



Relocation of Adult Homeless Shelter from 64 College Avenue to 89 College Avenue

Dear Neighbor,

We hope this letter finds you well. The Somerville Homeless Coalition (SHC) and First Church Somerville (FCS) are writing to share information about our ongoing efforts to support individuals experiencing homelessness in our shared Somerville community.

As you may know, Somerville Homeless Coalition has been serving the most vulnerable residents of the City of Somerville since 1985. Annually, SHC's programming supports over 7,000 Somerville residents facing homelessness, housing insecurity, and food insecurity.

To that end, First Church Somerville has had a long and deeply rooted partnership with SHC. FCS has served as the host of SHC's ongoing weekly community meal for over 30 years. In our neighborhood, just down the street at 64 College Avenue, SHC has also been operating its Adult Homeless Shelter for nearly 40 years - SHC's longest operating program.

Unfortunately, in recent years our community has witnessed firsthand the growing number of people forced to sleep outside in Somerville. This past winter a local annual homeless count determined that over 40 individuals are sleeping on the streets of Somerville on any given night. Before COVID the average was 10 people each night. Somerville's unhoused population, on the whole, has also grown increasingly more vulnerable during this time, particularly as it relates to physical health issues. Tragically, one of our unsheltered clients recently passed away in his sleep on the streets of Somerville.

In response to this growing humanitarian need and with a unanimous vote from the First Church Somerville Community, SHC has been invited to relocate its Adult Homeless Shelter, one block away, to 89 College Avenue. SHC expects to relocate its shelter this coming Fall.



The primary reasons for this relocation are that SHC's current shelter facility is falling into disrepair, it cannot accommodate more people and its current location has never been able to properly accommodate individuals with disabilities.

Relocating to FCS will create the first ADA accessible shelter in Somerville capable of accommodating those that have otherwise not been able to sleep at our shelter because of their physical limitations and the barriers of SHC's existing facility. We believe everyone deserves access to a safe and supportive place to sleep. The FCS facility allows SHC to help more people living outside and it will also be a more dignified environment for the guests.

We recognize that change, even within a small neighborhood, can be unsettling and we will make every effort to ensure this transition is as smooth as possible. SHC and FCS are committed to continuing to be responsive and reliable partners in the neighborhood.

We are open to answering questions you may have to ensure a positive outcome for everyone involved. We have included an overview of the shelter program operations in this letter. If you have questions, please email the SHC team at info@shcinc.org.

With Thanks,

Michael Libby

Executive Director
Somerville Homeless Coalition

Reverend Jenn Macy

Pastor
First Congregational Church