

Dear Aldermen, Planning Board and City Planners,

Somerville has the least amount of green space per person. We are second to last in the state.

15% Pedestrian Circulation Space is not the number that will provide us the quality parks and open civic space we need.

We reject this percentage. Quality Open Space are not larger sidewalks nor cut throughs. Instead we recommend changing Pedestrian Circulation Space to Civic Space.

With 25% Civic Space required by all new and renovated (improvements valued at 75% of property worth) and new development. This will bring us closer to Union Square's contribution to the parks and open civic spaces we need. We are willing to accept green roof spaces toward this percentage as long as there is plenty of signage and that roof spaces count 1/3 of the value as ground level space.

Pedestrian circulation space may not be counted towards our open space. 66% of all Open Civic Space must be green. As much as possible green space needs to be interactive, not something to admire at a distance. Think Rose Kennedy Greenway.

We prefer a large aggregated park centrally located than small pocket parks.

Greenspace needs a separate definition to Open Space or Vegetative Matter.

Somerville Climate Action offers this as a definition:

Proposed Green Space Definition

From the draft 2016-2021 Open Space plan: "Open space" is publicly accessible undeveloped land that primarily serves a recreational, or cultural purpose, this includes but is not limited to publicly accessible park, playground, community gardens, walking or biking trails, cemeteries, civic plazas and athletic fields, regardless of ownership or level of protection. Also included as open space are certain water bodies with recreational use, namely Alewife Brook and Mystic River.

A. Preamble

A separate definition of public and total "green space" is needed in the city of Somerville Zoning Ordinance in order to better protect and preserve the ecological, recreational, cultural, and regenerative benefits in an urban setting. Specifically, green space, as defined below:

1. Encourages community resilience and equity;
2. Contributes to the creation and conservation of biodiversity;
3. Connects residents with and fosters the protection of urban ecosystems;
4. Strengthens the city's response to the threat of climate destabilization;

5. Augments public recreational opportunities;
6. Preserves and enhances the form, patterns, and character of Somerville's neighborhoods;
7. Helps to maintain and promote environmental and public health;
8. Creates opportunities to employ natural solutions to address urban challenges;
9. Supports city-wide green building goals; and
10. Serves as a refuge from and connection to urban surroundings.

B. Definition (draft)

Green Space. Land of any shape or size, consistent with this definition, that serves ecological, environmental, aesthetic, recreational, or similar purposes. Green Space Area Open Space shall be open and unobstructed to the sky and shall consist of friable, permeable materials (including but not limited to loam, gravel, sand, and crushed stone, as well as naturally occurring soil, bedrock, and incidental pipes and other underground utilities) having a minimum depth of three (3) feet. Said land shall be capable of supporting the growth of trees, grass, ground cover, shrubs, and similar vegetation. Green space shall not include any hard surface areas (e.g., parking lots), with the exception of walks and terraces designed and intended for non-vehicular use.

Except as provided below, green space shall consist entirely of living trees, grass, ground cover, bushes, shrubs, or similar living vegetation, as well as water or other natural features of the site.

However, in no case shall hard-surfaced walks and terraces, or pervious ground cover consisting of gravel, stone, or wood chips not used as mulch beneath vegetation exceed twenty-five (25) percent of the total area of any parcel identified as green space under this definition. Any such excess shall require the reduction, on a one-to-one basis, of the percentage area of that parcel deemed to be green space.

Green space shall be open to the public or serve as a public resource, except where specifically noted in this ordinance.

End of Definition

The ordinance needs its own chapter on Sustainability.

To have sustainable green buildings LEED Silver or gold are not enough. We require the most recent iteration of LEED platinum.

We also need to set our own requirements that reflect the specific needs of our city.

Cambridge has such an ordinance:

http://www.cambridgema.gov/~media/Files/CDD/ZoningDevel/Ordinance/zo_article22_1382.ashx

<http://www.cambridgema.gov/CDD/zoninganddevelopment/sustainablebldgs/greenbldgrequirements>

Cambridge's Ordinance Summary

ARTICLE 22.00

SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

22.10 INTENT AND PURPOSE

22.20 GREEN BUILDING REQUIREMENTS

22.30 GREEN ROOFS

22.40 EXTERIOR WALLS AND INSULATION

22.50 OVERHANGS AND SUN SHADING DEVICES

22.60 SOLAR ENERGY SYSTEMS

22.70 WIND TURBINE SYSTEM

Somerville Sustainability Ordinance Examples

Green Roofs

A percentage of green (vegetative matter), blue (water storage) roofs, Yellow(solar voltaic) roof for commercial, midrise 4, midrise 5 and high rise and civic buildings requirement .

As created in Toronto (http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_492.pdf ,

<https://www1.toronto.ca/wps/portal/contentonly?vgnextoid=83520621f3161410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD&vgnextchannel=3a7a036318061410VgnVCM10000071d60f89RCRD>

and France (75% requirement) A percentage of green (vegetative matter), blue (water storage) roofs, Yellow(solar voltaic) roof for commercial, midrise 4, midrise 5 and high rise and civic buildings requirement . France and Toronto have these .

As in civic space types there needs to be variety. Developers could not all put in Solar Panels to meet the requirement.

Trash management.

Litter, recycling, and compost receptacles are all together. We would compost with worms so it is processed on site.

Are there battery operated garbage truck out there?

Convert dog do into electricity as was once proposed for the nunziato dog park?

Doggy zones throughout the city where dogs and our future goats can go to the bathroom?

Storm water management for all buildings, civic space and infrastucutre especially implementing Low Impact Design (LID)

To cool a building. To flush toilets. To make rain gardens. To water the landscape and vegetative walls.

To irrigate trees using a passive design like a curb cut or a storm water to street trees design.

To run a mill, power a generator?

Anything except spending money to ship it out to Deer Island. A cost that has increased in the past few months.

Efficiency meters are required for all new buildings

Lighting

We need to have a Night Sky ordinance section that limits light pollution and lighting that may be harmful to our health.

<http://darksky.org/>

Wind Turbines (see Cambridge's)

Renewable Energy (see Cambridge's)

Urban Agriculture

Urban Agriculture is part of being sustainable, of Somervision and of the current ordinance. In the Union Square Overlay District (USOD) zoning, commercial, mid-rise 4 and 5, and High Rises are permitted by right to have Urban Agriculture (p 44). But this permission is **moot** if buildings are not equipped to support the load of Urban Agriculture.

All Buildings must have the load bearing capacity to support Urban Agriculture.

Extra notes:

We need to have a FAR included in the zoning.

For a building to be able to build 'by right' to 20 stories high, how can we incentivize developers to use the green building and landscaping techniques we would like. Do we just have a standard that developers must comply with? Is that where the Green Standard (GAR) comes in?

No building in Union Square or Boynton yards may exceed the height of the base of the Prospect Hill Monument.

We must preserve the sightline of Fenway Park from the Prospect Hill Monument.

There is no requirement in the USOD for permeability or landscaping for Commercial Buildings or High Rise Buildings (p 33). This is an egregious error. Especially if we want ALL our buildings to be sustainable. How would a vegetative wall or ivy work without permeability and landscaping?

These are some of our concerns. As we continue to meet with different groups and other citizens, we will be asking more questions and suggesting solutions, so we can have a Comprehensive Zoning we can all be proud of.

Thank you for your hard work,

Green and Open Somerville

Somerville Climate Action

Ground Work Somerville

The Community Growing Center