

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Christopher Montiel [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:09 PM  
**To:** All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Summer Nova Expansion Project

**Follow Up Flag:** Follow up  
**Flag Status:** Flagged

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Hello, I am Christopher Montiel Dubon a 17 year old, junior student at Somerville High School. I live at [REDACTED]. This is the email that you can reach me at [REDACTED]. I support the idea of the Summer Nova Expansion Project. As a student, I believe that students should have an area where you can enjoy, play, and express themselves during or after school hours. Working at the Mystic Learning Center with youth that never want to leave the center because they love it and see it as a way to explore their childhood. But once they're older where shall they go? I believe that this expansion project will generate a positive trend for the newer generation that comes after us. A way to express their youth. I have talked with other teens that display their support for the expansion of Summer Nova as well. This is why I believe that the expansion of Summer Nova should procede.

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Charlene Pignone [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:05 PM  
**To:** All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion Project

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Hello, my name is Charlene, I am a staff member of mystic learning center and I am writing to express my support in the somernova expansion protect. I believe this would be a great interest to youth around the Somerville area to help build connections and grow with supporting one another with engaging activities and help support families with programs that the project will provide for youth and families around the Somerville area. The reason why this would be a great project because this will help children and youth stay engage and be able to participate in fun activities that they will enjoy during the week and on weekends. Thank you for your time.

Charlene Pignone

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Darien Rodriguez [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:02 PM  
**To:** All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion Project

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Darien Rodriguez, I am a long term resident of Somerville living on [REDACTED] Somerville and I am 23 years. Growing up in Somerville, I was lucky to have a supportive community around me and a place to go to when I was bored. But I knew that everyone was not as lucky as I was. Seeing my friends roam the streets looking for something fun to keep them out of trouble was hard to watch. I have noticed this has not changed, and the kids are only finding themselves in more and more trouble. Especially with the fighting and gang violence within the city, they are just looking for a safe place to be themselves. I myself work with the Somerville youth in low income areas and they are always raving about how fun it is at the dojo. Whether it is poetry slams or video game tournaments, to block parties with food and prize. They have been asking for these sorts of space and they deserve more. There are more than enough adult focused areas and we are only adding more. The most I know the teens and youth of Somerville get are after school curriculums and the Somerville libraries. We need to remember who will be working and running the city in the future. So if we aren't thinking about them now, how are we going to expect them to think about the City's?

Thank you for your time,  
Darien Rodriguez

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Greylis Pena Gonzalez [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:13 PM  
**To:** [REDACTED]; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion project

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Greylis Pena, I am 21 and a college student at Worcester state, who has been living in Somerville my whole life and currently working at Mystic Learning Center. I support this project because it is a space where the community (especially the youth) can come together and experience something amazing. If I were to live in Somerville(hopefully), I hope to show my future kids around Somerville and have them experience this new project.

Some specific interests I have from this expansion is the transportation from around Somerville to the dojo and the youth center. I believe that this youth center would be very helpful for the youth. Since I never had this type of opportunity growing up, I think it would be amazing that the new generation is experiencing this new project and have the opportunity to come together as a community. Having transportation directly to the dojo would be perfect because there are plenty of youths who don't have the transportation from where they live or they live in an area where they don't have access directly to the dojo.

I have spoken to Linda Kelley about the new expansion. Other experiences in this city other than the dojo as to my knowledge is Teen Empowerment. I have attended multiple youth events from the dojo and the events held by Mystic Learning Center.

Greylis Pena  
[REDACTED]

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Kevin Lenz Dodin [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:13 PM  
**To:** All City Council; [REDACTED] Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova expansion project

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To whom it may concern,

My name is Lenz I'm an 18-year-old Somerville resident not only do I live in Somerville but I grew up in the city of Somerville. I heard about the Somernova project, from what I've heard about the project I like what the project stands for the youth need a place where they are welcome. The youth need Somewhere where they can go to socialize and hang out with friends they need mentors and guidance. Growing up in Somerville I never had anywhere to go I was always following the wrong crowd just to have somewhere to hang out but being around the wrong forced a lot of temptation. I was smart I always knew the difference between wrong and right I didn't have much opportunity to do much. Until I joined a small organization called the Mystic Learning Center. Mystic gave me a place where I can learn grow and succeed. But u, unfortunately this organization isn't big enough for the youth. Which isThis is why believe this project will save the youth in the future. I plan to stay in Somerville and watch this project happen because why not what are the cons of bettering our youth?

Sincerely, Dodin

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Medina, Nevaeh [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 6:58 PM  
**To:** All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion Project

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My name is Nevaeh Medina. I work at [REDACTED], Somerville MA. I attend to Everett High School, and I am a junior. I have worked at mystic for 9 months now and I went to this summer camp/after school program as a little kid. I lived in Somerville my whole life, and moved to Everett 2 years ago almost 3. I support the expansion of Sumernova because it brings communities together, and makes peolle bond with new folks. I don't see my future in Somerville, I like to travel so I would want to move out of Massachusetts. I'm not really thinking about a future with kids yet so I'm gonna hold off on that for now!! I support this new community center because it makes me feel comfortable being around people I know and seeing a lot of the same people most of the time every 1 month that we go to the Dojo. I have been in conversations with the dojo staff about what the dojo should offer and look like. I told them we should add new furniture and fill in the white boards with different names of people that attend the dojo quite often to show how much they have improved, and brung people together. At the dojo I have attended it to be a safe place for me to go to eat, make new friends, relax, and have fun!! I love the dojo a lot and I would love for it to expand and more people come along.

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Ronaldo Joseph <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:17 PM  
**To:** Planning1; All City Council; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion Project

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Greetings Whom it may concern, My Name is Ronaldo Joseph, I currently live at [REDACTED]; I am currently 20 years old. I am writing to you because I am very interested in the Expansion Project that will be taking place. What causes me to be interested you may ask? I want to know more because I am also a part of this city and this city needs change. With the expansion project going on it will create a more diverse networking opportunity where the young youth children can actually take the time to know more about their cities'. This has been an ongoing problem in the city of Somerville, so being able to have a start on a project creates the first step to becoming a better city & environment. I am going to be honest here for me as I see my future self in Somerville. I don't think it would work out. The reason why I am saying it would not work out for me is because I plan to see myself doing my variations of work, not just in Somerville but different cities and different states. This still doesn't erase the fact that I still care for the city to make change not just for me but most definitely to the youth, it creates more freedom as in being welcomed without judgment from others. So yes, seeing the kids' future in Somerville will be a big role especially for the families. But the most specific project that I would like to see happen will be a youth center such as having basketball gyms, outdoor activities, and arts and craft area. I'm not just asking to ask you, I'm asking you to create change because I am part of an individual myself that also goes to the dojo, and I've seen the events we host and I can most certainly tell you that people would like to have more centers like those that include the city. Yes this may seem like a lot to request but changes do start within.

Best Regards,  
Ronaldo Joseph

[REDACTED]

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Stephanya Estrella [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:09 PM  
**To:** Planning1; All City Council; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Supporting Somernova's Campus Expansion Project

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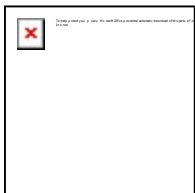
To Whom It May Concern My name is Stephanya Estrella I work at the Mystic Learning Center at [REDACTED], I am 20 years old and I've lived in Somerville for 15 Years. As someone who plans on living in Somerville, I'm excited that I will be able to witness this project. I Have gone to and supported many of the Dojo's events such as the open mic nights, vendor shop pop-ups, fluff festival, etc. Each event I have been to or have helped with has shown what Somernova and the Dojo is about. The Expansion Project will be a great way to allow the community to have a space to go and feel safe, opening up many job opportunities for the residents of Somerville. A bonus is the transportation that will allow people all over Somerville a chance to experience this project. I have been involved in many conversations with Dojo Staff about this project. A big interest of mine is the Youth Center, It will allow the kids who may and may not have somewhere to go after school a place to go where they can feel safe, have the opportunity to experience things they may not be able to, and overall be involved in their community because it's open to all, everyone has a chance to experience this project. My goal one day is to have the opportunity to work at the Youth Center as someone who works with youth.

Thank you,  
Stephanya Estrella

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Stephanya Estrella  
she/her/hers  
Group Leader/ Adult Advisor  
Mystic Learning Center

p - [REDACTED]  
f - [REDACTED]  
[https://mysticlearningcenter.org/  
linktree](https://mysticlearningcenter.org/linktree)





## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Zahra DaCosta-Gomes [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Wednesday, May 29, 2024 7:02 PM  
**To:** All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion Project

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Dear Zoning Board,

My name is Zahra DaCosta-Gomes, I am 16 years old, and I live in Somerville on [REDACTED]. I have been living in Somerville my whole life, and am writing you because I take great interest in the dojo expansion project. As a youth growing up in Somerville I have seen many community centers come and go. Community centers are a very important part of all community and something that youth need to help support them. I currently work at Teen Empowerment, as well as the Mystic Learning Center, and get to see first hand the issues youth are facing at home and in school. There is violence, drug abuse, family problems and many more. The Dojo expansion would create a safe space for youth to go and get the help they need. It would be a resource for them where they can find trusted adults and get into new activities that would keep them busy and out of trouble! I have heard lots of youth express their feelings on this topic, and it is the same each time. They would like a space where they can go and be themselves. A space where they can dance, hang out, play their sports, do their homework and I feel the dojo will have something to offer for everyone. There is not much else for youth in the community, and I believe this community center could possibly save some youth and would be a great addition to the community.

Thank you, Zahra!

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Aniana Cepeda [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 30, 2024 3:07 PM  
**To:** All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments

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Dear zoning board members,

My name is Aniana Cepeda, I work at the Mystic Learning Center Inc. an after school program I used to attend as a kid living here in the Somerville Projects. As a kid, I always remember longing for a place, any place really but I felt that school, rather than encourage innovation, killed it. I believed creativity could only grow in warm and eclectic environments. Since then, I've seen many Boys and Girl clubs, and YMCA types of facilities close down, or fill up far too quickly for the rest of us to get in, now that I'm 21 years old, I still find myself thinking the same way, which is that the youth as well as the rest of the community deserve more. Because progress should be for everyone, should it not?

You may ask why this particular space is needed, and why this much money, well it's come to my attention that many organizations offering promises like this one don't last longer than six months, but this place is different. This is tangible. A guarantee of funding for 10 years is a promise of generations getting to experience something so fundamentally great and impactful. A place where the youth can go, not only for sports, but to expand their minds, to learn from each other, and I can tell you from working at the Mystic Learning center, nobody is as curious as these kids. Many of them miss out on opportunities like this one, for many reasons, but a common one is the lack of transportation they don't have access to. The Dojo providing it for free makes an unfathomable difference in people's lives. I know it would've for me when I was a kid growing up here.

Of course, its not only about what a community center of this size, and its resources could do for the people of Somerville, the future of Somerville benefits from places like these as well, places where people are given the tools to innovate, and create, and succeed, whether that be building talking robots, or writing poetry. In conclusion, I'd like to remind you that a space of this capacity could help create an abundance of change, which is the only reason why any of us should be doing anything, right? For the sake of working towards a positive change? With this facility I think we can accomplish that and more.

Warmest regards,

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Gwen Freeley [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** Thursday, May 30, 2024 2:39 PM  
**To:** Planning1; All City Council; Public Comments  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion Project

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To Whom It May Concern,

My name is Gwenyth Freeley and I have been living, studying, working and volunteering in Somerville for the past three years. I am writing to you today to demonstrate my sincerest support for the Somernova Expansion Project. I believe that this project would provide a plethora of public and private initiatives that would enrich not only the Union Square neighborhood but the entire city of Somerville. Additionally, I believe that Rafi Investments' most recent proposed zoning overlay effectively and ethically takes into account many concerns raised by my fellow Somerville residents over previous zoning submissions.

I support the project in its entirety, however there is one aspect which I would like to highlight in particular. The Project would allow for a grand expansion of the Dojo at Somernova, a youth-centered community space which currently occupies a small space at the Somernova campus. For the past three years, I have been involved (either as a volunteer or employee) with the Mystic Learning Center, a community center located just over a mile and a half from the current Dojo at Somernova site. I have witnessed firsthand the power that community centers hold. Many of my coworkers are graduates of MLC's childcare program, and they have shared that having a safe and supportive space to spend time at after school helped keep them grounded during their most vulnerable years and helped lead them to where they are today. **I believe that the Somernova Expansion project would provide a dynamic, enriching and empowering third space that is desperately needed for our city's youth.**

I understand that skepticism remains around large developers such as Rafi and that projects such as this one have historically had harmful effects on long-standing residents. However, as Chris Dawn wrote in a recent op-ed in the Somerville Times, the Rafi team has done "way more grassroots legwork" than previous developers and their projects. Additionally, I share Dawn's opinion that heavy development in the Union Square neighborhood is imminent, and if we continue to deny Rafi's proposals, that may just leave the door open for another developer—who does not share the same grassroots values as Rafi—to walk in.

I hope you will consider my thoughts as a constituent and employee within this city.

Sincerely,

Gwenyth Freeley  
[REDACTED]

Community Resource Specialist at the Mystic Learning Center

\*\*\*\*\*

**Gwen Freeley** (she/her/hers)  
Community Resource Specialist  
Mystic Learning Center, Inc.

p [REDACTED]

[www.mysticlearningcenter.org](http://www.mysticlearningcenter.org)  
[linktr.ee/MysticLearningCenter](https://linktr.ee/MysticLearningCenter)



## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Evan Beyer <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 5, 2024 6:04 PM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** The Dojo at Somernova

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I'm a local program manager for the youth of Somerville. The utility of the youth center space known as the Dojo is a vital resource for local youth to have meaningful interactions and experiences with a multicultural community and positive outlets for many interests, such as parkour, Step team, and many other organizations that aim to improve quality of life in Somerville for the future generations. Please consider how this facility positively impacts the greater community.

Thank you for your time and consideration

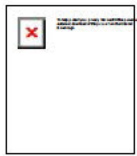
Evan Beyer  
Senior Coach  
Parkour Generations Boston  
Parkour Generations Americas

## Madalyn Letellier

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**From:** Joseph, Caelle [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Thursday, June 6, 2024 10:25 AM  
**To:** Public Comments  
**Subject:** Fwd: Somernova Expansion Support

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**Caelle Joseph'26**  
B.A. Candidate in International and Public Affairs and Business  
Economics

M: [REDACTED]

----- Forwarded message -----

**From:** Joseph, Caelle [REDACTED]  
**Date:** Thu, Jun 6, 2024 at 10:23 AM  
**Subject:** Somernova Expansion Support  
**To:** [REDACTED]  
**Cc:** Majic Alphonse [REDACTED]

Good morning,

I hope all is well. I'm writing to express my support for Somernova's campus expansion plans. Last summer, I interned at Somerviva: Office of Immigrant Affairs as a Leadership and Immigration Policy intern. During my internship, I worked with the Haitian team in the office and was tasked with organizing an event to bring together Haitian youth in Somerville to create the city's first Haitian Youth Coalition. My goal was to host a pilot event to gather as many community members as possible.

As I was not from Somerville, I sought guidance and was directed to contact Majic Alphonse, the director of the Dojo at Somernova. He immediately offered us a space to host the event after explaining my objectives, which was crucial for the success of this initiative. Without this space, the creation of the Haitian Youth Coalition's inaugural event would not have been possible. Not only did the Dojo provide space, but they helped advertise our event--bringing in many Haitian youth from different schools and their connections with other community organizations such as Teen Empowerment. This coalition, which still meets regularly, continues to find ways to strengthen the Haitian community and provide a platform to embrace our culture and address the challenges we face. The Dojo has facilitated numerous events across various organizations in Somerville, providing essential support and fostering community engagement. As a college student at Brown University, I have formed significant connections through these events, which have greatly benefited my career in law and policy. The networking opportunities and mentorship I have received have been invaluable.

The expansion of Somernova's campus is essential to provide a larger space for more networking opportunities between professionals and youth in Somerville seeking guidance. A bigger space would allow for more events, fostering connections that can help young people navigate their careers and contribute positively to our community.

I fully support this expansion, having witnessed Somerviva return to the Dojo to hold more various community events, including those organized by teams beyond the Haitian team.

Best regards,  
Caelle Joseph



**Caelle Joseph'26**

B.A. Candidate in International and Public Affairs and Business  
Economics

M: [REDACTED]