



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
***MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT***  
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REBECCA LYN COOPER  
GERARD AMARAL, *ALT.*

November 10, 2016

The Honorable Board of Aldermen  
City Hall  
93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02143

Re: Zoning Amendment: A proposed new article 16B in the City's zoning ordinance, with attendant zoning map changes to establish a minimum mixed use ratio (MMUR) in designated areas.

Dear Honorable Board of Aldermen:

In keeping with its lawful responsibilities, the Planning Board submits to your Honorable Board its recommendation on an ordinance to establish a Minimum Mixed Use Ratio in designated areas.

On October 18, 2016, at 6:00 p.m. the Planning Board and Land Use Committee of the Board of Aldermen jointly held a duly advertised public hearing in the Aldermanic Chambers in City Hall. The purpose of the hearing was to solicit public comments on the proposed amendment and to evaluate the amendment in the context of testimony received and information provided by the Planning Staff at the hearing.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

At the public hearing on October 18, 2016, Alderman White introduced the ordinance. He spoke about the importance of commercial development for the future tax base of the City.

George Proakis, Director of Planning, provided the Planning Staff's perspective on the application. Mr. Proakis indicated that the staff supports the idea of a Mixed Use Ratio when applied to new growth

districts like Boynton Yards and Inner Belt, but had concerns about the ordinance as written. Staff concerns were as follows:

- With the Union Square zoning pending, passage of the overlay would likely make an additional mixed-use ratio over the Union Square parcels redundant.
- The proposal establishes a minimum commercial ratio of 68%. This number exceeds SomerVision targets, based upon any measurements that have been completed by Planning Division staff to implement the Plan.
- The proposal omits industrial space, maker space, art studio space, retail space and hotels from the commercial side of the equation.
- Areas of Brickbottom and Innerbelt on the proposed map are currently zoned IA (industrial). These areas already do not permit residential development. Despite portions of these areas being included in the map, the ordinance would not be triggered in these areas, as long as no residential use is possible.

A number of members of the public spoke on the ordinance as well.

The Planning Board left the public hearing open for written comments until October 28, 2016.

#### FOLLOW UP MEETING

After the public hearing was closed, the Planning Board held a public meeting to discuss the amendment on November 3, 2016. After further discussing the ordinance, the Planning Board made a recommendation for the Land Use Committee to consider in their deliberations.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Following due consideration, at the meeting on November 3, 2016, Rebeca Lyn Cooper made a motion to **RECOMMEND CONSIDERATION OF THE ITEMS BELOW:**

1. That the Board of Aldermen defer adoption of the Minimum Mixed Use Ratio and incorporate the concept into the full overhaul of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance;
2. That further study be completed to determine the appropriate percentage for the minimum mixed use ratio; and,
3. That some form of enforcement mechanism be included to ensure that commercial development is prioritized as development phases are built out.

Dorothy Kelly Gay seconded the motion.

The motion carried 5-0.

Sincerely,



Kevin Prior  
Chair