

Here are some specific questions and comments that we have related to the Draft Plan release on November 25, 2024.

1. Will the proposed Armory Advisory Board Members be paid a fee for the services or will they be expected to volunteer their time? The Draft Plan reads as an enormous amount of work that would be full time jobs for five people to get all of it done in a timely manner.

Response from Rachel Nadkarni on 12.4.24: The answer to this question is unknown at this time. Usually Board members of this nature are unpaid but they are looking into payment.

2. The Draft Plan states, "*The Armory Advisory Board is envisioned as a five-member board consisting of two representatives of the Somerville arts community, two residents of Somerville, and one professional in facilities management or real estate with relevant background to support the Advisory Board's work.*" According to the Draft Plan, the two representatives from the Somerville arts community and the two residents of Somerville will need to make recommendations about capital expenditures, building management and services, tenants, and tenant mixes. They will need to provide services in conflict mediation, community relations, extensive and ongoing evaluation through surveying of multiple communities, fundraising, marketing, real estate acquisition, facilities management, and more. **These responsibilities require contracted professionals.**

Response from Rachel Nadkarni on 12.4.24: The administration and City Council will together decide on Armory Advisory Board members who will be able to self-nominate and will go through an interview process with the administration and City Council.

3. Can City Staff serve as Armory Advisory Board Members, if chosen?

Response from Rachel Nadkarni on 12.4.24: No.

4. Can Somerville Arts Council Board Members serve as Armory Advisory Board Members, if chosen?

Response from Greg Jenkins on 12.4.24: No, he would "not recommend this."

5. Can current Armory tenants serve as Armory Advisory Board Members, if chosen?

Response from Rachel Nadkarni on 12.4.24: No. This would be considered a "conflict of interest."

6. The Draft Plan talks about norms being created for building governance, and a charter being created to "outline the policies by which the board will operate." Who is creating these norms and this charter? Presumably City Staff?

7. The Plan further states, “*Governance should not be the role of a single tenant and should be the role of an independent body.*” Although the idea of a **tenant-led or tenant-involved governance model** came up in a May 2024 Armory Master Plan community meeting and received positive community feedback, this concept does not appear anywhere in the Armory Master Plan.

8. None of the case studies provide a governance model similar to what is proposed in the Plan. Early on, Create Today provided the only case study of a municipally-controlled arts space in Provo, UT where 90% of the population are Latter Day Saints.

9. There are local potential case studies like Boston Center for the Arts, the Cambridge Foundry, and Multicultural Arts Center of Cambridge, all of which involved municipal ownership/collaboration, but none of which took the direction proposed in the Plan.

10. Why wasn’t Somerville Media Center looked to as a case study? They have bylaws and a Board that reported to the Mayor when they operated in a City-owned building.

11. What would the funding and staffing model be for the “non-profit organization” or “quasi-municipal trust” that would be created down the line once independence from the City is achieved?

12. The Draft Plan does not explore the option of a 3rd Party Operator which was posed to the community with great interest before Create Today was sidelined. There are levels of complexity, super-structures, and calls for more community input and consultants in the Draft Plan that simply do not have to exist. The Center for Arts at the Armory (CAA) has the capacity and experience to be engaged by the City of Somerville to perform building governance and management services. CAA has put forward multiple proposals that have been ignored by the City.

13. At many turns, the Draft Plan advocates for its own SomArts spaces. We agree that space for artist creation, production and rehearsal are very important. But the City does not have the capacity to manage them at the Armory, and is already over-committed at The Hive. Related to the SomArts spaces at the Armory, has a report been requested on the actual usage of those spaces? How much time has been used and by whom? What is the per hour cost for usage for tax payers? What is the criteria being followed to use this space—are these individuals Somerville residents? Do they qualify financially? Are these questions important to City government, which has a mandate to serve Somerville residents, for use of City tax dollars for access to subsidized space?

14. Will the City of Somerville be able to “hold back” spaces in the Armory, and not put them up for bidding as part of the RFP process, so that they can be used by the Somerville Arts Council / SomArts?

15. The Draft Plan is very light on financials. Rent structures are alluded to but not specified. A tiered structure for different levels of operational expense for the building is presented but at the same time the Draft Plan states that the City budget will remain flat for the upcoming years. For all of the increased City staff time that will be required by the Draft Plan, is it presumed that will be financed through tenant rents? Who will finance the Armory Advisory Board and later the non-profit or quasi-municipal trust?

Response from Rachel Nadkarni on 12.4.24: Related to rent, the City will be publishing a range for each space, and respondents to the RFP will say what we can pay within that range. They will not pick the highest bidder, they will pick the most mission-aligned. It has not yet been determined if it will be City staff or the to-be-identified Armory Advisory Board who will evaluate and make decisions related to the RFPs.

16. Who will be making the decisions in the RFP process about who gets leases?

Response from Rachel Nadkarni on 12.4.25: They are not sure yet if it will be City administration or the 5 Person Armory Advisory Board who will be involved in these decisions.