



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STATE HOUSE, BOSTON 02133-1054

DENISE PROVOST

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October 22, 2018

Re: 18 registered voters submitting a proposed Zoning Ordinance amendment to add a new Section 17.8 re: open space requirements for mid-rise and high-rise buildings.

Honorable Members of the Board of Aldermen,

Although I was unable to attend the October 4, 2018 public hearing on the above-referenced ordinance, I wish to weigh in in strong support of its passage. Somerville's land use patterns have been for many years seriously out of balance, when it comes to parks and open space, playgrounds and playing fields, community gardens, trees, and green space generally. It is one of the highest-volume subjects I hear about from constituents, and has only increased over my years in public office.

Although we have had for many years an open space bonus as part of our zoning, I don't remember a single development project which has ever taken advantage of it. This 'positive incentive' simply hasn't worked. As our urban density increases, we fail to add appreciable green space to keep up with the human needs of our population for fresh air, exercise, a change of scene, and a hint of cooling shade in summer.

Especially as GLX-related development pushes our city to new heights of building, the time has come to be more directive about the quantity and quality of green space which accompanies new growth. The shrunken, hardscape-dominated margin of alleged 'public open space' proposed by US2 as part of its plans for Union Square's D-2 block is just the latest example of offering Somerville green space which is more of a miserly afterthought. Great cities must thoughtfully incorporate green and open space in their planned development.

When my first child was four or five, she once said to me, "I know where Boston Common and Cambridge Common are, but where is Somerville Common?" It would be a few years before I could explain to her that Somerville had once been known as Stinted Common, having more than once given its common lands back into private ownership.

Please, stop allowing the people of Somerville from being stinted in their expectation that that they will be able to enjoy Green and open spaces. We are cut off from the waterfront by highways and rail tracks, just as most of Somerville is cut off from the Mystic River. Especially as we increasingly give up the automobile, provide us with significant and well-designed opportunities to be in the open, and with some connection to nature.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denise Provost".

Denise Provost

Cc: Somerville Planning Board