

John Long

From: K Molloy [kmolloy@gmail.com]
Sent: Wednesday, February 06, 2013 3:37 PM
To: Peter Forcellese; John Long
Subject: Fwd: My comments on Federal Realty's proposal for single-story standalone grocery store in former IKEA site

Hello again,

Below is message I sent to the Somerville BOA last week.

Best regards,

Karen Molloy
197 Highland Ave.
Somerville, MA 02143

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

From: K Molloy <kmolloy@gmail.com>
Date: Thu, Jan 31, 2013 at 9:49 AM
Subject: My comments on Federal Realty's proposal for single-story standalone grocery store in former IKEA site
To: william.a.white@verizon.net, TFTAld32@aol.com, aldermanconnolly@gmail.com, brucemdesmond@yahoo.com, aldermansullivan@aol.com, sean@odonovanlaw.com, rebekah.gewirtz@gmail.com, aldermanbastardi@comcast.net, mheuston@hotmail.com, RobertTrane@aol.com, tony@tonylafuente.com

Good morning Somerville Board of Aldermen,

I attended the Joint Public Hearing by Planning Board and Land Use Committee on 24 January regarding Federal Realty's proposal to develop the land that it wants to acquire from IKEA. I do not recommend that the zoning change they seek should be changed based on the plan they proposed.

I am dismayed by Federal Realty's lack of vision for the site and proposal for a single-story suburban-style supermarket. As a Somerville resident/taxpayer looking forward to how the site can maximize the City's tax base, the proposed under-utilization of this prime location next to a future T stop and by a waterfront bothers me greatly.

I have no issue with a supermarket in Assembly Sq. -- it will benefit current residents of East Somerville, new residents who will live/work in the Assembly Sq area, and residents of other nearby neighborhoods (including those in the section of Charlestown that recently lost a Johnnie's Foodmaster and gained a pricey Whole Foods).

I would prefer to see what many citizens who attended the hearing spoke about: a multi-story mixed-use structure with a grocery store. I've lived in Somerville nearly 30 years and have seen how the result of lack of long-range vision in development can have on Somerville's tax commercial base -- one only needs to compare Assembly Sq and Kendall Sq from the 1980s onward to understand the difference between short-term and long-term planning.

But now we have the chance to redo Assembly Sq, and the other night Federal Realty seemed unwilling to entertain alternative ideas from the community and seemed to want to stick to its proposal, which they say they can build in a hurry.

It's a real treasure of a location (entrance to the T right there and steps from the waterfront, new office/retail/residential development) and I'd hate to see that site squandered by an unimaginative suburban-sprawl type use that is not all in keeping with the Somersvision Plan. I certainly did not advocate for a second head-house for the Assembly T stop a few years ago or support the Assembly Square DIF bond for it all to come down to such a paltry proposal. As was eloquently stated by a few others on the 24th, Assembly Sq. needs to bring a lot of jobs and generate a lot of revenue for the city and Somerville cannot afford to have a developer build a weak link that would underutilize such a valuable parcel of land.

I was disappointed to hear a few folks on the Planning Board express the fear "What if no one else wants this land and this is the only opportunity to get it developed?" This kind of scarcity thinking and impulse to settle for less has contributed to Somerville's poor commercial tax base over time, in my opinion. (I've lived in Somerville nearly 30 years.) The location is prime to all sorts of revenue-generating development and Federal Realty might not be up to the task for this site. What a developer builds there will have a positive or negative impact for a very long time. In these times we see the heated high-tech and bio-tech development in East Cambridge and Central Sq. Cambridge and wonder when Somerville will start to see some of that action at Boynton Yards. And we see the developments planned for Lovejoy Wharf and other areas not far from Assembly (for example where Converse is moving its worldwide headquarters) and wonder when Somerville will start seeing some of that commercial action too. Let's make sure we don't waver in providing a solid development plan for Assembly Sq that attracts really good commercial businesses to Somerville.

Thanks for your consideration.

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