

**Arts at the Armory Co-Director Statement 11/26/94  
In Response to the Release of the Armory Master Plan Draft on 11/25/24**

We are grateful to see that the Armory Master Plan has finally been released after a long 3.5 year process. Thank you to the City staff and consultants who worked on the Plan. We would also like to thank the community who continually engaged in this process despite the disorganization and confusion created by City administration.

We are left unsettled, now that this plan has been released, as there are still no clear answers. The community overwhelmingly stated that the City of Somerville should NOT be the governing body over the Armory. The City's own consultant, Create Today, said that managing a building like the Armory is not one of the administration's "core competencies." Time and time again over the past 3.5 years, the City of Somerville has proven that they do not have the competency nor the capacity to effectively play a managerial or governance role in the Armory. Many details in the Draft Plan are fuzzy but one thing is clear—the authors of the Plan have elected themselves, the City of Somerville, to control the Armory for the foreseeable future.

At the May 2024 Armory Master Plan Community Meeting, the City put forward the ideas of a City-controlled roadmap that included ideas of future Armory governance by a new non-profit organization or a quasi-municipal trust (something that does not currently exist). With the exception of City staff and a couple of Somerville Arts Council board members, the community rejected the idea of the new non-profit and quasi-municipal trust as a plausible way forward for the Armory building. The Plan Draft published yesterday calls for a City-controlled Armory Advisory Board that will eventually lead to a non-profit organization or a quasi-municipal trust. The Draft Plan specifies that it will ultimately be City staff who will control everything from the Advisory Board to governance, and from building management and daily administration to hiring additional consultants for support.

Forming a non-profit organization was exactly what was done between 2004 - 2008 when the Saters were getting ready to reopen the Armory building as an arts and community center. There were various advisory groups, including community members and leaders, artists, neighbors and government officials, involved in this process. The Center for Arts at the Armory (CAA) was formed as a non-profit arts and cultural organization to be the anchor tenant in the building and to perform a lead role in managing the building, alongside the building owner. Over the years, CAA has grown and evolved *in response to the community*, just as the Draft Plan says should happen once again. This model can be seen repeatedly, including in local examples such as at Boston Center for the Arts, the Foundry Cambridge, Multicultural Arts Center of Cambridge, and the Zeiterion (New Bedford).

The current Draft Plan essentially kicks the can down the road, and now makes it the responsibility of the 5-person Armory Advisory Board to figure out all of the details that should have been put forward in the Armory Master Plan. And all the while, the 5-person Armory Advisory Board is still going to be controlled and commanded by City Staff.

We look forward to discussing the Draft Plan with you in more detail in Committee. We know that you look to us as a trusted leader in this domain and we greatly appreciate your confidence and support. Thank you for taking the time to review our feedback.

Stephanie Scherpf & Jess White