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Artist explores the futuristic history of Somerville

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What does the future hold for Somerville? Local artist **Tim Devin** spent a year gathering official plans as well as responses from residents, asking what's in store for Somerville, in his unique community art project, **"The History of Somerville, 2010-2100."**

From the deluge of responses received, Devin began creating a historical timeline spanning from 2010 to 2100. "I began talking to locals in February of last year at festivals and accepting letters. I got a sense of what people would like to see happen as well as what they're afraid of," he told the Journal.

"This project was a social experiment that gave a voice to many about the future of their town," Devin said. "Despite the predictions of destruction and devastation, a great many changes come to Somerville. The first large change comes with the locals leaving and young people moving in. This creates a new mentality of community sharing. The entire mentality of Somerville changes so drastically, a dog gets elected as the mayor."

In the timeline, people expressed major concerns about environmental calamities, natural disasters, possible wars and the dangers of gentrification. Jessica Straus predicted that by 2030, "Somerville is totally gentrified. All the Victorian houses are snapped up and renovated. Somerville is completely unaffordable to most." The fear is that yuppies and young people will overrun the town, forcing out the locals and raising housing costs. The natives will feel they are a dying breed, soon to become a part of folklore.

People then predicted technological and cultural breakthroughs and a tight-knit, green, self-sustaining community in Somerville's future. Lauren Schumaker predicted that by 2025, "all cars are banned and Somerville becomes a walking and biking town." Josh Burchord predicted that Somerville will be a more diverse and welcoming place than Cambridge by the 2020s.

According to Somerville residents, the city will become much more environmentally friendly with the invention of hover cars, and with biofuels replacing fossil fuels. Electricity in Somerville will be entirely renewable and harvested by windmills standing on the city's seven hills. While industry is booming in India and China, the U.S. and Europe are both powered largely by renewable energy. Some have even speculated that NASA will begin colonizing the moon and exploring other planets.

Adam Olenn predicted, "After Somerville annexes Porter Square, a massive green rooftop garden is built over the parking lot at the Porter Square Shopping Center. This becomes a community garden and every weekend, there's a farmer's market."

The expansion of the MBTA will bring a Green Line station to Union Square, which extends out to Medford, and an Orange Line station to Assembly Square, further changing the face of the city.

The future will also bring natural disasters like an earthquake in 2036 that ravages the unaffordable Victorian houses. The disaster leads to martial law and a revolt in Inman Square. After 10 days of bloody combat, Inman rejoins Cambridge. However, the violence does not stop. An anonymous source predicts, "in the midst of this turmoil, the ghost of Whitey Bulger appears. He leads an uprising of townies against those who have moved in since the 1990s. These new residents are forcibly evicted; their coffee shops, art festivals and bicycle lanes are removed; and a wall is built between Cambridge and Somerville." Throughout this townie revolution, the environmentally friendly approach is still maintained.

After a few years, non-locals are allowed back into Somerville and the wall between Cambridge and Somerville is removed. Quite rapidly, the two communities abolish religion and class. The city destroys the local highways, putting its money into public transportation and city-provided scooters for all residents.

In the future, Somerville will endure other tragic and bizarre events, according to the timeline: such as a nuclear war, Godzilla attacking Davis Square and futuristic economic troubles. Eventually, in the 2080s, the streets will be ripped up and Somerville will become an agricultural mecca, where residents raise goats and chickens on their farmlands. This return to agrarian life brings peace to Somerville, which has expanded to include Charlestown and Cambridge.

"While the future brings about serious difficult changes to Somerville in regards to locals and newcomers, the prevalent theme of the responses was a profound sense of community and neighbors looking out for one another," Devin said.

The art project was hosted at the Nave Gallery in Powder House Square on Feb. 5-6. More information on the artist and his project can be found at **http://timdevin.com/historyofsomerville.html**. Devin will also be hosting a book reading at the main branch of the Somerville Public Library on Feb. 23 at 7 p.m. for the book that will follow.

Devin is a member of Rise Industries, an artists' collaborative, and began the futuristic reflection for ArtBeat in 2009. "I tried to stop working on this project at the end of 2009, but people kept getting in touch with me," Devin said. "So I started it up again and kept working on it until now."

Devin said his work deals with humanizing public space and combating the negative effects of urban anonymity. He focuses on people's emotional isolation and their lack of attachment to their environment. "I have done a few story and idea-gathering projects in the past, so 'The History of Somerville, 2010-2100' grew from my experience and public interest," he said.

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Somerville Journal | 80 Central Street | Somerville, MA 02143

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