

Madalyn Letellier

From: Crystal Huff <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, June 16, 2026 4:10 PM
To: Zoning Board
Cc: Stephen Cary; Public Comments
Subject: SomerBridge LLC Hotel and Permitted Parking
Attachments: Somer_Donut.svg

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Dear members of the ZBA and city staff,

The parcel at 1 McGrath Highway is zoned as high-rise, which enables much higher buildings than elsewhere in the city. Thanks to a project for school this spring, I happen to have an estimate of the zoned high-rise area in Somerville: It's about 0.15% of the city's land area. (See attached chart from my GIS project on Somerville if you're interested.) This is a tiny portion of the city's land. We've managed to prohibit additional surface parking on these parcels, however, and I would request that the Somerville ZBA to uphold that prohibition. If we could expand the surface parking prohibition to more parcels, in fact, I would be ecstatic. I submit this email as a public comment partly in hopes that the City Council might take up that charge.

High-rise zoning enables many things by right on the parcel. However, Somerville city ordinances state that in the high-rise district, "Motor vehicle parking may be provided as above ground structured parking or underground structured parking. Surface parking is prohibited."

This [Cambridge Day article](#) says that SomerBridge Hotel LLC is owned by Marriott hotels as a parent company. So, to my mind, this company (despite the cute LLC name) isn't a local person who lacks resources to make an expensive but legal requirement of the project happen. Marriott resources are vast, and they should operate accordingly if they want to be considered a business of good repute in Somerville. I feel particularly strongly if their project is going to continue delay on the Community Path connector by an additional 18-24 months. That connector is a required condition of the permits they received in 2023.

Here's hoping that Marriott "operating accordingly" doesn't mean that they decide to sit on the parcel for another few years and wait for conditions to change. I know that's also a risk we take in our zoning decisions, and undesirable. Ultimately, however, I strongly believe that Somerville has prohibited additional surface parking on high-rise parcels for good reasons, and this is particularly true the more we learn of the impact of surface parking on our stormwater management issues. The cost of the Combined Sewer Overflow mitigation project to come is enormous.

I do not want to see us add any surface parking in the city, and I particularly do not want to see an exception made for reasons of financial convenience for Marriott Hotels as a business. They can

afford to construct a parking structure as part of their development, and they should do so if they feel they need parking beyond what's available right across the street, at Twin Cities Plaza. Goodness knows that the Twin Cities Plaza lot is almost always half-empty, except during a holiday shopping frenzy. (I know this is probably not where they will advise their customers or employees to park, and with good reason, but I hope this also makes the point of how much surface parking already exists, and is undesirable. I also hope the idea makes you giggle.)

Best,

Crystal M. Huff

Ward 5 resident

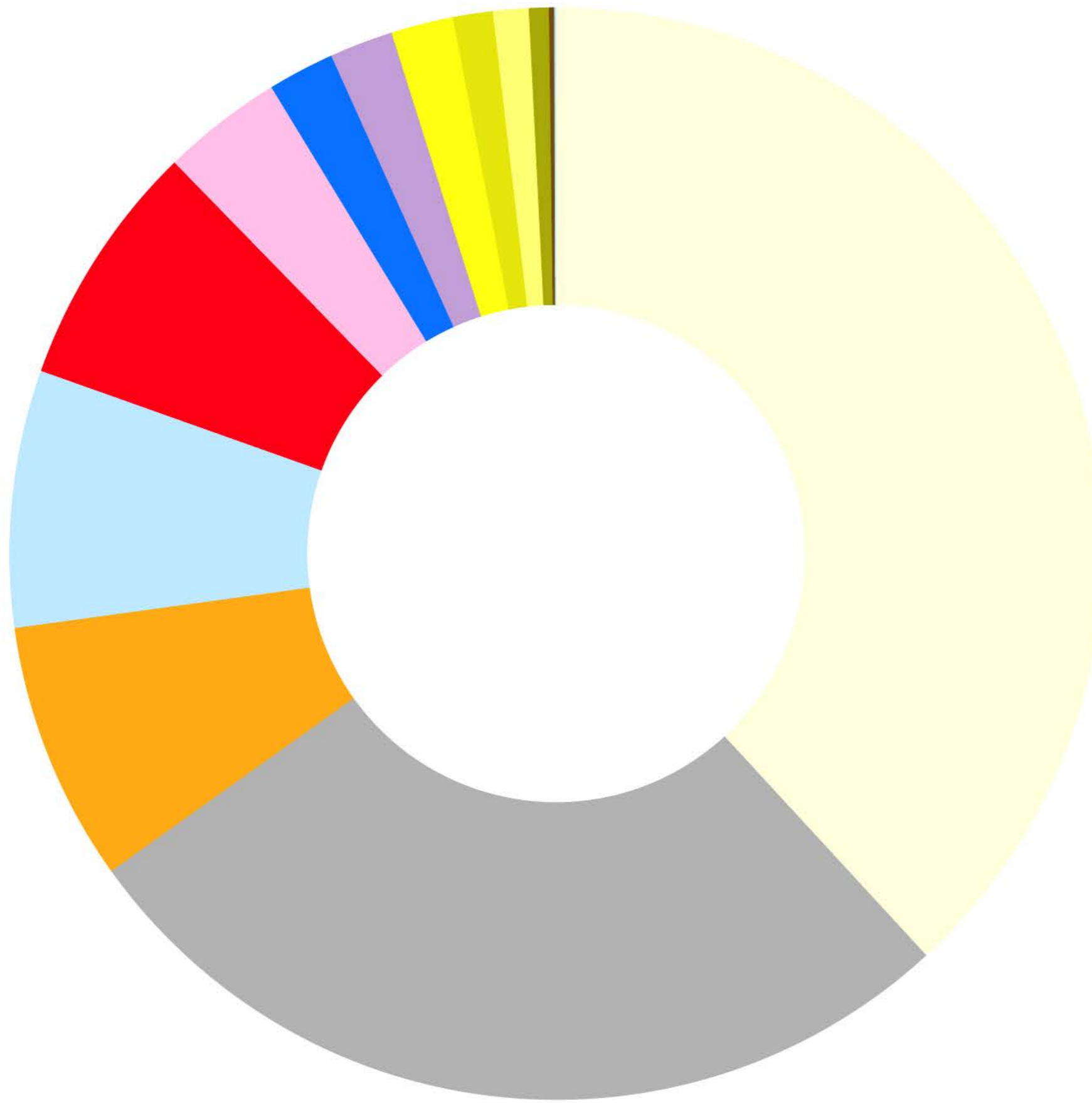
Editor of [Recognize Fascism](#)

[Gardening Collective](#) Coordinator, [Mutual Aid Medford And Somerville \("MAMAS"\)](#)

MA candidate in [Tufts University's UEP Program](#)

– I use they/them pronouns. –

Somerville Land Allocation



Percentages of the City by Square Footage

- Neighborhood Residential 38.16%
- Roads and Parking Lots 26.98%
- Urban Residential 7.69%
- Civic 7.61%
- Commercial 7.27%
- Assembly Square 3.58%
- Tufts Special District 1.97%
- Fabrication and Arts 1.88%
- Mid-Rise 4 1.84%
- Mid-Rise 5 1.18%
- Mid-Rise 3 1.05%
- Mid-Rise 6 0.59%
- High-Rise 0.15%
- Powderhouse School 0.05%

Madalyn Letellier

From: Tori Antonino [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2026 7:15 PM
To: Public Comments
Cc: Planning Board
Subject: thoughts on 1 Mcgrath...notably what does the vegetative roof look like

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Hello Planning,

I found out about the variance request of 1 McGrath highway from underground parking (at 15 McGrath) to surface parking. We worked hard on the city zoning to not allow surface parking. It is a poor use of land, impermeable (in this case), and a source of the heat island effect. This area of Somerville is heavily paved, hot, uncomfortable, yet has the opportunity to be less so.

I understand that the stalling of 15 McGrath prevents 1 McGrath from executing their preferred plan. I understand that this development is important to connect the community bike path. I understand that hotel use can be a revenue generating land use and is in need.

I also understand that the climate crisis, biodiversity crisis, and extreme heats depends on vegetation to solve so much of the latter. The amount of landscaping is paltry, even though it meets the Green Score, and the removal of more landscape goes in the opposite direction of adding greenery.

I would like a condition that requires a solar panel structure over the exposed parking surface to mitigate the harm to the community with uncovered surface level parking.

A recurring theme with developments achieving the green score, but having little greenery, is troubling. The Green Score needs reworking so that actual well vegetative green space is created, which I thought was a main purpose of the "green" score.

Additionally, where is the vegetative roof as required in the zoning? I cant find it in the renderings.

Thank you,

Tori Antonino
[REDACTED]