

Travel

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SURFACING | SOMERVILLE, MASS.

Out of the Shadow of Boston and Cambridge

Like its narrow hilly streets, Somerville, just north of Cambridge, has seen its share of ups and downs. “Slummerville,” as it was known among Bostonians for years, became synonymous to some with the mobster Whitey Bulger, whose Winter Hill gang was headquartered there. But this densely populated New England city of about 76,000 residents is coming into its own as a hip alternative to both Boston and Cambridge, with cheaper rents and cool mayoral initiatives like urban agriculture. The city’s creative hub, Union Square, has been transformed with restaurant and bar openings, plus new businesses like the indoor farmers’ market Something GUD, and the Aeronaut Brewing Co. *NICHOLAS DERENZO*



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAYANA SZYMCAK FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Tiny Museum

◀ This shoebox-size diorama debuted in August 2013 with all the trappings of a classic museum, from the Greek Revival-style colonnaded facade to wooden floors, track lighting and minuscule paintings, sculptures and installations by New England artists — none bigger than a few inches tall. 72½ Union Square; tinymuseum.org



Bronwyn

▲ After the success of his Cambridge tasting menu spot T.W. Food, Tim Wiechmann (above) returned to his German roots in May 2013 with this haute but approachable Central European restaurant and beer garden, with fresh-baked breads and pretzels, wursts made from scratch and elevated classics like waygu sauerbraten and riesling sauerkraut. 255 Washington Street; 617-776-9900; bronwynrestaurant.com



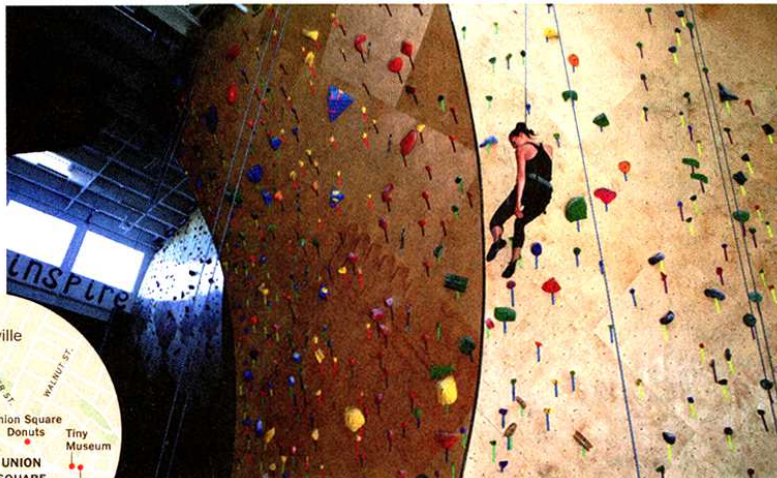
Union Square Donuts

▲ Since this throwback shop opened in February 2013, locals have lined up every weekend to see which whimsical flavors the pastry chef Heather Schmidt has paired with her yeasted, brioche-like dough, such as brown-butter hazelnut crunch, cocktail-inspired grapefruit juniper, or Fluffanutta, which honors the city’s greatest creation, Marshmallow Fluff. 16 Bow Street; 617-209-2257; unionsquaredonuts.com



Brooklyn Boulders Somerville

▲ Opened in July 2013 in a cavernous former envelope factory, this climbing gym has elegant touches like birchwood walls, murals by local artists and a high window that rewards climbers with views of the Boston skyline, plus a mezzanine collaborative work space where desks come with pull-up bars and yoga balls. 12A Tyler Street; 617-623-6700; bkbs.brooklynboulders.com



A4 Pizza

◀ The décor is a mix of your grandfather’s go-to dive bar and his garage (strung industrial light bulbs and a taxidermy bear head), but the pizzas are anything but unserious, thanks to dough made with 13-year-old sourdough starter, mozzarella hand-pulled daily and seasonal toppings like butternut squash. 445 Somerville Avenue; 617-764-4190; areafour.com



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