

## Kimberly Wells

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**From:** Kate Lila Wheeler [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, December 7, 2021 1:35 PM  
**To:** Planning1; All City Council; City Clerk Contact  
**Cc:** JT Scott; Chris Dwan; David Guss; Vanessa Boukili  
**Subject:** Plan for new Public Safety Dept

Dear Members of the Planning Board, City Council, Urban Forestry and Landscape Planner and local residents copied here,

We would like our comments entered into the record for the next Council meeting.

We request a review and design modifications to the new public safety building proposed for 90 Washington Street so that the 40 mature trees on the site are maintained.

We also request there be no permit, permission, or Zoning amendments granted for cutting mature trees at the proposed site.

It has been difficult to find, on the City's website, any good information about where the process is regarding these trees -- many of the documents including the informational document for the March 31 2021 meeting have been removed.

However, in general, time and again this city initiates projects by chopping down all the trees, reducing green and open space so as to build the largest building envelope possible.

We have discussed this with nearly all of you in the past. It is clear that 'lollipop' newly planted trees do not compensate for the loss of mature trees for decades, or ever, when you consider effects across individual residents' lifespans.

Mayor Curtatone's letter proposing the public safety building relocation pretends the building will be carbon neutral. This is good except, this considers the building in isolation. Tree removal (for a parking garage, I think) is not in line with such aspirations. Also, the carbon sequestration function of the living trees will end. Nor is the construction's carbon footprint included in the calculations - or is it?

It is unfortunate to watch design after design in Somerville, our dear city which is a heat island, and lacks adequate green space, continue to use such rhetoric while continuing to fail to plan around valuable tree assets or to press developers for adequate open and green spaces.

That area of Washington Street has few trees and the greenery that's there should be preciousy protected. .

Besides trees' benefits for breathing, mental health, anticancer and other health giving properties, besides their cooling the local microclimate, studies also find that living trees contribute to public safety and reduce violence where they are planted and abundant.

Please read below our signatures

Kate Wheeler  
David Guss  
Ward 2

Environment and Crime

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.469.4529&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

Below is an excerpt:

<https://www.deeproot.com/blog/blog-entries/trees-for-public-safety-reducing-crime-rates/>

Kuo and Sullivan report that, overall, “residents in ‘greener’ surroundings report lower levels of fear, fewer incivilities, and less aggressive/violent behavior.” The authors hypothesize that in poor, inner-city neighborhoods, vegetation can help inhibit occurrences of crime in two ways:

1) Increasing surveillance (“eyes on the street”).

The presence of trees encourages the use of shared outdoor spaces. Treed outdoor areas are consistently used more than treeless ones, and the more trees there are in an outdoor space, the greater the number of simultaneous users of that space. Trees also imply surveillance by acting as territorial markers, even if no surveillance is actually present.

2) Mitigating some of the psychological precursors to violence.

Mental fatigue (defined as irritability, inattentiveness, and decreased impulse control), particularly irritability, has been linked to aggression in numerous studies. The restorative effects of trees may inhibit some behaviors related to mental fatigue, such as crime, before they occur.

These reasons seem so simple that it’s tempting to wonder if they could possibly be enough. And yet sometimes the **simplest explanation** is also the likeliest. Whether intentional or not, I think most of us form emotional relationships with trees in our neighborhoods. It’s interesting to think that the complexity of this relationship could go beyond mere pleasure, but extend in to issues of public health and safety as well.

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Kate Lila Wheeler

she/hers