity for affordable housing development. Its location within a current residential area and close to mass transit and major roads makes it attractive. The exterior of the current building could also be kept, maintaining the current feel of the neighborhood and affording a degree of character to the redevelopment. Such buildings have been gutted and converted into apartments, most notably in Lowell, MA. Though the Lowell Mill apartments are not affordable projects, 20 Vernon Street could and would be a fine example of redeveloping a historic building into affordable housing. The current site is big enough to provide some flexibility as it might also be appropriate to build another structure on site. A large parking lot also already exists. The major obstacle in redeveloping is the property’s current use. It would be unfortunate to displace so many local employees from their current jobs. If, however, the foam company looks to sell and move to an updated facility in the near future, 20 Vernon Street should be looked at carefully as a potential development site. The parcel contains a large area of land, an existing building exterior, and a parking lot for a relatively low cost. This parcel is *recommended.*
Fitchburg Corridor Recommendations

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 51 Allen Street
Current Use: Vacant Auto Repair
Lot Size: 31,761 ft² / .73 Acres
Zoning: RB
Brownfield: Yes

Assessed Value:

- Land: $220,400  Land Value/Lot Size: $6.94/ft²
- Buildings: $0  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $
- Total: $253,100

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

51 Allen Street is currently vacant, and was last used as an auto repair facility. The site includes mostly vacant land and an auto repair garage and is located just off of Somerville Avenue near Union Square. It is currently zoned as an RB district, which limits possible residential redevelopment to three family homes. The parcel is big enough, though, to accommodate many such structures. 51 Allen is almost adjacent to another SCC project, the Linden Street development and could be woven with Linden Street to create one neighborhood. The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection lists this site as a brownfield.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

51 Allen St. is within walking distance of several schools, including Somerville Charter School, located less than a quarter mile away. A Head Start Facility also occupies the neighboring property. The parcel is located two blocks from shops and restaurants in Union Square. Major shopping centers such as Porter Square and the Cambridgeside Galleria are accessible by car or bus.

Bus routes are prevalent in nearby Union Square and Allen Street is within blocks of several major thoroughfares including McGrath Highway, Somerville Avenue, Prospect Street, and Washington Street. Currently, 51 Allen lies between two T stops, Lechmere Station on the Green Line, and Porter Square on the Red Line, each lying between one and one-and-a-half miles away. One proposal for the Green Line extension, however, does include a Union Square stop. Completion of such a project would make 51 Allen more accessible by train.
Economic Impact of Redevelopment:

Somerville has rezoned the area around and including 51 Allen St. as RB in anticipation of its future conversion into residential property. The property currently generates a commercial tax rate, but its vacant status leaves an economic hole in the neighborhood. Redevelopment into affordable housing would create more consumers for Union Square businesses and, most likely, increase the current tax paid of approximately $5,884. If, for example, 19 units were built of similar quality and value to the sample SCC property, the parcel would generate approximately $22,257. The parcel’s brownfield status, however, is a major economic concern.

Overall Recommendation:

51 Allen Street offers the opportunity to expand or compliment the Linden Street Apartments. Similar style two and three bedroom apartments would be appropriate, given current zoning and size restrictions. It is easy to picture the two developments commingling into one neighborhood. If 38, 42, 50 and 52 Allen Street could also be acquired, SCC could connect 51 Allen with Linden Street. Allen Street provides easy access to all services, including schools, shopping, and recreation, and to various forms of transportation. The most pressing concern about the property is its brownfield status. If that can be addressed in a relatively inexpensive manner, the extremely low value of the land could compensate for the extra cleanup cost. Because of the aforementioned opportunities, this site is highly recommended.
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 260 Beacon Street
Current Use: Office Building
Lot Size: 17,741 ft² / .41 Acres
Zoning: RC
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $561,300  Land Value/Lot Size: $31.64/ft²
- Buildings: $275,500  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $30.31/ft²
- Total: $836,800

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

As a single story office building, 260 Beacon is currently underused. The parcel lies on a relatively major street and is surrounded by various uses including auto repair, retail, residential, and small businesses. The parcel is currently zoned as an RC Residence District, allowing for a three story (or 40 foot) residential complex. RC zoning would permit 10-17 units of housing on the .41 acre property, plus parking. There is currently a small parking lot on the property, directly adjacent to the building. 260 Beacon lies two blocks from the Fitchburg Line and is not listed as a brownfield site. A residential property on this site would be part of a mixed-use neighborhood.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

260 Beacon Street is within ¼ mile of several schools including the Agassiz Community School in Cambridge and Notre Dame Learning Center in Somerville. The parcel is located within two blocks of two major supermarkets. The Porter Square shopping center is less than ¼ of a mile away and accessible by car or bus, as are the Fresh Pond Mall and Cambridgeside Galleria.

Porter Square offers the nearest T station. The 83 bus to Porter and Central Squares, and the 87 to Arlington and Lechmere are within a two block walk. Beacon Street also offers relatively easy access to Somerville Avenue and Route 2A.

Economic Impact of Redevelopment:

Depending on the development, the city could add to or lower its tax base with the redevelopment of 260 Beacon. The current use includes only 9,088 feet of living space. 10-17 units of housing, depending on assessed value, could yield a higher property tax. Ownership or rental units at existing SCC properties generate an approximate average of
$1150 in tax revenue per unit. Twelve such units would generate $13,800 in revenue, less than the current tax of approximately $18,900 paid on the property. Seventeen units, of similarly assessed housing, though, would yield approximately $19,550. Moreover, residential properties are relatively scarce on Beacon Street. The introduction of 10 or more units could provide needed customers for local businesses. The value of $31.64 per square foot of land is moderately high, but would not include any brownfield cleanup costs.

**Overall Recommendation:**

As stated above, the parcel size of 260 Beacon would allow for 10-17 residential units and possibly still allow for parking. This could, however, be a possible site for a slightly larger, 40B project. Because of the relative scarcity of residential property in the immediate vicinity, a slightly larger scale development would not have negative density implications on the surrounding community. A four or five story building would also respect the surrounding height limits. 260 Beacon provides opportunity for affordable housing in a reasonable neighborhood. For these reasons, 260 Beacon Street is recommended.
**RECOMMENDED**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address: 2, 8, 29 Harding Street &amp; 33 Earle Street</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Use: Parking Lot</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lot Size: 20,816 ft²</td>
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<td>Zoning: IP</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brownfield: Yes</td>
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Assessed Value:
- Land: $300,800  Land Value/Lot Size: $14.45/ft²
- Buildings: $0  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $-
- Total: $323,700

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<th>Address: 8 Harding Street</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current Use: Parking Lot</td>
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<td>Lot Size: 17,244 ft²</td>
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<td>Zoning: IP</td>
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<td>Brownfield: Yes</td>
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Assessed Value:
- Land: $278,500  Land Value/Lot Size: $16.15/ft²
- Buildings: $0  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $-
- Total: $298,700

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<tr>
<th>Address: 29 Harding Street</th>
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<tr>
<td>Current Use: Warehouse</td>
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<td>Lot Size: 40,831 ft²</td>
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Assessed Value:
- Land: $654,100  Land Value/Lot Size: $16.02/ft²
- Buildings: $527,000  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $18.03/ft²
- Total: $1,181,100
Address: 33 Earle Street
Current Use: Warehouse
Lot Size: 12,197 ft²
Zoning: IP
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $517,500  
  Land Value/Lot Size: $17.94/ft²
- Buildings: $63,500  
  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $13.05/ft²
- Total: $581,000

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

This cluster of properties exists on the Somerville side of Harding Street, just past South Street. The parcels lie in an IP district, meaning the zoning would likely have to be changed to accommodate residential redevelopment. A residential district, though, exists on the other side of South Street. That district could be extended to these current properties. Currently, 2 and 8 Harding Street are both parking lots. 29 Harding and 33 Earle are both commercial warehouses. The parcels lie three blocks north of Cambridge Street and abut the Fitchburg rail line north of 33 Earle. The two parking lot properties are listed as brownfield sites. Taken together, the parcels make up about 3.5 acres of land, offering the possibility of a large project. This large area could support a larger 40B project or a community project similar to Linden Street.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

The site is within ¼ mile of 10 different schools, including Harrington Elementary School on Cambridge Street. Nearby Cambridge Street offers nearby services, shops, and restaurants, all accessible by foot. The Cambridgeside Galleria is located within one mile and the Prudential Center in Boston is within two miles. Both are easily accessed by car or bus. Three food markets also lie within ¼ mile of the site.

The Harding /Earle Street properties are accessible to several bus routes, the closest of which is the 69, running on Cambridge Avenue between Cambridge Common and Lechmere. The 85, C2 and 87 buses are also relatively close, within a few blocks of the site. Harding Street is a short bus ride from several T stations, including Central Square on the Red Line and Lechmere on the Green Line.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

The owners of 33 Earle and 29 Harding pay commercial rate on the property. Depending on the size of a future residential development, the city could suffer a net property tax loss with redevelopment into affordable housing. As an example, an SCC property currently containing 42 rental units pays $1,431.64 yearly per unit, less than the current revenue paid at the combined properties. In accommodating redevelopment with a zoning change, then, the city would be trading tax revenue for the intrinsic values of affordable housing. There would also be an added development cost in that the parking lots are currently designated as brownfields which must be taken into account.

**Overall Recommendation:**

The parcels at 2, 8, and 29 Harding and 33 Earle offer the opportunity for a large redevelopment project. If acquired together, the 3.5 acres of land would support many small, or several medium sized affordable housing projects. The site’s location, just off of a residential neighborhood and close to major roads and services, is ideal. Continuing the current neighborhood south of South Street would necessitate limiting housing structures to two and three family homes. The cost of the land ranges between $14 and $18 per square foot. This could be reasonable, despite the extra costs associated with 2 and 8 Harding’s brownfield status. Though those costs and possible zoning changes will have to be addressed, we recommend these parcels for their location and potential.
40 Lake Street
Current Use: Commercial Warehouse
Lot Size: 29,967 ft² / .69 Acres
Zoning: RC
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $384,800 Land Value/Lot Size: $12.84/ft²
- Buildings: $387,700 Bldg. Value/Living Area: $20.77/ft²
- Total: $854,000

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:
40 Lake Street is currently a commercial warehouse located in a residential neighborhood. Lake Street is located off of Somerville Avenue near Union Square. The parcel is zoned RC (Residence Districts) which is intended “…to establish and preserve a district for multi-family residential and other compatible uses which are of particular use and convenience to the residents of the district.” The property is currently owned by The H.D. Chasen Company, an Industrial Supply Company. As a commercial warehouse, this parcel is currently a non-conforming use in the neighborhood, as dictated by the city’s zoning regulations. The rear of the parcel directly abuts the Fitchburg Line. Somerville’s zoning regulations dictate that the parcel size could support approximately 29 units.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:
40 Lake Street is located within one half mile of a number of charter and preschools. Somerville High School is .44 miles from the parcel. This property is within walking distance to Market Basket supermarket and to shops, bars, restaurants, a bank, and other resources located in Union Square.

Somerville Avenue provides easy access to this Lake Street parcel, allowing for additional access to McGrath Highway. 40 Lake Street is within 1/3 of a mile of five MBTA bus stops. Transportation service to the parcel would be affected by the Union Square portion of the proposed Green Line extension.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

As a single-story warehouse in a residential neighborhood, the parcel can be said to be underutilized and out of place. Affordable housing would add to the Lake Street neighborhood by further strengthening the residential feel of the neighborhood. Such changes should have a positive, rather than negative economic impact on the surrounding neighborhood, and would likely add to the city tax base as well.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is well situated in a residential block, close to commercial and retail services. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and possibly by future train service. A possible challenge of the site could be its direct abutment to the rail line. For these reasons, this property is recommended.
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 35 Medford Street
Current Use: Industrial Office
Lot Size: 49,227 / 1.13 Acres
Zoning: BA
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $998,800  Land Value/Lot Size: $20.29/ft²
- Buildings: $1,678,700  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $27.68/ft²
- Total: $2,754,600

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

Medford Street connects to and also runs parallel with McGrath Highway. 35 Medford Street is currently an industrial office building that falls into BA (Commercial Districts) zoning. The purpose of BA zoning is “to establish and preserve business areas bordering main thoroughfares that are attractive to a wide range of uses, including retail business and services, housing, government, professional and medical offices, and places of amusement...” Housing is allowed in BA districts with special permits. The relatively large parcel size would support approximately 49 units.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

35 Medford Street is located within one half mile of a number of elementary, preschools, and childcare centers. The parcel is located just less than one mile away from Somerville High School. This property is also less than one block away from the rear entrance to the Twin City Plaza (located on McGrath Highway), providing easy, walkable access to a supermarket, pharmacy and office supply store.

Medford Street’s connection to McGrath Highway provides easy access to Boston and to Rts. 28 and 93. There are five bus stops located within a half-mile of 35 Medford Street, allowing users easy transportation to Lechmere and points beyond.

The area surrounding the parcel would be affected by the proposed North Point development, “…Spaulding and Slye’s large scale 48 acre, $1.2 billion development proposal for a new mixed use ‘urban village,’ which includes the relocation of the Lechmere Green Line T station, and high density, pedestrian oriented residential, office and retail development” (City of Somerville website).
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Approximately 45-49 housing units could be developed on this parcel. As compared to current SCC properties, a development of that size would generate approximately $60,000 or more per year in taxes. In addition, possible redevelopment and investment in the neighborhood because of the North Point development could increase property values in the entire area.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is well situated in a residential block, close to commercial and retail services. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus. Considering these factors, the plans for North Point, and the assumption that the surrounding area will change as a result, this parcel is recommended.
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address:</th>
<th>11 Miller Street</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Use:</td>
<td>Industrial Warehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size:</td>
<td>25,683 ft² / .59 Acres</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoning:</td>
<td>RC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownfield:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessed Value:

- Land: $772,800  Land Value/Lot Size: $30.09/ft²
- Buildings: $473,400  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $18.31/ft²
- Total: $1,264,000

**Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:**

11 Miller Street is currently an industrial warehouse located in a residential neighborhood. Miller Street runs off of Beacon Street in Somerville, near the Fitchburg railroad corridor. Beacon is a main street, but Miller is a quiet residential side street that connects to Beacon on either end. The parcel is zoned RC (Residence District), which is intended to “establish and preserve a district for multi-family residential and other compatible uses which are of particular use and convenience to the residents of the districts,” which makes the current use incompatible with other uses found in the neighborhood.

The Somerville Arts Council states that 11 Miller Street has been renovated as studio space for twenty artists, artisans, and musicians. The lot size of 25,683 ft² could support approximately 20-25 housing units.

**Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:**

11 Miller Street is located within one half mile of number of elementary and charter schools. Somerville High School is located .76 miles away from 11 Miller. The parcel is directly adjacent to Shaw’s/Star Supermarket and is within walking distance of other small shops and restaurants. The parcel is located approximately ½ mile to the Porter Square shopping center, and 2.2 miles from the Cambridgeside Galleria mall.

11 Miller Street is within walking distance to the Porter Square stop on the Red Line. The parcel is also accessible to four MBTA bus routes, the 83, 87, 77 and 96. It would be easy to get from the parcel to Arlington Heights, Lechmere, Porter, Harvard or Davis Squares via bus. The closest bus stop is at Somerville Avenue and Sacramento Street, located .06 miles from the parcel.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

By comparing 11 Miller Street to a current SCC property of a similar size (19 units), it could be estimated that an affordable development of 20-25 units could contribute over $22,000 per year in taxes to the city. The consolidation of land uses and improvement in the overall feel of the neighborhood would be a long-term economic benefit.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is well situated in a residential block, close to commercial and retail services. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot, car and public transportation. For these reasons, this property is *highly recommended.*
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 33 Park Street  
Current Use: Store/Shop  
Lot Size: 10,480 ft² / .24 Acres  
Zoning: BA  
Brownfield: No  

Assessed Value:  
- Land: $393,600  
- Buildings: $82,600  
- Total: $482,100

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 44 Park St.  
Current Use: Industrial Warehouse  
Lot Size: 43,211 ft² / .99 Acres  
Zoning: RC  
Brownfield: No  

Assessed Value:  
- Land: $650,300  
- Buildings: $200,500  
- Total: $857,900

**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 50 Park St.  
Current Use: Factory  
Lot Size: 27,113 ft² / .62 Acres  
Zoning: RC  
Brownfield: No  

Assessed Value:  
- Land: $666,400  
- Buildings: $349,100  
- Total: $1,027,500
Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

Park Street runs between Somerville Avenue and Beacon Street over the Fitchburg line. 44 and 50 Park Street are located across the street, and over the railroad tracks from 33 Park Street. The railroad tracks divide the zoning of the street between BA (Commercial Districts-“to establish and preserve business areas bordering main thoroughfares that are attractive to a wide range of uses, including retail business and services, housing, government, professional and medical offices, and places of amusement. While it is anticipated that most users will arrive by motor vehicle, it is intended that the area should be safe for and conducive to pedestrian traffic”) and RC (Resident District, “to establish and preserve a district for multi-family residential and other compatible uses which are of particular use and convenience to residents of the district”). The Somerville Avenue half of the street is zoned BA and the half closest to Beacon Street is zoned RC. Upon reading the descriptions of the two zones, it seems that it would be difficult to have the two zones co-exist in such close proximity, but after visiting Park Street, it becomes obvious that housing clearly works in the area. Housing is allowed in a BA zone with special permits.

44 and 50 Park Street are currently non-conforming uses, as the parcels are zoned RC and are currently occupied by a warehouse and a factory, respectively. There is a large housing development across the street and tracks from 44 and 50 Park Street, and the conversion of the two non-conforming uses would only complement the existing housing on the street.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

The Park Street parcels are located near a number of schools of all levels. Somerville High School is located just over one half mile from the parcels. These parcels are located within walking distance of a variety of small shops and restaurants and just under one mile from the Porter Square shopping center and two miles from the Cambridgeside Galleria mall. They are located under a third of a mile from two grocery stores, Shaw’s/Star Market and Market Basket.

Park Street is easily accessible by car with major thoroughfares on each side, Somerville Avenue and Beacon Street. There are a number of bus routes that service these parcels, and five bus stops within a quarter mile of the parcels.

Economic Impact of Redevelopment:

Considering the size of the parcel and comparing it to similar SCC properties, as a residential property, 33 Park Street would most likely generate approximately $8,000 per year in taxes. As a residential property, 44 Park Street could contribute approximately
$60,000 per year in taxes. In addition, improving the look and feel of the neighborhood and providing uses that would conform to zoning regulations would provide an immeasurable benefit to the city.

**Overall Recommendation:**

These properties are well situated in a mainly residentially-zoned area block, close to commercial and retail services. The site is easily accessible to commercial services by foot and bus. The challenges of the sites include their clustered locations directly around the Fitchburg rail line. Because the properties fall into two types of zoning designations, BA and RC, 33 Park Street is *recommended* and 44 and 50 Park Streets are *highly recommended.*
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 57 Pitman Street
Current Use: Auto Repair
Lot Size: 8,250 ft² / .19 Acres
Zoning: BA
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $120,300  Land Value/Lot Size: $14.58/ft²
- Buildings: $111,100  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $33.37/ft²
- Total: $231,400

**Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:**

The property is an auto repair/garage facility situated on a narrow one-way street. It is completely surrounded by high-density, multi-family residential houses. The property is located approximately two blocks from the intersection of Elm Street and Somerville Avenue, also known as Wilson Square. The narrow width of Pitman Street places the property extremely close to its residential neighbors which suffer from the typical noise and particulate pollution generated from an auto repair facility and the vehicles that are housed there. A neighborhood park and playground is located within walking distance of Wilson Square.

**Accessibility to Commercial Centers and Public Transportation:**

The property is located between Union Square and Porter Square in Cambridge. There are some retail shops along Somerville Avenue as well as a supermarket a few blocks from the property, but it is not situated near any substantial amount of retail shops.

Several fixed route bus line run along nearby Somerville Avenue. Automobile access to McGrath Highway (Rte. 28) and Massachusetts Avenue (2A) is available via Somerville Avenue. The closest rapid transit station is in Porter Square, approximately .5 mile to the northwest.

**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

The surrounding properties would greatly benefit from the removal of the current land-use. An auto repair facility is a locally undesirable land-use in a residential area. Specifically, last year’s tax assessment of this property yielded approximately $4,700. If an 8-unit housing development were to be built in its place, an annual residential tax assessment $8,800 would nearly double the current tax revenue.
**Overall Recommendation:**

Consistency in land-uses in that area may raise land values, therefore increasing residential tax revenue and mitigating any loss of commercial tax revenue due to the removal of the current use. Although the property lacks close access to shopping centers compared to other recommended properties, its location in terms of automobile accessibility and the beneficial impact to surrounding residential properties leads us to **highly recommend** this property for conversion.
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 230 Somerville Avenue
Current Use: Factory
Lot Size: 18,803 ft² / .43 Acres
Zoning: BA
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $605,300  Land Value/Lot Size: $32.19/ft²
- Buildings: $327,400  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $22.44/ft²
- Total: $932,700

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

The property lies halfway between Union Square and McGrath Highway. Surrounding properties are generally mixed-use, including repair shops, office buildings, and retail shops. The orientation of the property is not currently aligned with the street edge, resulting in some underutilization of lot space. The property is currently zoned BA and allows the construction of up to six residential units without need for a permit; more than six units would require a site plan review.

Accessibility to Commercial Centers and Public Transportation:

The property is within walking distance to Union Square and its many retail shops. Somerville Avenue/Union Square is served by several MBTA bus lines and Union Square is a candidate for a potential stop along the proposed Green Line extension. McGrath Highway and Interstate 93 are easily accessible by car from this location.

Economic Impact of Redevelopment:

The annual commercial tax assessment for this property is approximately $19,000. If the property were converted to a 19-unit property similar to a previous SCC project, the residential tax revenue would be virtually the same. Because the surrounding area is mixed-use, there is no potential for increased land values through land-use consistency. However, the property’s current status as a factory can have an unfavorable impact on surrounding properties due to potential pollution.

Overall Recommendation:

Given the location of the property (near a central business district), the negligible change in tax revenue, the inefficient use of lot size and shape, and the current land-use status, this property is recommended for conversion to affordable housing.
**RECOMMENDED**

Address: 346 Somerville Avenue  
Current Use: Store/Shop  
Lot Size: 21,218 ft² / .49 Acres  
Zoning: CBD  
Brownfield: No

**Assessed Value:**
- Land: $606,200  
- Buildings: $221,400  
- Total: $827,600

**Land Value/Lot Size:** $28.57/ft²  
**Bldg. Value/Living Area:** $35.24/ft²

**Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:**

The property is currently occupied by Sullivan Plumbing & Heating and is located near the heart of Union Square. Land uses along this section of Somerville Avenue are mixed, comprised chiefly of multi-family homes and apartments with ground-level retail. There are some instances of undesirable land uses such as auto repair facilities as well in this area. The zoning designation CBD allows for a great deal of versatility in possible land-uses.

**Accessibility to Commercial Centers and Public Transportation:**

The property is located halfway between a neighborhood supermarket and Union Square which contains numerous retail shops. There are also a handful of retail shops east of the property.

Neighboring Union Square is serviced by numerous bus lines and is a potential site for a station on two versions of the proposed Green Line extension. Automobile access is available to McGrath Highway through Union Square, although the traffic geometry can be confusing due to numerous one-way, non-linear streets.

**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Last year, the commercial tax assessment for this property was approximately $16,800. By converting this property into a 19-unit affordable housing development similar to a previous SCC project, the annual residential tax assessment would be nearly $24,600, an increase of almost 50%. Unfortunately, because the surrounding area is mixed-use, there is no potential for increased land values through land-use consistency.
Overall Recommendation:

This property is close to Union Square (although not as close to a CBD as some other recommended properties) and to other neighborhood shops and supermarkets. There is easy accessibility by car to several major roads and highways. The taxable value of the property will increase as well. This property is recommended.
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 444 Somerville Avenue
Current Use: Auto Repair
Lot Size: 36,673 ft² / .84 Acres
Zoning: IA
Brownfield: Yes

Assessed Value:
- Land: $649,800  Land Value/Lot Size: $17.72/ft²
- Buildings: $722,100  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $21.81/ft²
- Total: $1,371,900

**Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:**

This property is an auto/repair facility in an industrial area interspersed with high-density residential properties. The 400-block of Somerville Avenue is riddled with less-than-optimal combinations of contiguous land-uses. The property is currently zoned IA, which allows for light industrial development but does not allow housing to be built.

**Accessibility to Commercial Centers and Public Transportation:**

The property is within walking distance to Union Square and its many retail shops. Somerville Avenue/Union Square is served by several MBTA bus lines and Union Square is a candidate for a potential stop along the proposed Green Line extension. McGrath Highway and Interstate 93 are easily accessible by car from this location.

**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Last year, the commercial tax assessment for this property was approximately $27,800. By converting this property into a large affordable housing development similar to a previous 42-unit SCC project, the annual residential tax assessment would be nearly $51,500, which would nearly double the original assessment. Unfortunately, because the surrounding area is mixed-use, there is no potential for increased land values through land-use consistency.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is very close to Union Square and to other neighborhood shops and supermarkets. There is easy accessibility by car to several major roads and highways. The taxable value of the property will nearly double in value. The area would have to be rezoned or a variance would have to be obtained before conversion is possible. Those
difficulties not withstanding, the surrounding residential properties would greatly benefit from one less auto repair facility. This property is recommended.
**RECOMMENDED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Address:</th>
<th>21 Village Street</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Current Use:</td>
<td>Commercial Warehouse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot Size:</td>
<td>12759 ft² / 0.29 Acres</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zoning:</td>
<td>RC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brownfield:</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Assessed Value:

- Land: $157,400  
  Land Value/Lot Size: $12.34/ft²
- Buildings: $85,000  
  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $21.14/ft²
- Total: $252,600

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

21 Village Street is currently a commercial warehouse located in a residential neighborhood. Village Street is located between Somerville Street near Washington Street, and along the Fitchburg corridor. Although the Somerville and Washington Street area typically has high traffic, Village Street is a very quiet residential area. The parcel is zoned RC, which allows for high-density residential development and small businesses that add to the convenience of the residents in the district. The site is large enough to build 12 residential units according to zoning regulations. The land currently has a large paved area surrounding the building, which could be beneficial for fulfilling the parking requirements.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

This property is located less than ¼ mile away from a major supermarket and less than ¼ mile away from Union Square, a commercial center which contains many convenience stores, shops, and restaurants. Walking to and from these shops from Village Street is possible, though Union Square is a greater distance away. Village Street is not located directly next to highway access, although it is not more than two miles away.

There are many bus stops located near Village Street, specifically on Somerville Avenue and Washington Street (83, 86, and 87 bus lines). These buses travel specifically to the Lechmere Green line T stop and the Sullivan Orange line T stop. These T stops are only accessible by the buses as they are too far away to walk. The proposed Union Square stop along the Green line would dramatically increase the accessibility of residents to mass transit.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Transition from a commercial warehouse to an affordable housing structure would possibly increase the city tax base. Currently the land houses a worn down building, possibly being used for storage. A parcel this size is large enough to build a 12 unit affordable housing development. Such a structure would yield approximately $14,000 per year in taxes as compared to the approximately $5,100 per year generated by the current use. New affordable housing units would add to the Village Street neighborhood, contributing a much more visually appealing building. Developing an affordable housing unit would add to the continuity of the residential area, while adding tax revenue.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is a small underdeveloped parcel situated in a residential block. It is located near a major supermarket and near a commercial center, Union Square. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and if the Green line is extended to Union Square, the access will increase. The challenges of the site include its somewhat small size and proximity to another building. The parcel next to 21 Village Street (23 Village Street) may need to be bought in order to build a viable affordable housing unit. For these reasons, this property is **recommended.**
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 10 Ward Street  
Current Use: Commercial Warehouse  
Lot Size: 10,478 ft² / 0.24 Acres  
Zoning: RB  
Brownfield: No

Assessed Value:
- Land: $290,000  
- Buildings: $0  
- Total: $290,000

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessed Value/Lot Size:</th>
<th>$27.68/ft²</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bldg. Value/Living Area:</td>
<td>$0/ft²</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

10 Ward Street is currently a storage area and parking lot used by a nearby restaurant in a residential neighborhood. Ward Street runs off of Medford Street near Somerville Avenue, along the Fitchburg corridor. Although the Somerville and Washington Street area typically has high traffic, Ward Street is a quiet area. The parcel is zoned RB, which allows for low density residential development. The site is large enough to build 10 residential units according to zoning regulations. The land also has a large parking lot, some of which could be very beneficial for fulfilling the parking requirements. Street parking is also readily available in the area.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

This property is located near a Target, AJ Wright, and Glass Stop. Within one half mile is Union Square, home to many convenience stores, shops, and restaurants. Walking to and from these shops from Ward Street is possible, as the busy road has safe sidewalks. Highway access is located within two miles of Ward Street.

There are many bus stops located near Ward Street, specifically on Somerville Avenue and Washington Street (69, 80, 87, 88, 90, and 91 bus lines). These buses travel specifically to the Lechmere Green line T stop and the Sullivan Orange line T stop. These T stops are only accessible by the buses as they are too far away to walk. The proposed Union Square stop along the Green line would dramatically increase the accessibility to mass transit.

Economic Impact of Redevelopment:
Transition from a commercial warehouse to an affordable housing structure would increase the city tax base. A parcel this size is large enough to build 10 affordable housing units, according to zoning regulation. A structure this size would yield approximately $11,000 per year in taxes as compared to approximately $5,800 per year generated by the current use. Currently the land does not house any sort of major industrialization, and is simply a storage area and parking lot, both of which yield low tax bases. This land is currently underutilized. A new affordable housing unit would add to the Ward Street neighborhood, replacing neighbors’ current view of an unsightly parking lot and worn down storage shed. Developing affordable housing units would add to the continuity of the residential area. This housing would have a higher tax base than the current land use generates as well.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is a small underdeveloped parcel situated in a residential block. It is located near some chain stores and close to a commercial center; Union Square. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and if the Green line is extended to Union Square, the access will increase. The challenges of the site include its somewhat small size and land value per square foot. On the positive side, this land is not a brownfield, and because it does not currently house a building construction will not include high demolition costs. For these reasons, this property is *highly recommended.*
**HIGHLY RECOMMENDED**

Address: 321 Washington St.
Current Use: Industrial Warehouse
Lot Size: 128,271 ft\(^2\) / 2.94 Acres
Zoning: RC
Brownfield: Yes

Assessed Value:
- Land: $1,833,000  Land Value/Lot Size: $14.29/ft\(^2\)
- Buildings: $1,295,500  Bldg. Value/Living Area: $16.96/ft\(^2\)
- Total: $3,128,500

Description of Site and Relationship to Zoning and Adjacent Land Uses:

321 Washington Street is currently being used as an industrial warehouse and central location for Bornstein Flooring, John Turell Carpets, and Salon Flooring Showroom. Washington Street is a main road that runs through Somerville. The parcels directly abutting 321 Washington Street are two and three family residential houses. The parcel is zoned RC, which allows for high-density residential development and small companies that serve the convenience and use of the residents in the district. This site is very large and could potentially hold a development of 128 affordable housing units according to zoning regulations. Also, because this parcel is so large, there would be no question of whether the parking requisite required by zoning regulation could be fulfilled.

Accessibility to Services and Public Transportation:

This parcel is located less than one half mile from the Lincoln Park Community School. This property is also located within one half mile of Union Square, home to many convenience stores, shops, and restaurants. Walking to and from these shops from 321 Washington Street is easy and direct. Also, because Washington Street is a main thoroughfare through Somerville, this parcel is close to other stores that fall along this road.

There are many bus stops located near 321 Washington Street (80, 83, 86, 87, 87, and 91 bus lines). These buses travel specifically to the Lechmere Green line T stop and the Sullivan Orange line T stop. These T stops are only accessible by the buses as they could be considered too far away to walk. The proposed Union Square stop along the Green line would dramatically increase the accessibility of residents to get to mass transit.
**Economic Impact of Redevelopment:**

Transition from a commercial warehouse to an affordable housing structure would likely increase Somerville’s tax base. Currently the land houses warehouses and central locations for 3 businesses. Even though this land has a high tax base the land houses large warehouses and the land is underutilized. A parcel this size is large enough to build 128 affordable housing units. A structure this size would yield approximately $183,000 per year in taxes as compared to approximately 63,000 per year generated by the current use. Developing this land with affordable housing residences would adequately fulfill the need for this type of housing in Somerville. Also, because this housing complex has the potential to be very large, the business attracted to Union Square shops would increase.

**Overall Recommendation:**

This property is a very large parcel located on the main roadway, Washington Street. It is very close to a commercial center and school, which would make this location ideal for families, and especially those without cars. The site is easily accessible to commercial centers by foot and bus, and if the Green line is extended to Union Square, this access will dramatically increase. This site also has a relatively low land cost per square foot ($14.29) and building cost per square foot ($16.96). The largest challenge of this site would include the high cost of demolition to tear down the large warehouse structures; however there are a few buildings currently on the property that could be renovated into housing. For these reasons, this property is **highly recommended.**
Final Thoughts

As highlighted in this report, land in Somerville, MA is in short supply. Underutilized parcels along the Lowell and Fitchburg rail lines provide some of the few remaining sites available for affordable housing development. The majority of sites along these lines, however, can be eliminated through some simple criteria. The remaining parcels require a deeper analysis of cost, zoning, service access, and general viability. We have begun that process in this report. In completing these analyses, we are confident that each of these parcels provides some opportunity for affordable housing development by SCC, or by some other developer. A deeper, more quantitative analysis of each of these recommended sites and their respective costs should be used to finalize purchase and development plans. Specifically, further tax and cost assessment, brownfield evaluation, and design visioning would be logical next steps for SCC. It is our hope that this project has provided a basis on which to focus these plans for affordable housing development.
References


Somerville Community Corporation. Somerville Community Corporation 2004 annual report
MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
BETWEEN
TUFTS UNIVERSITY FIELD PROJECTS TEAM NO. 9
AND
SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY CORPORATION

I. Introduction

Project code: SC-26
Project title: Land-Use Inventory along Somerville’s Railroad Corridors

This Memorandum of Understanding (the “MOU”) summarizes the scope of work, work product(s) and deliverables, timeline, work processes and methods, and lines of authority, supervision and communication relating to the Field Project identified above (the “Project”), as agreed to between (i) the candidates for the Master of Arts degree enrolled during the spring 2005 semester in the Field Projects and Planning course (UEP-255) (the “Course”) offered by the Tufts University Department of Urban and Environmental Policy and Planning (UEP) who are identified in Paragraph (1) below (the “Field Projects Team”); (ii) Somerville Community Corporation, further identified in Paragraph (2) below (the “Client”); and (iii) a Tufts faculty member directly involved in teaching the Course during the spring 2005 semester.

II. Specific Provisions

(1) The Field Projects Team working on the Project consists of the following individuals:

1. Gary Anderson
   email address: [redacted]

[Date]
(2) The Client’s contact information is as follows:

Key contact/supervisor: Kristin M. Blum, Director of Housing Development
Email address: Corporation
Address: One Davis Square, Suite 213
Somerville, MA 02144
Web site: www.somervillecdc.org

(3) The goal/goals of the Project is/are:
• To complete a land-use inventory along the Boston-Lowell (and Fitchburg, time permitting) rail corridor
• Make a schedule of immediately abutting & nearby properties that includes a variety of factors (including existing & past uses, zoning, parcel size, etc.)
• Put together land use overlay map (showing proposed Green Line stations & bike path extension)
• For those properties with redevelopment potential, complete a more in-depth analysis (including visioning, fiscal impact analysis)

(4) The work processes and methods by which the Field Projects Team intends to achieve this goal/these goals is/are:
• Research on city and other websites to obtain information for the inventory/schedule
• Visual/active inventory of properties
• Communicate with municipal contacts
• Contact city assessors

(5) The Project work products and deliverables are:
• Land-use inventory
• Information about each of the properties along the rail corridor (in a common template created by the field projects team)
• Land-use map
• Zoning analysis, fiscal impact analysis, visioning
• Final report

(6) The anticipated Project timeline is:
For March 2
- Boston/Lowell Corridor Basic Data Finished
  o Filling in template for block groups
  o Getting photographs
  o Visiting sites
- Outline Due in Class
For March 16
- Mid Term Orals Due in Class
Mid March Sometime
- Think Tank
For March 23
- In Depth Analysis/ Interpretation Finished
  o Identify underutilized areas
  o Interview stakeholders and get local opinions
For March 30
- Draft Due in Class
For April 13
- Recommendation Analysis Finished
  o Pick a few of the best areas to develop?
For May 3
- Final Report Due

Timeline for second rail corridor (time permitting)
For Feb 23
- Begin Basic Data Research for select areas
For March 16
- Basic Data Finished
For March 30
- In Depth Analysis Finished
For April 20
- Recommendation Analysis Finished

(7) The lines of authority, supervision and communication between the Client and the Field Project Team are:
  • Kristin Blum, Director of Housing Development
  • Katie Anthony, Assistant Housing Project Manager

(8) The understanding with regard to payment/reimbursement by the client to the Field Projects Team of any Project-related expenses is:
The client does not expect any excessive costs, but agrees to cover reasonable costs that are not covered by Tufts University for project-related expenses such as the cost of maps or other materials obtained from the city.
TO: Gary Anderson, Tom Beraldi, Emma Heffern, Natalie Lipomi

This letter is your official notification that your research project

4. Research involving the collection or study of EXISTING data, documents, records, or specimens if the sources are publicly available or the information is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified directly or through identifiers or codes.

*Land-use Inventory Along Somerville’s Railroad Corridors*

is exempt for IRB review for the following reasons:

2. Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior UNLESS the information is recorded in a manner in which the subject can be identified AND disclosure would place the subject at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to financial standing, employability, or reputation. This does not apply where the subjects are children except where it involves passive observation of public behavior.

Please be sure to print a copy of this notification for your files.

Helen A. Page       February 14, 2005
IRB Administrator      Date of Email Notification

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