



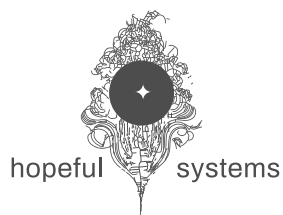
WE BLOCK PARTY'D AND SO CAN YOU!

tools &
infrastructure
for Somervillians
to throw block
parties

HYPER
CLARION
publications



Fractal Bunny Productions

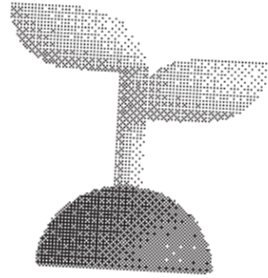


hopeful systems

editor's forward

Somerville is a magical place, dripping in quirky stickers and serendipitous street finds. From School of Honk and Elfland to Porchfest and the Abundance Casino, it is the convergence of so many experiments in community. One vibrant layer of this ecology are block parties, where neighborhoods join together to co-create, share space and get wiggly. Just as Porchfest is a decentralized festival distributed across space, block parties are a decentralized festival distributed across time, with all the cool corners of Somerville throwing their own block party during the summer. Beyond ludic fun, block parties are also important spaces for a wide range of neighbors to meet each other and build trust and connection. In the words of Boston Mayor Michelle Wu:

“the key to saving democracy is block parties!”

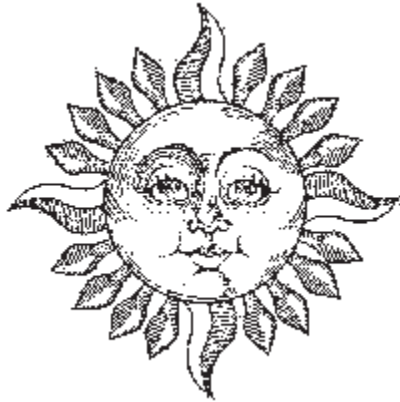


This zine provides access to critical tools and infrastructure for residents to host their own block parties and in doing so experiment with new modes of community. This includes a step-to-step guide for resident submitting their own block party application to the City of Somerville, as well as reflections, suggestions and offerings for block partying from the folks on Calvin street and beyond. We hope you feel inspired to throw your own block party!

~ CALVIN ST, MAY 17TH 2025 ~

99sol

an inspirational
time theory



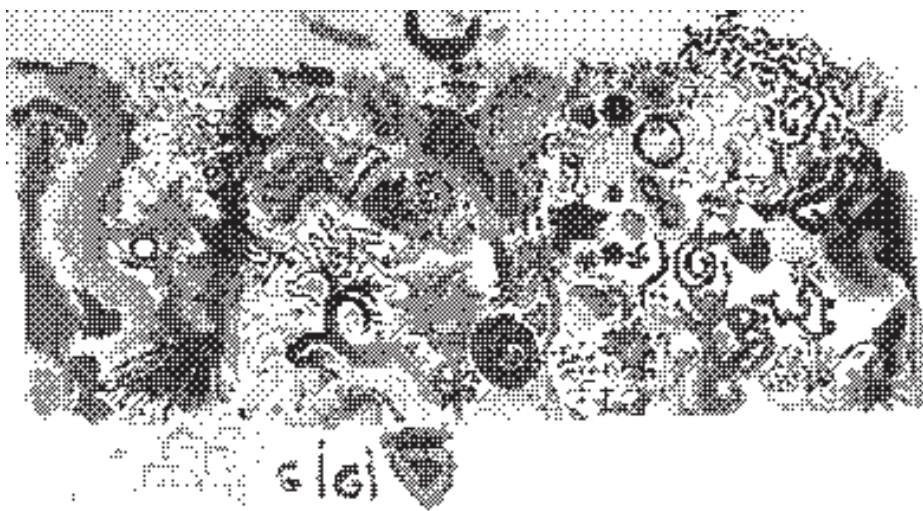
A day on Earth is 24 hours.

Sol, a day on Mars, is equivalent to
1.02749125 Earth days - approximately
24 hours, 39 minutes, and 35 seconds.

How long is
a day in the
Playborhood?

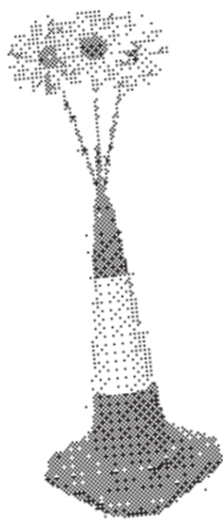
Time is Humanity's most scarce, and most valuable resource. In expectation, each of us is granted 26,718 Earth days to spend. Completing a Master's degree takes approximately 667 of these Earth days. Those of us who are pursuing a career will spend many more. This is true for Earth days, the number of rotations our globular home will spin around itself as we spin thoughts, projects, relationships, and hardships. However, what if we measure time differently? What if we measure the net positive impact - on our surroundings, our communities, and our ecosystem. Sure, our work is one way to get there, making productive days feel like time well spent, while at the same time making unproductive periods harsh - as if time stands still. What if we spend a day, or even an hour, building something that will inspire 99 other people. What if these inspirational seeds grow and sprout, such that some of these people each spends time inspiring 99 more.

99Sol is a measure for time spent inspiring, and is the only way to emancipate ourselves from the linear shackles of time. An action that might seem frivolous - such as making a tree sing or a wall talk, could unexpectedly seed research ideas, sprout fruitful collaborations, and grow new forms of collective intelligence. Our impact is unpredictable, yet the energy that generates it is ours to cultivate.



so you you want to have a block party, eh?

In Somerville, it's pretty **straightforward and free!** This step-by-step guides help you navigate the bureaucracy and submit your own application (sourced from www.somervilletogether.com, a now defunct website). **Don't be intimidated** by the application – it's the same one used for much more complicated licenses, but **most block parties get approved.**



#1

First, work with your neighbors to find a date that works for as many people as possible.

Be sure to pick a rain date. (If you don't and your event gets rained out, you'll need to submit a new application).

#2

Via the somer ville ma.gov website, create a Citizenserve account and read up on how to submit.



click on the [citizenserve](https://www.somervillema.gov/citizenserve) logo to go the Citizenserve portal. Register for an account (registration type: citizen). Look for the “**Submittal Requirements**” for Public Events and follow the instructions carefully.

www.somervillema.gov/citizenserve

#3

Apply for a “Block Party License” from the City to block the street, no later than **6 weeks before your target date.**



Scroll down to the key icon and click “apply for license”

#4

Complete the application. Guidance on the trickiest questions is provided below. Double-check and save your responses - the form can be finicky!

APPLICATION TYPE

Block party license

IS THIS APPLICATION FOR A NEW OR EXISTING BUSINESS LOCATION?

A new business location (if this is your first application). Then enter your home or business address, and click on “Find Address”. If Citizenserve doesn’t identify your address, select “Use This Address.” OR Select “An Additional License for an Existing Business” if you’ve already been licensed before. For Business name, use “<Your Street Name> Block Party.”

DOES THIS EVENT INCLUDE ALCOHOL SERVICE? + WILL FOOD BE SERVED?

For typical block parties, attendees may serve food potluck-style without a license, as long as common sense is used with respect to food safety (don’t leave perishables out more than two hours, make sure meat is thoroughly cooked, etc.). Attendees may drink alcohol on private property, like front steps, yards, and driveways. Specify in your application that food will be potluck and alcohol will only be consumed on private property and that you will NOT be selling food or alcohol.



FAQs

Are there deadlines for submitting the public event license application? Yes! There are time frames for getting the licenses processed. Public events are approved at each City Council meeting, and it takes a few days for department heads to sign off before each meeting. Block parties need to have sign-offs by the Friday before each meeting. This year we submitted on February 27 and received approval on April 6 for our May 17 party.

Is there a way for residents to get a temporary no parking sign in advance of a block party, and is that a good idea? The head of Traffic and Parking notes that a “no parking” sign may be purchased at Traffic and Parking. The cost is \$5/sign and the sign must be posted 48 hours in advance of the event. That said, City staff have mentioned that over the years that they have handled block party licenses, requiring neighbors to move cars has sometimes created some friction which has made block parties less popular. An option is to move just a few cars to create an open area.

How do I involve neighbors? Drop off a simple flier for neighbors at each house (federal law prohibits putting fliers in mailboxes, but you can put them in each door.) Hang up fliers around the neighborhood. Call and email. Going door-to-door with the invitations adds a personal touch that will help you get more people interested in volunteering for and attending the event. Keep the invitation simple, and remember to include at least one contact name and phone number, so neighbors can get in touch with someone if necessary. Distribute a short reminder notice one week before the block party to confirm to everyone that it’s still happening. Invite your neighbors to your planning meetings!

FAQs CONT.

Who should be invited? It's up to you! Invite just your block, neighboring blocks, the whole neighborhood, or the whole city! A good line for an invitation is: "Bring food to grill for your family and a dish to share." If you want to be more ambitious, you could hold something like a chili cook-off or a cookie contest, and have kids award prizes to their favorites, but you can always try that in a future

year once you graduate to "advanced" block partying!

(so place your tables, etc. strategically).

What happens on the day of? The Department of Public Works will drop off a "street closed" barrier on the day of your event. If for some reason they don't drop off the barriers, call 311 or DPW (see above) or block your street off with your own lawn chairs, as long as you have the license. You will need to let cars go in and out of their driveways, so you will have to move the barriers at certain points

What other suggestions do you have? If you want to start small/manageable, block off the smallest section of the street that still works for your gathering. This allows you to inconvenience the fewest people, and thus makes it less stressful to have the "perfect" party.

How about activities? Some established block parties do cool things, like bouncy houses or a clown. However, even just sitting in a circle with lawn chairs is perfect. Kids love being able to actually ride their bike or scooter on the block, and may go in and out of houses. I always bring out some toys from my house and put them on a blanket for the younger kids. The Fire Department requires that if you do set up a large object, like a bouncy house, that you leave at least 12 feet of clearance on the street, so a fire truck or ambulance can get by when necessary.



Public event instructions from the city
(Distinct but related to Block Parties,
[https://www3.citizenserve.com/
Documents/149/Public%20Event-
Special%20Alcohol%20CS%20
instructions.pdf](https://www3.citizenserve.com/Documents/149/Public%20Event-Special%20Alcohol%20CS%20instructions.pdf))

Still have questions? Reach
out to your ward councilor!
Find them in this directory,
and click their name to get
contact info.

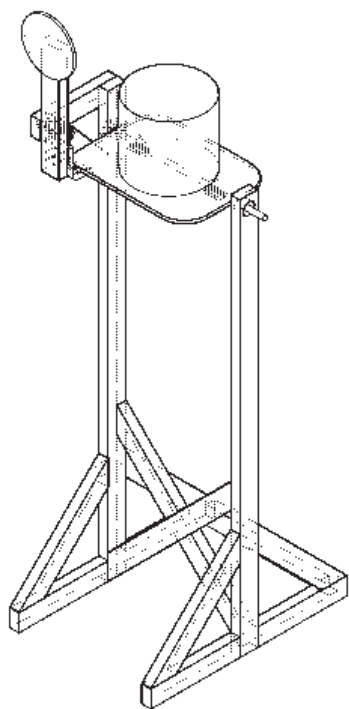


There's lots of ways to get
in touch! Phone, email,
office hours (drop-in or
appointment)



Extended FAQ from Somerville Together website with
great info on topics such as private vs. public streets, rain
dates, street barriers, food trucks, and park parties.

MORE Qs?



**DANK.
DUCK...
DUNK!**

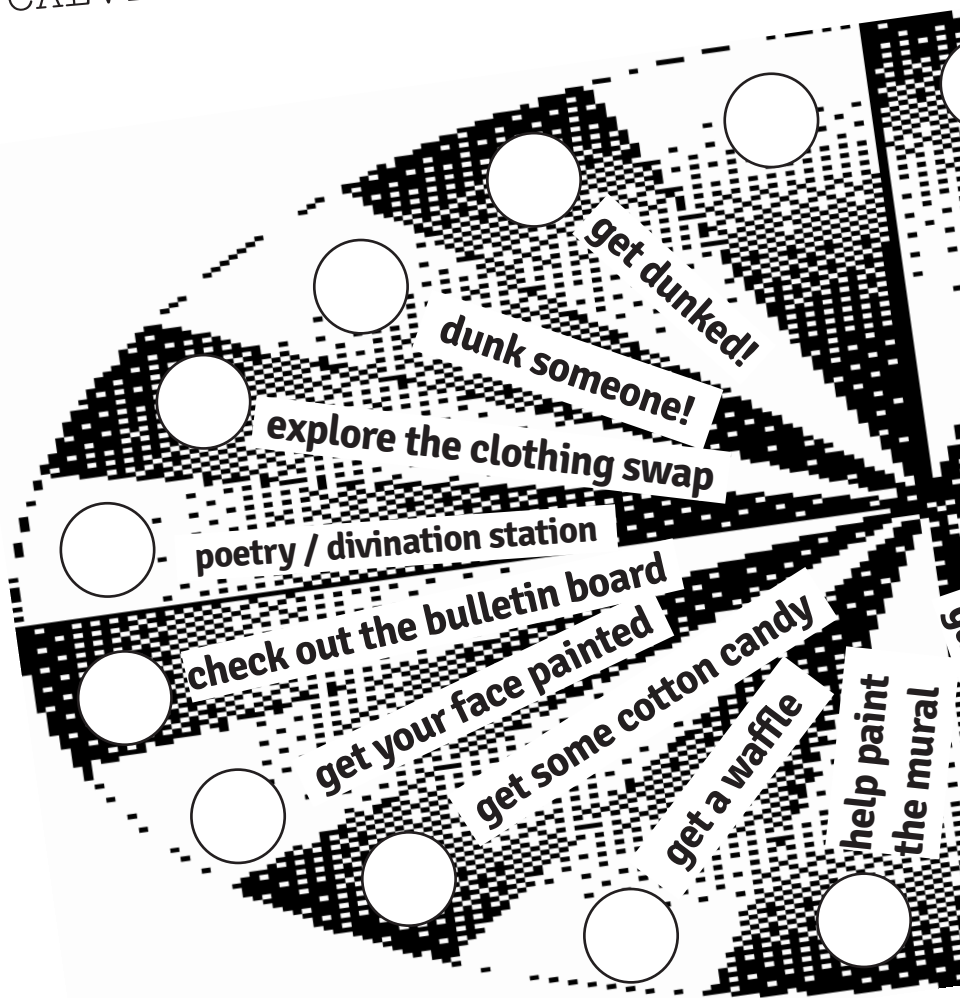


Classic dunk tanks involve a massive tank that a person (dunk-ee) sits above. A mechanism drops them into the tank when an onlooker hits a target with a good throw. This form factor is fun, but it's hard to pull off at a block party. For a more lightweight and elegant alternative, Alfonso and Jack built the Dank Duck Dunk (D3). The D3 has a platform for a bucket to be placed above the dunk-ee. The platform is prevented from rotating as one edge sits on a wooden arm attached to a target. When the dunker hits the target, the wooden arm is pushed out from under the platform. The bucket and platform can then freely rotate and dump water on the dunk-ee.

If you want to borrow the dank duck dunk for your block party, you are most welcome! Just email calvinblockparty@gmail.com

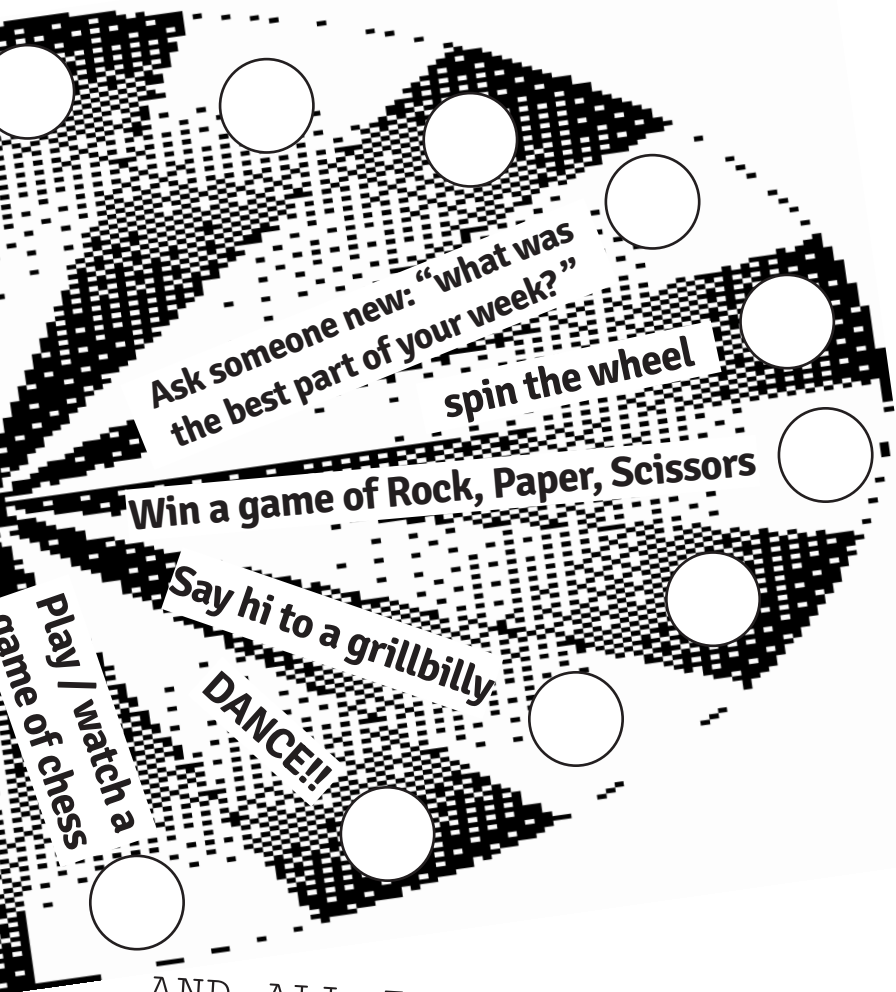


I DID THE FOLLOWING @ THE
CALVIN ST. BLOCK PARTY....:



PASSPO

When you live on a block of co-creation, the wheel of fortune is an abundance casino. Take a chance and enter a world of interactivity - there are many possibilities to try over the course of the afternoon!



...AND ALL I GOT WERE CHERISHED
MEMORIES, AND THIS COMPLETED

RT PAGE

SPUN SUGAR

For your next block party, consider
some delicious sugar clouds:

Cambridge Taylor Rental
+1 (617) 666-7368

The fluffy sugar
of life binds our
sweet community
together...



block parties inspire block parties inspire block parties inspire...

"When we hosted our first block party on Parkdale Street in 2022, we were required to flier all our neighbors' houses to let them know the party was happening. One resident wrote me the email below after seeing the flyer:

Hi Aaron,
I have been living [on] Parkdale Street since 1976 and this is the first block party for the neighbors. I think it is a wonderful idea and am looking forward to meeting others who live on the street. I don't plan on doing anything at my address but I would like to know if anyone is collecting contributions.

On the day of the block party, she came out with a friend and got a chance to meet neighbors, many of whom she had never met before."

-Aaron, borrower of Dank Duck Dunk for the inaugural 2022 Parkdale Block Party

...connections!

AT A BLOCK PARTY...



Your bananas
could get
tattooeder...

Your hair
could get
shorter...



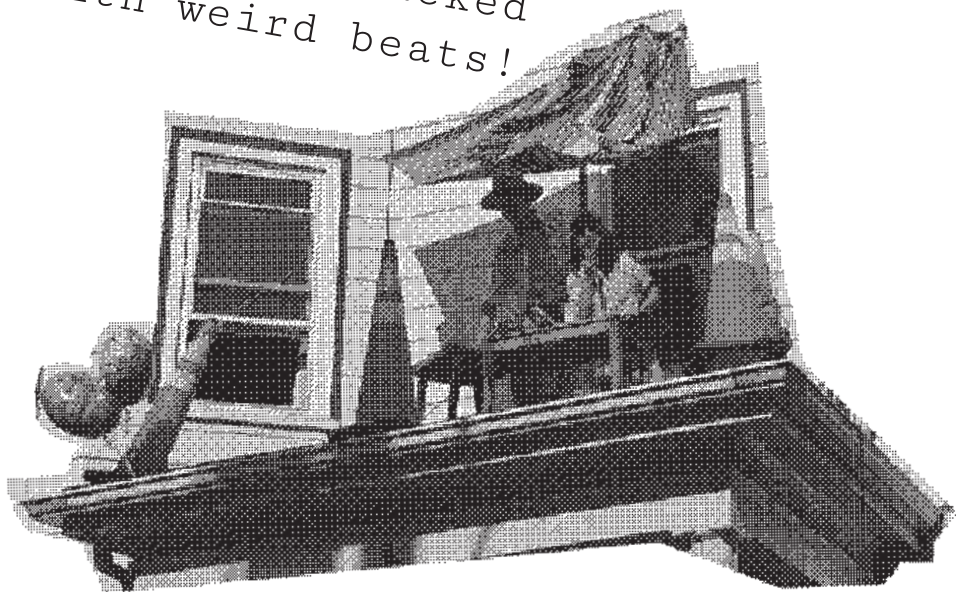
your face
could get
painteder....



You could bash
a silly lil
piñata...



and the portico
lineup is stacked
with weird beats!



CHECK OUT THESE DELICIOUS MUSICIANS

Just as Porchfest brings together communities by matching local bands with porches, block parties can collaborate with musicians to add a fun layer of co-creation and a magical sonic texture to the day. What musicians live on your block? Thanks to the fantastic musicians who generously donated their time and talent this year!

MIRIMBA



**FURTHER
NOTICE**



**JERMAINE
KELLY**

GLUTTY



**BEETS BOOK
CLUB**



Scan the QR codes to see
the bands' Instagrams!

The Classifieds

Listings of possible
community experiments around
the block

Make a little
free library!



Attend public
hearings!

(They're more
fun than
you might
think...)

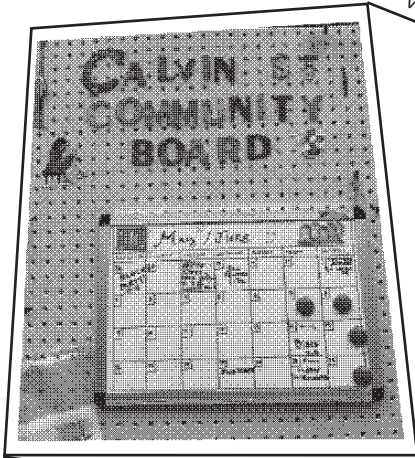
Work with your fellow tenants
to buy your home

How can Tenancy in Common mechanisms support a community in edifying a playborhood? How do we elicit and align our values? How does the architecture of Somerville triple-deckers support community and co-housing? Stay tuned to find out!

Start a Community Board!

A community board can be a great way to strengthen community, communicate with neighbors, and share upcoming events

Make sure it's
water-proof!



Ours includes:
-calendar
-sticker share
-pegboard
-art of the month

Plan around
your soup
radius!

Host or attend
a repair meetup

Support a local bathhouse!

Attend a local rave or
bonfire!

MAGIC BEANS - A SALAD TO CREATE COMMUNITY

Two weeks before the block party, we hosted a cozy planning meeting. The scheming party planners needed protein to fuel their creative minds, so we whipped up the following delicious bean recipe (which was later used to feed the first JoyFest, another local event you should check out). This recipe is great because it's incredibly easy and produces plenty of leftovers, at a very low cost per serving. We all have busy lives on top of planning parties, so any way to reduce the strain while still meeting new friends over home cooked food is a massive win.

Ingredients (all available at
Market Basket)

- 1 can (20 oz) white kidney beans
- 2 carrots, peeled and diced
- 2 stalks celery, diced
- 2 small potatoes, peeled and diced
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/4 cup minced parsley
- 2 tablespoons minced dill
- black pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons salt
- 1 tbs tomato paste or red pepper paste
- 14oz can whole peeled tomato
- olive oil

Instructions

1. Drain beans in colander. Set beans aside. Squish whole tomatoes with hands until mostly broken up and set aside separately
2. Saute onion, carrot, celery with a pinch of salt in plenty of olive oil until soft (approx. 5-10 mins)
3. Add tomato paste or red pepper paste and cook for a couple mins
4. Add tomato from step 1 and potato and cook for 15-30 mins with a few big glugs of olive oil
5. Add beans, bring mixture just barely to a boil and remove from flame. Stir in most of parsley and dill reserving some for garnish
6. Serve warm or let cool overnight and serve chilled
7. Garnish with good olive oil, pinch of flaky salt, fresh ground pepper, squeeze of lemon juice, and reserved parsley and dill

(Based on Armenian Cooking Today by
Alice Antreassian)

A poem for the past and future Calvin



Tonight was the end of 20 Calvin #2, the home of many wanderers and playful spirits since (atleast) 2017.

With sickly green destroyed plaster walls, a decaying porch and cheap materials, this casita was not the grandest abode.

But the skuffs on the walls spoke to tenants who used the space fully.

The porch merged with nature, inviting new more-than-human friends like Lucy the migratory seasonal roommate, birthing new clutches every spring,

or the sprawling multistory kudzu that almost hacked its way into the building itself.

The cheap cabinets, surfaces and materials were used meticulously and with love to cook enormous feasts, like duos of szechuan chili fish, otak oak and congee on snowy January days. A house forged and furnished in trash (“street finds”), tonight Calvin #2 met its maker and went out in style.

For those lucky enough to stumble upon it, the Calvin St Treasure Expo (Ca.S.Tr.E.) was as ephemeral as it was sumptuous.

Nameless strangers, passing by Calvin st on their way to pick up their freshest at sweet laundry, or on their way back from their 9-5 at green town, looked on at the billowing realms of trinkets that had accumulated from such varied use.

Nostalgic street records. Kitschy fake plants. Blinds, bowls and brooms. A bright pink bubble gun.

And so slowly, and then not so slowly, the house disintegrated.

The expo goods wandered off, first by lucky neighbors, then by van-sailing trash pirates, scalpers and pilferers, then finally by the noble custodians employed by the City of Somerville. The property manager locked away the house for renovation and reintegration with The Market. Its tenants, once a dense little family unit living amidst the trash and trinkets, peeled off, building new homes and new families.

Into oblivion, the house rejoined the webs that made it.

The generous, serendipitous and anonymous neighbors slinging shiny gifts. The robust and Holy civic infrastructure of public trash collection. The seemingly inexorable forces of realtors, mortgages and gentrification. The social fabric of a vibrant quirky community, striving daily for generosity, peace, truth, creativity and joy.

These webs will reconstitute many more homes for many more people. Always in flux, always giving. They will offer love, connection and community. Always unfolding, always living. We carry a shining piece of trash with us to the next chapter. Always remembering, back to the beginning.

