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Urban Ring CAC (for STEP)
Logan Airport CAC (Noise Study)
Logan Health Study CAC (MA DPH)
MAPC MetroFuture Steering Com. (to 2008)
Ethanol Train Technical Advisory Committee
Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership
MBTA Rider Oversight Committee
Mystic View Task Force

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February 1, 2013

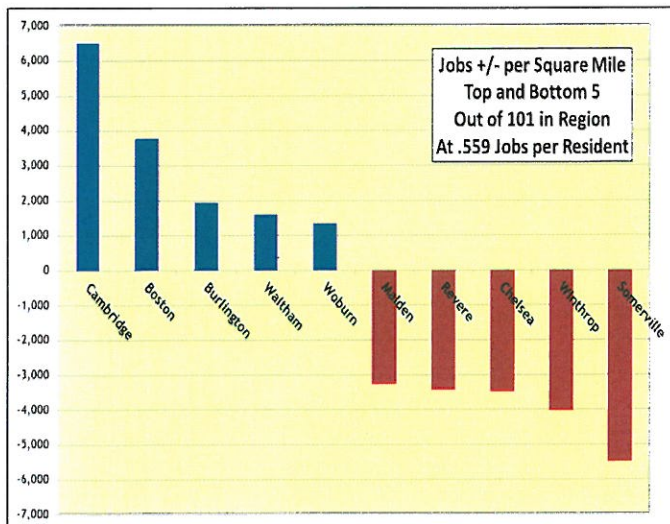
Alderman Thomas F. Taylor, Chair
City of Somerville Board of Aldermen Land Use Committee
Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

Via Email: forcellese@verizon.net

Re: An amendment to Zoning Ordinance 6.4.8.D(2)(b) to permit a ground floor supermarket that exceeds the Ground Level Retail Size Cap in the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District as proposed by Federal Realty Investment Trust December 10, 2012

Dear Alderman Taylor, Members of the Land Use Committee and Board of Aldermen,

As you know, Somerville is a terrific place to live work and play, with a diverse and interesting citizenry. Because of our population density and our current mix of land uses - largely residential, retail and shrinking light industrial - we are also among the 10 neediest cities and towns out of 351 for annual state aid per square mile. Our long term and deep local fiscal problem is simple. We do not have a commercial tax and job base which comes close to matching our population density.



We have more than 5,000 jobs per square mile less than we need to match our local work force population - the greatest municipal jobs deficit in the Commonwealth. Cambridge has the greatest jobs excess in Massachusetts, at over 6,000 jobs per square mile more than they have local workers. Cambridge's jobs excess is proportional to its annual non-residential taxes collected of almost \$200,000,000 (for fiscal 2012) while Somerville's local jobs deficit is proportional to our non-residential taxes collected of under \$30,000,000 (for fiscal 2012).

To deal with Somerville's job and tax deficits the 2012 Comprehensive Plan calls for creation of 30,000 new jobs, with most of the new jobs in the next 10 years (over 60%) at Assembly Square.

To create a dense transit-oriented mixed use environment at Assembly Square, including 200 to 400 jobs per acre in the commercial blocks, we need to focus on multi-story buildings near the new Orange Line T-station, with a compatible walk and bike friendly street grid. Single story grocery stores and big box retail create only 20 to 40 full-time jobs per acre, about 10% of what the Somerville community needs. This is exactly why the Board of Alderman voted to zone the IKEA parcel for buildings up to 250 feet high with a Floor Area Ratio (building square feet divided by land square feet) of 10. Current zoning for the IKEA parcel would allow 5,000,000 square feet of new development. That may be too much.

But a single story grocery store on any portion of the IKEA parcel would be entirely too little realization of Assembly Square's potential. Assembly Square is the third best New England location long term for research and development space related to Boston's unique constellation of universities. Only Kendall Square and the Longwood Medical Area are better, and they are rapidly filling up. We need to insist that Assembly Square realize a potential equal to the local energy we and the state have invested to date. If we put a single story grocer next to the state's first new subway stop in a generation, why would any future governor invest in Somerville? And why should our citizens continue to have faith in their future?

To be clear, I have nothing against a grocery store in Assembly Square, especially if it is a great store and is built within an urban multi-story format as has happened in Cambridge's University Park, in Baltimore, in Portland Oregon, in Seattle, and in many other cities across the United States and Western Europe. I also deeply appreciate Federal Realty's efforts to build mixed use, a great retail street fabric along Assembly Square's new Main Street and a spec office building on the remaining waterfront block.

I just think we need to stick to the vision we all share for Assembly Square and not give up so quickly on its true potential to help us create a balanced future for all of our citizens. Therefore I would urge you to show some fortitude and to insist on zoning at Assembly Square which requires all future retail to be in multi-story blocks with real preservation of job goals for the site and for deserving Somerville citizens.

Thanks very much for your attention.

Sincerely, Wig Zamore