



SOMERVILLE COMMUNITY CORPORATION

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**Testimony from Danny LeBlanc, Chief Executive Officer  
To the Joint Committee on Community Development and Small Business  
Massachusetts State Legislature  
June 1, 2011**

Senator DiDomenico, Representative Dorcena Forry, Members of the Committee, and  
Community Development Colleagues:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to appear before you today on this critical piece of legislation for the future of community development in cities and towns across Massachusetts. My name is Danny LeBlanc. For the last 10 years I have served as Chief Executive Officer of the Somerville Community Corporation. I've lived in Somerville for the past 35 years, and reside in the district represented by Senator DiDomenico. I also serve on the Board of Directors of the Mass. Association of CDCs and as co-chair of MACDC's Policy Committee.

Like all communities in the Commonwealth, Somerville has its own unique set of challenges and opportunities. The uniqueness of each community is one key reason why the Community Development Partnership Act is so important: it allows each organization and community to determine its own development needs, and then to attract the community, public, and private support to bring off the plan. Quite simply, if your plan isn't good enough to inspire the confidence necessary, you won't get funded to do the work. I can't think of a better set of checks and balances for good public policy.

While many communities in the Commonwealth are correctly concerned with the ravages of the economic downturn, in Somerville we've actually been anticipating the next major uptick in market forces. With the Green Line extension on the short-term horizon, and major new development potential at Assembly Square and Inner Belt, Somerville's housing market and attractiveness for new development have remained remarkably strong. This is mostly a good thing, but it also poses unique challenges for low and moderate income, in terms of their ability to afford the cost of housing to stay in Somerville.

Our Legislators and City officials know these Somerville circumstances well. And so do we at SCC. That is why we're gearing up to build hundreds of affordable housing units in the next 10-15 years, as we anticipate the overall development of thousands of new units at Assembly Square and Inner Belt. We need the CDPA to attract the investment necessary to do the job right. We also know our residents need the new jobs projected for Somerville to survive and thrive in our community – MAPC's MetroFuture projects that around 17,000 jobs will be created in Somerville over the next 20 years, nearly doubling the number of jobs we have today. SCC is advocating for local hiring agreements with new development, and we've also formed a collaborative of several agencies to develop an "opportunity center" to connect our residents

with services and help they'll need to access these jobs. Again, we need the CDPA to help assemble the resources we'll need to fulfill this major challenge.

These are just two examples, from one community, of how this Community Development Partnership Act will enable us to develop and shape the communities we all want to see in Massachusetts in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I urge you to report it out of committee favorably so that we can all get about that important community development business. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify on behalf of this legislation.