



Somerville Community Heroes United Corporation

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



2020

Year in Review

Because of your partnership and commitment,

as well as the dedication of our incredible staff and board during this tumultuous and challenging year, SCC has proven our resiliency and we pledge to continue the fight for equitable development throughout our city. We began 2020 ready to engage more residents, expand our programming, and serve Somerville's most at-risk communities with access to affordable housing, economic equity, and good jobs. We were also getting ready to commemorate our 50th Anniversary, saying farewell to longtime CEO Danny LeBlanc and welcoming new CEO Gonzalo Puigbo. Then the pandemic hit. Our superhero staff pivoted to address the immediate concerns of our most vulnerable neighbors — helping hundreds navigate the unemployment process and apply for rental assistance. We fought hard for affordable homes and local businesses. Still, the disproportionate impact of COVID-19, its uneven economic recovery, and the lingering systemic effects of racist policies exacerbated people's urgent needs in ways we have yet to fully grasp. Although we have so much to learn, SCC, our members, residents, supporters, and partners already know the fundamentals of community. As the world fell apart, we stayed true to our proven course: advocating for affordable housing, equitable development, economic opportunity, and supporting our community. Due to intractable budget concerns, we unfortunately had to let go of valuable staff in 2020, but as an organization, SCC recommitted to its mission and to our communication and transparency. From requiring us to protect each other by social distancing, to bringing us together in mutual aid, this year not so gently reminded us that our health, safety, and wellness are all interconnected. We are only as strong as the communities to which we belong. **On behalf of the SCC Staff and Board of Directors, thank you all for inspiring and challenging us to press on. Thank you for being our everyday heroes.**

“...we stayed true to our proven course.”



A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and flourishes.

Gonzalo Puigbo
CEO



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 offer services and lead community organizing that supports low- and moderate-income Somerville residents in their efforts to achieve economic sustainability and increase civic participation.

A BRIGHT FUTURE OF Opportunity

FIRST SOURCE:

As the pandemic hit, the First Source program saw first-hand the shifting ground and economic impact of the crisis. Job opportunities shriveled, businesses shuttered, and many people came to us seeking help as they tried to navigate the byzantine unemployment assistance application process, sometimes without computer or internet access. Through persistence, the **First Sourcerers** (Blake, Danyal, and Juan) helped people who seemed to have impossible issues with their unemployment. Thanks to the City of Somerville's Job Creation & Retention Trust Fund Covid Assistance grant, we were able to hire two temporary additional coaches to our team of superheroes in order to help 184 people weather the crisis through the summer.

Despite diminished employment opportunities in 2020, our team provided



hundreds of hours of career coaching, helping people find available jobs or training, assess on-the-job risk and safety, manage childcare and family responsibilities, or strengthen computer and English skills. In the fall, Apitchaya joined our team as an Americorps member, helping to streamline our new **digital literacy curriculum**. Together, the Sourcerers piloted our first ever Spanish language job readiness training series — **La Fuente** — which was a big success and will continue to be offered.

Throughout 2020, we were able to keep our Jobs Board up and running and ended up **placing 54 people in good jobs** with at least a \$15/hr wage. We also added 7 new Employer Partners to our Employer Advisory Board, expanded programming into Malden, and hosted **36 job readiness workshops** and networking events.



FINANCIALS

OPERATING REVENUES:

Rental Income	\$185,511
Grants & Government	
Contracts	\$589,618
Contributions	\$389,336
Interest & Other Income	\$28,591
Program Services & Management Fees	\$244,470
Net Assets	\$591,555

TOTAL OPERATING REVENUES.....\$2,029,081

OPERATING EXPENSES:

Economic Opportunity	\$153,340
Community Organizing	\$202,048
Mediation	\$121,927
Housing Development & Asset Management	\$707,638
General & Administrative	\$426,270
Fundraising	\$119,220
First Source	\$304,562

TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES\$2,035,005

A BRIGHT FUTURE OF Opportunity

CONTINUED

FINANCIAL LITERACY AND FIRST TIME HOME BUYER CLASSES:

SCC's financial literacy and economic opportunity programming work to counter years of unjust economic policies by helping people build wealth and find financial stability. Our First Time Homebuyer classes help people better understand the often intimidating process of saving for and purchasing a home, as well as how to access programs that can make doing so more accessible. Our Financial Literacy classes help people learn how to save, decrease debt,

26 First-Time Home
Buyer participants
purchased
homes in
2020!



understand credit and banking, budget and achieve their financial goals.

The **Dynamic Duo** (Janine & Jose) smoothly pivoted to a fully online format for all First Time Home Buyer classes and are in the process of updating all Financial Literacy curricula to digital. Despite the pandemic, **26 First-time Home Buyer participants purchased homes in 2020!** At least two of those were lottery units, and one was a Section 8 for Homeownership purchase. We are also thrilled that Jose became a part-time SCC employee after his Americorps tenure.



ADMIN A-TEAM

Our administrative team worked hard to streamline and update SCC's systems to increase transparency and efficiency. Marcia got everyone's budgets in order, while Helen worked in administrative and organizational support

When you have that total
**community
connection,**
you feel accepted, you feel like
**'I'm a part
of this.'**

— *Jurret, SCC Volunteer and Member Extraordinaire*



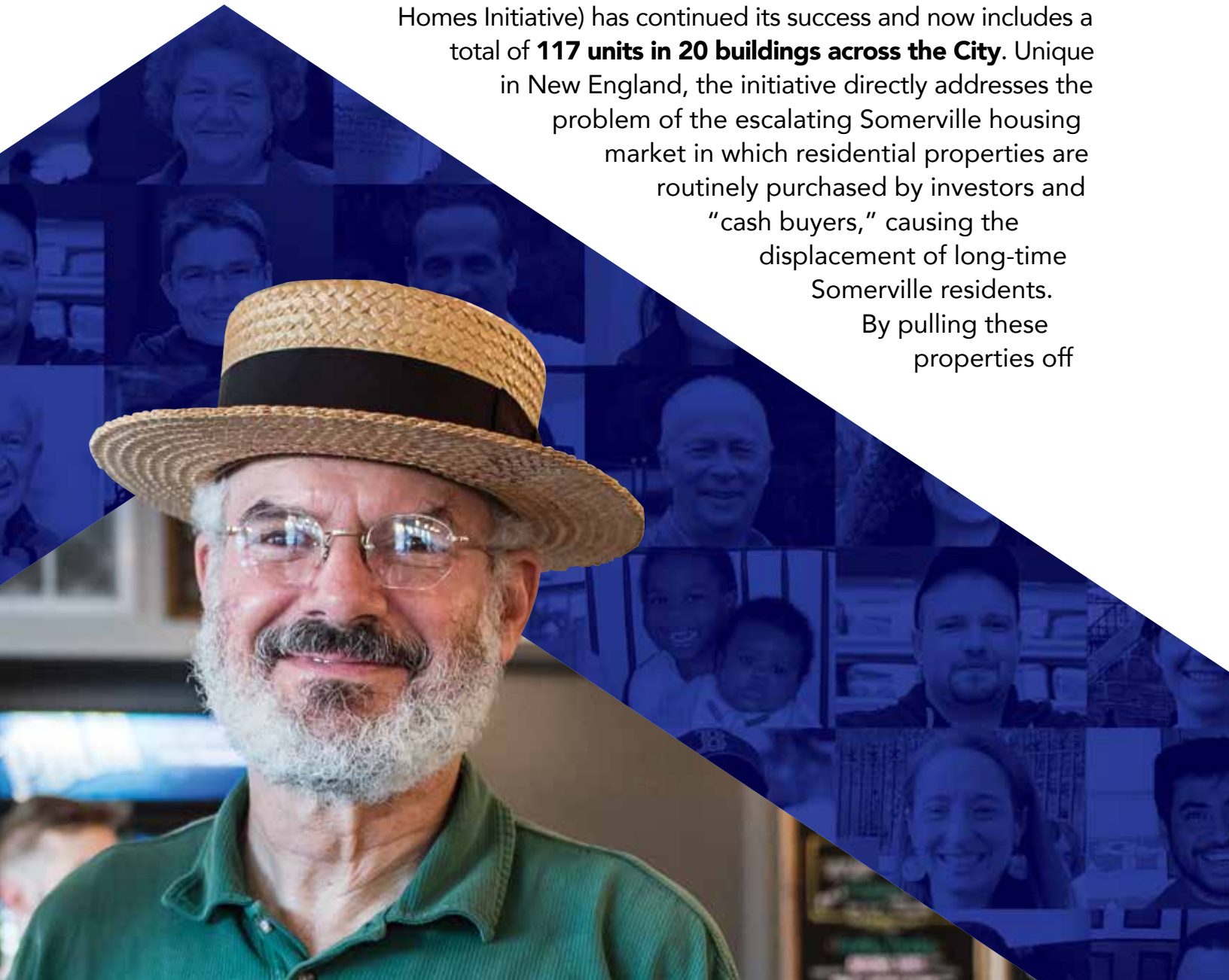


HOUSING FOR Everyone

When staying safe means staying home,

our advocacy for healthy, safe, and affordable homes has never been more critical. The **Fantastic Four** (Sam, Alex, Carolina, and Danny) worked incredibly hard to make sure our residents were able to stay in their homes and moved many people off the priority waitlist into safe housing.

The **100 Homes Initiative** (along with the subsequent 49 More Homes Initiative) has continued its success and now includes a total of **117 units in 20 buildings across the City**. Unique in New England, the initiative directly addresses the problem of the escalating Somerville housing market in which residential properties are routinely purchased by investors and “cash buyers,” causing the displacement of long-time Somerville residents. By pulling these properties off



the market we can preserve existing housing units as affordable in perpetuity and protect the tenancies of many Somerville residents, including many immigrant families who may not have applied or qualified for typical affordable housing programs. We are then also able to create better engagement with local residents and connect them to the other organizing, job training, and asset building services that SCC has to offer. Mayor Curtatone recently said he hopes it will one day be the 1000 Homes Program!

WEBINAR SUCCESS

We hosted a very successful webinar panel on the impact of the pandemic on housing and public health, with over 70 attendees. We are planning the next panel on tenant protections in what will become a regular series.



THANK YOU SCOTT!!!

After 7 years at SCC, Real Estate Director and Superman Scott Hayman retired in 2020. A native of Worcester, Scott was the founding director of the Central Mass Housing Alliance and Director of Housing for the City of Worcester before coming to SCC. During his tenure at SCC, he:

- Oversaw the completion of Saint Polycarp Village III, along with Yara Vergucht as project manager
- Got the 181 Washington project to the development stage, through some tricky negotiations and public process
- Led the launch and implementation of the 100 Homes program, which has now resulted in over 100 units becoming permanently affordable housing. In developing the 100 Homes program, Scott utilized lessons he had learned and tools developed in helping to run the Neighborhood Stabilization Program for MHIC for the 3 years before coming to SCC
- Led SCC's teams in the upcoming Clarendon redevelopment partnership

We already miss Scott's humor and hard work and wish him lots of relaxation and aces on the court back home in Worcester.

HOUSING FOR Everyone

— CONTINUED

In 2020, SCC's partnership with POAH, Redgate, and the Somerville Housing Authority meant we were able to secure zoning approval for the redevelopment of Clarendon Hill. Once completed, the site will be the location of **296 new affordable units**.

We also completed energy retrofits on many properties, including **14 solar installations**, and strengthened partnerships with energy efficiency building partners, so that all new constructions in the future will be energy efficient. Every SCC building that gets these energy retrofits is helping to slowly **green the grid**, reducing our buildings' environmental impact while addressing social inequalities by providing solar power access to those who need it most.

With the full backing of the staff and board, we supported the





**Massachusetts Eviction
Diversion Pledge,**
promising to:

- Abide by and support the current CDC eviction moratorium
- Proactively engage with residents and create payment plans
- Support and accept rental assistance payments
- Promote rent adjustments for Section 8/MRVP families
- Encourage structured and interactive mediation

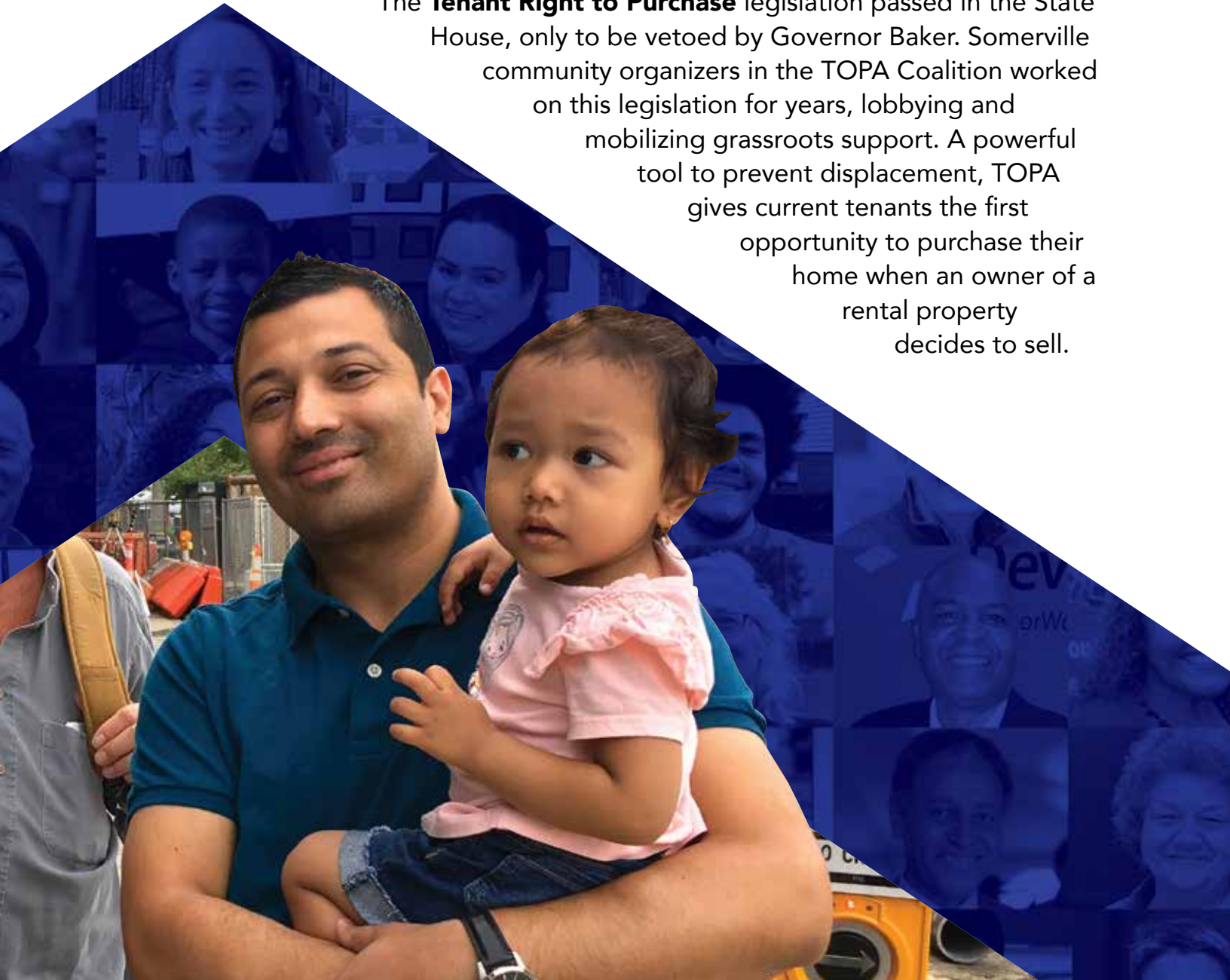


BUILDING Community

GUARDIAN OF THE TENANT GALAXY:

We hired Magda as a dedicated tenant organizer to work with the local tenant population. She organized a successful **Tenants' Rights Workshops** in partnership with the Know Your Rights Campaign, and spearheaded the **Latinx Committee** to help with Spanish-speaking rental assistance cases referred by the Office of Housing Stability.

The **Tenant Right to Purchase** legislation passed in the State House, only to be vetoed by Governor Baker. Somerville community organizers in the TOPA Coalition worked on this legislation for years, lobbying and mobilizing grassroots support. A powerful tool to prevent displacement, TOPA gives current tenants the first opportunity to purchase their home when an owner of a rental property decides to sell.



Tenants can designate their right to purchase to nonprofit organizations like SCC to maintain the property as affordable housing.

Exemplifying the work TOPA will facilitate, in 2020 SCC worked with a group of long-term, senior tenants whose building was going up for sale. Through the 100 Homes Programs, the tenants were able to quickly buy the building and stay in their homes. We are ready to help fight for TOPA's passage again and preserve affordable housing in Massachusetts.



THANK YOU RENE!!!

We can't thank Rocketeer Rene enough for his years of dedicated service to SCC and the Somerville community. A tireless social justice advocate, Rene joined SCC in 2013 working with the organizing committees. He spearheaded these successful campaigns:

- Established initial Jobs Linkage Fee
- Passage of the Jobs Linkage state home rule legislation and City Ordinance
- Inclusionary Zoning amendment to increase affordable housing percentage from 12.5% to 20%
- Increased Housing Linkage Fee
- Helped form Union United
- Was the lead organizer of the Union Square Community Benefits Agreement
- Worked with Clarendon tenants on the redevelopment plan

We miss Rene's dedication, humor, and compassion and wish him the best in all his new adventures!

Superhero Staff

SHOUT OUT

SCC has a long record of serving our community

no matter what, so it's no surprise that our superhero teams rose to the occasion as the COVID-19 pandemic upended life as we know it, springing to action to help with rental assistance, navigate unemployment applications, keep people connected, demand justice, and more! The staff supported each other in the transition to working from home, helped each other learn the systems and platforms for remote work, coordinated a staggered return to the office in order to serve members, tenants, and participants when needed, and supported colleagues who were sick with the virus. With all senior leadership transitioning in 2020, the staff buckled down and held the organization together. **We couldn't be prouder of the SCC staff and their dedication.**



In a year of transition, SCC is lucky to have added these fresh faces to the team! Alex, Apitchaya, Carolina, Gonzalo, Magda, Marcia, and Sam

First Sourcerers

- Blake Roberts-Crall
- Danyal Najmi
- Juan Williams
- Apitchaya Ramirez

Real Estate Fantastic Four

- Sam LaTronica
- Alex Bob
- Carolina Mejia
- Danny Lopez

Economic Opportunity Dynamic Duo

- Janine Lotti
- Jose Cedanio

Guardian of the Tenant Galaxy

- Magdalena Gomez

Admin A-Team

- Helen Corrigan
- Marcia Kittredge

Iron Man CEO

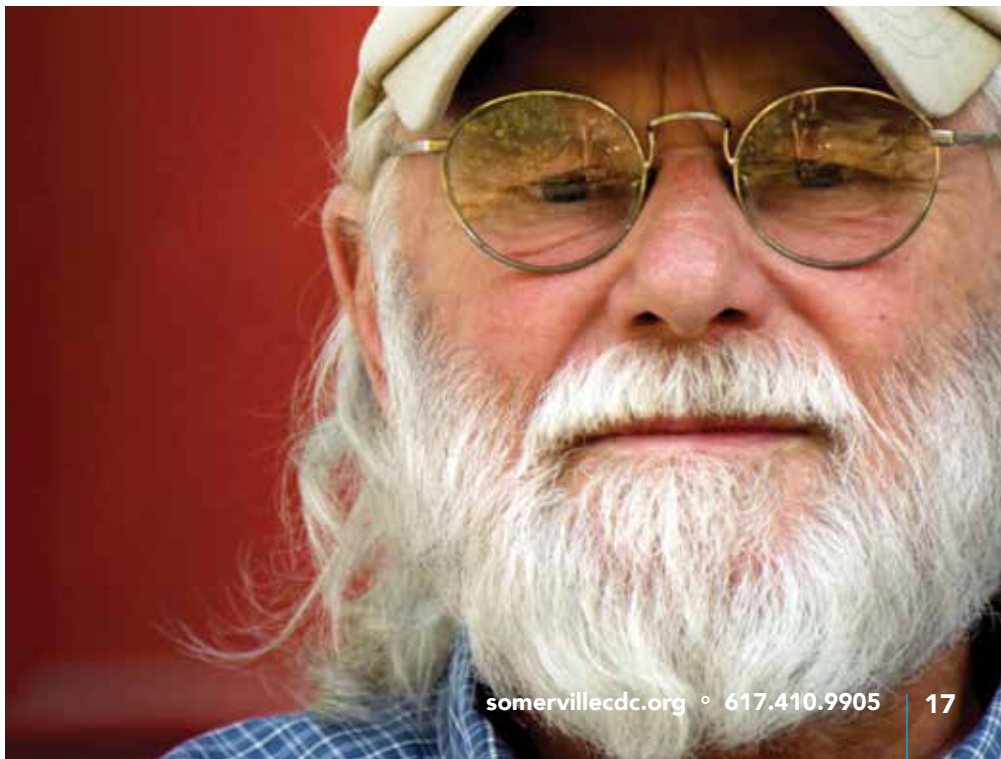
- Gonzalo Puigbo



I started contacting friends —
what do you do, how do I survive ...

**that led to SCC.
I literally think of
it as having
saved my life.**

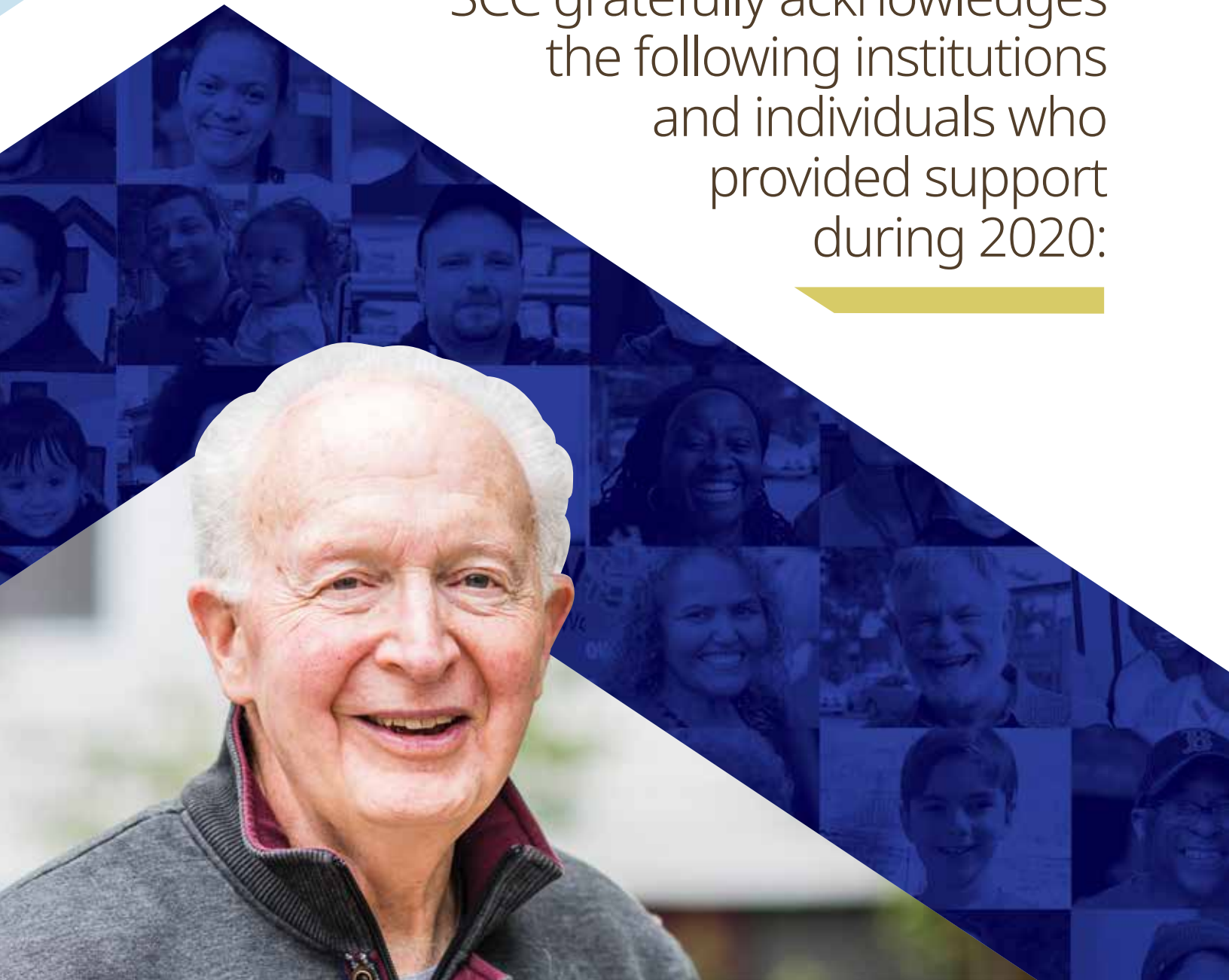
— Van, SCC Board Member



ACKNOWLEDGING THOSE WHO MAKE Our Work Possible

It's our honor to work with SCC members, supporters, and partners to help create an Equitable Somerville. Although we are immensely proud of this work, we know that these investments are just a small drop in the bucket of what our communities need. We look forward to working with you to build the just and inclusive future that Somerville deserves.

SCC gratefully acknowledges
the following institutions
and individuals who
provided support
during 2020:



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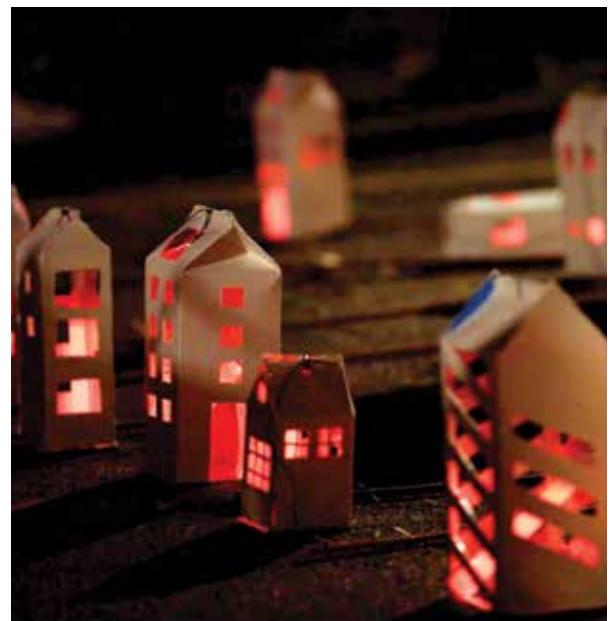
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LIGHT UP SOMERVILLE

We hosted our inaugural **Light Up Somerville Walk** in November to raise awareness about the need for affordable housing in Somerville and showcase SCC's 100 Homes. The socially distanced and Covid-safe Walk was attended by approximately 100 people, including many of you, as well as people just learning about SCC's work. Participants created handmade lanterns which represented our 100 Homes and carried them through the city at dusk. It was a beautiful evening which safely brought people together and achieved a sense of community during a difficult time.

In partnership with Mister Francis productions, we produced an 18 minute documentary on SCC's work in the community, culminating in Light Up Somerville. This powerful film has already strengthened our storytelling and been entered into local film festivals.





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