



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
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December 12, 2019

The Honorable City Council
City Hall
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

Re: Adoption of a new Somerville Zoning Ordinance to supersede the current zoning ordinance as originally adopted on March 23, 1990.

Dear Honorable City Council:

In keeping with its lawful responsibilities, the Somerville Planning Board submits to your Honorable Council its recommendation on the proposed new Somerville Zoning Ordinance, as submitted for the December 12, 2019 regular meeting (agenda item 209339) of the City Council.

On December 10, 2019, at 6:20 p.m. the Planning Board and Land Use Committee of the City Council held a duly advertised joint public hearing in the Council Chambers in City Hall. The purpose of the hearing was to solicit public comments on the proposed ordinance and evaluate the proposed ordinance in the context of testimony received and the findings and analysis of the Planning Staff.

This recommendation will focus on the public testimony received at the public hearing and the discussion of the Planning Board in the meeting that followed the December 10 Joint Public Hearing.

PLANNING BOARD RECOMMENDATION

Somerville Planning Board has been vocal proponents of the Overhaul since it first came to this Board in 2015. Since that time various modifications through extensive and impressive public processes have made



this proposal better and better. This ordinance reflects our SomerVision goals, as well as the desires, of the people of our city – both our residents and our businesses.

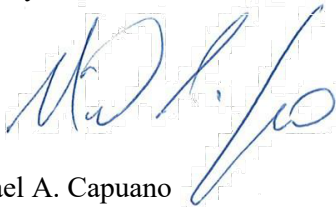
The Planning Board sincerely appreciates all the Planning Staff research and expertise that has gone into writing this document. Along with the work of numerous citizens that have attended open houses, provided testimony, and written comments, we also acknowledge the time and effort put forth by the City Council as an overhaul of the zoning ordinance is a coordinated team effort.

The Planning Board is extremely supportive of the revised organization of the ordinance and the easy to follow language. The Planning Board encourages adoption quickly to reduce the unpleasant outcomes that the continued use of the current ordinance sometimes creates, but with the understanding that there are certain issues that will need to be further studied and amended shortly after adoption. The Planning Board also requests that the City Council consider the following items prior to adoption of the proposed new Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

- The Planning Board is supportive of allowing the approved development on the D2 parcels (holding DSPR approvals) in Union Square to continue under the previously approved LEED standards in the approved Coordinated Development Special Permit.
- The Planning Board is also extremely supportive of holding development across the City to the highest standards of sustainability and resilience in design, construction, and operations/maintenance.
- From the time it passes, any ordinance will need to adapt. Zoning should reflect the changing needs and desires of a municipality and, therefore, is not a static document. Amendments should be made after further research and careful consideration.

The mandate of this board is to provide our unique expertise and perspectives on the development and growth of the city. However, the zoning ordinance is the charge of the City Council. As the revised structure and the text of the code have been complete for a while, the merits of certain language choices could be debated to the point of accomplishing nothing. The City cannot afford to be hampered by an outdated ordinance any longer. The Planning Board urges the City Council to accept the document structure that allows amendable flexibility and adopt the proposed ordinance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael A. Capuano". The signature is stylized and written over a light blue grid background.

Michael A. Capuano
Chair of the Planning Board