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## Artist Space in Industrial Zones

*Allowing artist live/work or work space in industrial zones*

A simple manner by which several cities (Boston, Somerville) have supported the creation of artist space is by creating a [definition](#) of 'artist live/work' or 'arts use' that is allowed, either as of right or by special permit, in industrial zones. The thinking behind this is that artists space in general is similar to light industrial space, and many former industrial building make for perfect artist space. Most cities who have done this do monitor use through one method (artist certification) or another (special permits) to guarantee that the zoning allows only real artists to take advantage of it. Setting up a format for monitoring also allows for cities to target specific properties for redevelopment into artist space, and enables cities to preserve industrial space where needed. Typically, we have seen cities use this tool to create artist space in 'edge' industrial zones, or zones where industry is no longer a feasible financial option.

### Some City Specific Zoning Codes

The following summary reviews the specifics of Boston and Somerville's zoning codes as it applies to artists. Briefly, both Boston and Somerville have a special allowance for artist live/work space in industrial districts.

#### *Boston Zoning Code*

Artist mixed-use (live/work) is the only residential use allowed in Boston's industrially-zoned districts. Developers must establish legal occupancy and meet residential building code requirements which protect life safety of occupants.

Artist space is defined in two separate ways, as:

1. (3A) "Art use", the creation, manufacture, or assemblage of visual art, including two- or three-dimensional works of fine art or craft, or other fine art objects created, manufactured, or assembled for the purpose of sale, display, commission, consignment, or trade by artists or artisans; or classes held for art instruction.
2. (3B) "Artists' mixed-use", the use of all or a portion of a building for both art use and habitation.  
*This defines live/work space.*

Both of these definitions are allowed in industrial zones of the city. An interested party should read the code itself

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### Spotlight on Boston



Boston has taken a leadership role on the artist space issue in the country. It has taken many innovative steps to produce and preserve critically needed artist space.

Click [here](#) to learn more about their effort to date, outlining the key steps taken.

### Building Arts Districts



Did you know that ArtistLink has a whole section on how to zone, build, design and program arts districts. Check it out [here](#)...

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carefully for the specific district they are in to see if 3A and 3B are “allowed” or “conditional uses”.

The code may be found at:

<http://www.cityofboston.gov/bra/zoning/downloadZone.asp>

If an artist project is listed as a conditional use in a district, the project developer may apply for a variance. Any developer interested in artist space should contact the [Boston Redevelopment Authority](#) first to learn about the specifics of preparing to apply for a variance.

#### *Somerville Zoning Code*

Artist housing is allowed as a specific use in Industrial A (IA) and Industrial P (IP) zones of the city (also other districts). The IA classification is for industrial uses that are not compatible for commercial uses, but it allows living and studio spaces for artists (Section 6.1.8 in the zoning regulations). The IP classification is for industrial park districts. In this zone, if an artist housing project is six or less units, a special permit is required. For seven or more units, a special permit with site plan review is required. Artist housing is allowed in commercial districts, too. It is not allowed in RA or RB but it is allowed in RC (multi-family residential), BA (smaller business zone), and BB (business zone) as of right for buildings with six or under units. For NB (neighborhood business) and CBD (central business district) zone it is allowed with a special permit. For all those five zones (RC, BA, BB, NB, and CBD), a special permit with a site plan is needed.

The majority of this information can be found in section 7.11.3E of the zoning ordinance. Zoning information is provided on the Somerville’s web site:

<http://www.ci.somerville.ma.us/>.

Viewers should go to the “departments” section, click on either “zoning” or “planning”, and go into the “forms and ordinances” sections.

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