

Monday April 11, 2016  
by Certified Mail

Somerville Capital Projects and Planning Department  
Somerville Board of Aldermen  
Somerville Historic Preservation Commission  
Somerville Design Review Committee  
Somerville Planning Board  
Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Re: Somerville West Branch Library, 40 College Avenue

Dear Sirs and Madams,


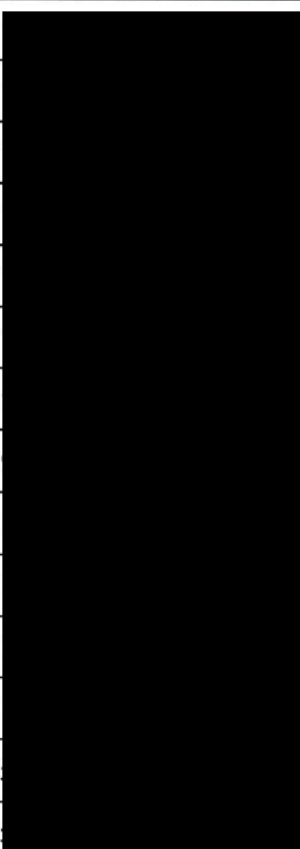
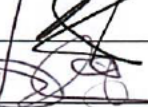

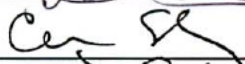
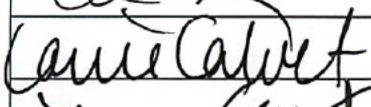


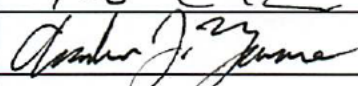
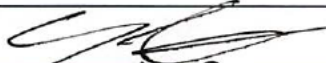
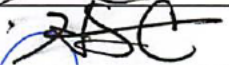

The undersigned owners ("the Owners") of properties immediately abutting the Somerville West Branch Library ("the Library") respectfully submit this **letter of opposition** to the current Library renovation project ("the Project") and request the **suspension** of any design development or other work relating to the Project, pending satisfaction of the following grievances against the Project:

- The Owners were not notified of any public meetings regarding the preliminary Project designs, and therefore did not have opportunity to provide input on the selection of the Project design.
- As the immediately abutting Owners, any exterior changes to the Library would affect us far more directly and substantially than they would affect any other community members.
- Yet, the only community input from which the city chose and developed the current Project came from non-abutting community members whose properties are not directly affected by the Project.
- The proposed Project results in the loss of one of the few remaining green/recreational spaces in Davis Square, and would replace this green space with a structure that is out of proportion and character with the rest of the neighborhood.
- **It is the Owners' unanimous belief that the current Project would be severely injurious to the structural integrity and value of the immediately abutting properties, as well as to the historic character of the neighborhood.**

Being thusly aggrieved, we respectfully petition the above-named addressees and any other relevant Departments, Boards, and Commissions to **please suspend all work relating to the Project until the concerns of the immediately abutting Owners community have been given fair hearing and satisfaction, and the Project amended accordingly.**

The Library and its green space are valuable and beloved civic assets, and the Owners support any improvements thereto that also respect the abutting properties and the character of the neighborhood. The existing Project does not do so, hence the Owners cannot support and must oppose it. The Owners are happy to meet with the relevant Departments, Boards, and Commissions to discuss our concerns further. **Until we explicitly state otherwise via follow-up letter with the same signatories, please consider all of the undersigned immediately abutting Owners to formally and firmly oppose the Project.**

Sincerely,  
*(signatories on following page)*

	M. Lourdes Villalba	
	Adrian Senderowicz	
	Dan Ehrlich	
	Celia Slattery	
	Laurie Calvert	
	Jonathan Calvert	
	Thalia Tringo	
	Andrew Zamore	
(see attached letter)	Brian Hayes	
(see attached letter)	Rosalind Reid	
	Ulysses Lateiner	
	Henry Cataldo	
	Gordon Rogers	
(see separate attached letter)	Benjamin Katz	

[REDACTED]

To the City of Somerville:

We are the owners of [REDACTED]; our condominium property abuts the Somerville West Branch Library on the rear. We write, in support of our fellow abutters, to express our own concerns about the current plans for the library renovation.

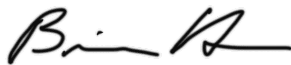
In particular, we join our neighbors in strenuous objection to the fact that the City failed to invite abutters to comment on the selected project plan until it was fully developed and being prepared for submission to various boards and commissions. We join in asking that the planning process be suspended to allow abutters' concerns and interests to be addressed. We are willing to support the City's petitions for approvals and variances only after a satisfactory design and construction process is developed.

When we attended the March 28 meeting for abutters, we were distressed to learn how little consideration appears to have been given to the fact that the library is an institutional/community facility tightly surrounded on three sides by dense residential uses. Privacy, quiet, green space, shade trees, natural light, and elbow room are all in extremely short supply in the neighborhood. Many of us purchased homes near the library partly because we valued the small amounts of these valued commodities that come with a location adjoining a historic library and its stately grounds.

We have been good neighbors to the library, and it has been good to us. Our homes are also historic properties and contribute to the character of the entire neighborhood. But the current plan shifts the balance, requiring the abutters to sacrifice green space, shade, quiet, and open views to create a community facility.

As our fellow abutters' letter states, we support improvements to the library that respect the abutting properties and the character of the neighborhood. We join them in asking for a halt to the work on the project until the abutters' concerns are addressed.

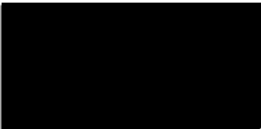
Sincerely,



Brian Hayes



Rosalind Reid



April 8<sup>th</sup> 2016

By way of introduction I own , my property overlooks the lawn behind the West Somerville Library

Unfortunately due to unexpected travel I am not able to attend the meeting scheduled for April 11<sup>th</sup> 2016 at the Community Baptist Church, so I have provided this brief letter to my neighbors so they can help ensure my views are heard.

I live near Davis Square, and while I reside across the city line in Cambridge, I am a strong proponent of Somerville and Davis Square in particular, where I own three two family homes.

I believe strongly in both private and public efforts to improve both the housing stock and amenities in Somerville, and have never opposed any development or indeed any petition to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

However in the case of the West Somerville Library project I am firmly opposed to its construction and can conceive of no modification to the proposed plans which would change those objections, and I intend to ensure my opposition is noted by the Somerville Historic Commission, the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals, and ultimately by any other process which might be appropriate.

My objections fall broadly into two categories:

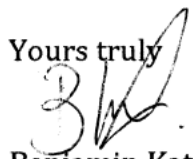
**Impairment of both the value and the quiet enjoyment of my property**

The proposed plans bring the property within a few feet to my property line, bounded by a large wooden fence. This eliminates the pleasing view of the existing outdoor space, and more significantly meaningfully reduces the light entering the first floor of my property, generally reduces the utility of my back yard by obscuring a clear view of the sky when seated, and will in my opinion will reduce the enjoyment and the value of my property.

**Public Policy**

The Somerville Library is a wonderful, and historic building which is clearly under utilized, with a national trend of significant reduction of visitors to libraries, I feel that public funds should be used to improve the interior of the existing structure, encourage more visitors, and I suspect that given the current macro trends in library use, the proposed extension will likely become an under used structure which was built at significant cost both to the taxpayers, and to the neighbors.

Yours truly



Benjamin Katz

Somerville Department of Capital Projects and Planning  
Somerville Board of Aldermen  
Somerville Historical Preservation Commission  
Somerville Design Review Committee  
Somerville Planning Board  
Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals

Re: West Somerville Branch Library  
Date: April 9, 2016

Until only this week many of the immediate abutters of the proposed renovation project for the West Branch Library were completely unaware of the large expansion that is now proposed, much less of the advanced planning of the project. Only yesterday the majority of the neighbors were able to see an understandable copy of the advanced plans which we obtained on request from the town.

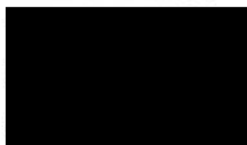
The plan that is apparently in current favor, "Scheme B", appears to include the import of a massive amount of landfill behind the library that will be deposited above grade and very close to the private property lines. The city's commissioned engineers appear not have considered the possibly disastrous effect of rechanneling ground water onto the neighboring private houses, including the possibility to affect the structural integrity of those private houses.

As a professional engineer myself, I have severe concerns about this aspect of "Scheme B". The abutters have had only a few days to consider the other ramifications of the towering construction.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Daniel Ehrlich", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Daniel Ehrlich



copy: Abutters of West Somerville Library