

Madalyn Letellier

From: a L [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2023 11:30 AM
To: All City Council; Planning1; publiccomments@somerville.gov; City Clerk Contact
Subject: #23-0940 (Rezoning application for 200 Inner Belt Road)

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Members of the Somerville Planning Board

September 8, 2023

Dear Council and Board members:

I am a resident/owner/artist/business (yes, all four!) tenant of the Brickbottom Artists Building, which is just over the rail tracks from the subject land parcel and which will be immediately, negatively impacted by the proposal if it moves forward as-is.

I am writing to express my clear and direct opposition to this rezoning application, for several reasons:

1: Needless Traffic and it's pollutive and quality-of-life impacts

Brickbottom neighborhood is already at risk of inundation by traffic from:

- The proposed development at 200 McGrath Highway - which directs a bulk of its traffic - including all large truck deliveries, exit through Brickbottom neighborhood via Somerville Ave Ext in order to rejoin McGrath Highway at Poplar St.
- the "two" buildings at 28 Chestnut and 28 Fitchburg currently in progress - with 250+ parking spots, plus anticipated weekly large truck deliveries.
- Any additional developments and buildings *within* the actual Brickbottom neighborhood limits of the green line/bike-path, commuter rail, and McGrath highway

The proposal seeks to dump a parking garage at 86 Joy Street for a residential building at 200 Innerbelt.

This will burden the residents of Brickbottom neighborhood with additional traffic wholly unrelated to our neighborhood, and all of the negative quality-of-life and health fallout:

- congestion in an already tight neighborhood
- CO2 air pollution
- microplastic tire-waste pollution

2. The proposal is at-odds with the neighborhood and city desire for creating an arts district.

The proposal as-is seems to eliminate the Joy Street Studios and replace it with a parking garage. Aside from providing zero benefits to anyone actually living/working in the BB neighborhood, the proposal actively removes a vibrant art/creative/maker's space.

3. The proposal spits in the face of anyone who lives/works in the actual Brickbottom neighborhood.

We, actual residents of the Brickbottom neighborhood, have consistently voiced on multiple platforms the desire for not only a creative neighborhood, but one that is oriented to walkability and mass transit. One that increases green-space while reducing dependency on car oriented infrastructure.

A parking garage that solely benefits residents of another neighborhood is unquestionably counter to that.

4. The proposal runs counter to the city's stated planning and development plan.

Per Somervision, both the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts were identified as “transformation” zones that would be ***planned and prepared*** for future redevelopment, following a series of steps:

- Neighborhood plans
- Urban design framework plans
- Formulation of Master Plan Overlay Zone regulations
- Master Plan Special Permit or individual parcel special permits

This process provides for robust citizen engagement at all stages. Most important, the tool of Master Plan Overlay zoning was promised as the way to link the grant of higher-scale and more intensive uses in the zone to a program of public infrastructure investments, mitigations, and the fulfillment of social needs and community benefits

This proposal clearly and unequivocally seeks to pre-empt that process and deny residents our promised engagement in the development of our neighborhoods.

All elements of the future redevelopment of Inner Belt and Brickbottom must be thoroughly studied, planned and reviewed with strong public engagement at all stages.

The request to create a High Rise zone that permits a height of 155 ft plus unlimited mechanical and maximum scale and density for this site cannot be substantiated based on the current, incomplete record and unfinished planning process.

I urge you to ask the developer to withdraw this application as premature and, if they do not do so, deny the zoning change based on the failure of the proposal to show consistency with the city's plans and policies.

Sincerely,

Adam Leveille
1 Fitchburg St, C307
Somerville, MA

Lance Brisbois
1 Fitchburg St, C307
Somerville, MA

Madalyn Letellier

From: Heather Van Aelst [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, September 7, 2023 6:42 PM
To: All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Agenda #23-0940

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Dear Council and Board members,

I'm writing to voice my opposition to the rezoning application referenced in agenda item #23-0940 for 200 Inner Belt Road, in light of the ongoing neighborhood planning for Inner Belt and Brickbottom. I reside/work in the Brickbottom Artists Building, near the subject land parcel.

Somervision earmarked both Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts for future redevelopment, with a comprehensive process including neighborhood plans, urban design frameworks, Master Plan Overlay Zone regulations, and special permits. This process ensures a thorough study, addressing spatial arrangement, traffic, urban design, and more, with strong citizen engagement.

Allowing developers to bypass this process for higher-density development threatens to diminish the value of the zoning tools and community engagement processes. For the long term health of the neighborhood, it's critical to use these processes and engage with the community before allowing individual zoning changes.

I urge the developer to withdraw this premature application, and if not, for the joint committees to deny the zoning change for inconsistency with city plans and policies.

Thank you,
Heather Van Aelst
1 Fitchburg St C304

Madalyn Letellier

From: Kamala Asher [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, September 7, 2023 11:46 PM
To: All City Council; Planning1; City Clerk Contact; Public Comments
Subject: Agenda #23-0940 = OPPOSE Rezoning application for 200 Inner Belt Road

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Members of the Somerville Planning Board

In reference to: Agenda item #23-0940 (Rezoning application for 200 Inner Belt Road)

Date: 9/7/23

Dear Council and Board members:

I am writing to express my opposition to this rezoning application, which I believe is premature in light of the unfinished neighborhood planning process, which the city has undertaken for the Inner Belt and Brickbottom zones.

I am an owner tenant of the Brickbottom Artists Building, which is just over the rail tracks from the subject land parcel.

Under Somer Vision, both the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts were identified as “transformation” zones that would be planned and prepared for future redevelopment, following a series of steps:

- Neighborhood plans
- Urban design framework plans
- Formulation of Master Plan Overlay Zone regulations
- Master Plan Special Permit or individual parcel special permits

This process would provide thorough study of the zones and work out solutions to the main problems of spatial arrangement, traffic, pedestrian and bicycle movement, urban design and functions, building scale, density and mix of uses. It would also provide for robust citizen engagement at all stages. Most important, the tool of Master Plan Overlay zoning was promised as the way to link the grant of higher-scale and more intensive uses in the zone to a program of public infrastructure investments, mitigations, and the fulfillment of social needs and community benefits.

If developers/owners will be permitted to jump out of the planning process to claim higher scale and density development rights, without subjecting their sites and projects to the Overlay process, the value of this tool will be lost and community engagement and empowerment will be left as hollow slogans.

All elements of the future redevelopment of Inner Belt and Brickbottom must be thoroughly studied, planned and reviewed with strong public engagement at all stages. The request to create a High Rise zone that permits a height of 155 ft plus unlimited mechanical and maximum scale and density for this site cannot be substantiated based on the current, incomplete record and unfinished planning process.

I urge you to ask the developer to withdraw this application as premature and, if they do not do so, deny the zoning change based on the failure of the proposal to show consistency with the city's plans and policies.

Thank you for your attention,

Kamala Asher, on behalf of artist owner Jo Sandman, #507

Madalyn Letellier

From: margery hamlen [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, September 8, 2023 10:57 AM
To: All City Council; Planning1; Public Comments; City Clerk Contact
Subject: Agenda #23-0940

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Dear Council and Board members:

I am writing to express my opposition to this rezoning application, which I believe is premature in light of the unfinished neighborhood planning process, which the city has undertaken for the Inner Belt and Brickbottom zones.

I am a resident/owner/artist/business tenant of the Brickbottom Artists Building, which is just over the rail tracks from the subject land parcel.

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I urge you to ask the developer to withdraw this application as premature and, if they do not do so, deny the zoning change based on the failure of the proposal to show consistency with the city's plans and policies.

Thank you for your attention,

Margery Hamlen, Brickbottom C-513

From: Anne Randolph [REDACTED]
Sent: Saturday, September 23, 2023 10:36 AM
To: All City Council <Citycouncil@somervillema.gov>; Planning1 <planning1@somervillema.gov>
Subject: September 7th Joint Meeting, Land Use Committee and Planning Board, regarding rezoning proposal for 200 Innerbelt

This email is from an external source. Use caution responding to it, opening attachments or clicking links.

Dear Land Use Committee and Planning Board,

Thank you for creating space for the community to react to North River's surprising proposal to build high rise housing at 200 Innerbelt, and their request for spot rezoning to make that possible.

Thank you for your insistence on the importance of community engagement.

I'm hoping to attend North River's community engagement zoom meeting on the 27th but I do have issues with their idea which are unlikely to be resolved by their explanations. It's my understanding that Somerville is trying to craft coherent neighborhood plans for areas like Innerbelt and Brickbottom with well thought out zoning and robust community engagement. To me it would seem that this is the time for thoughtful, comprehensive planning— not a time for randomly putting up high rises in industrial zones. And industrial and warehouse zones have long been the incubators of artist communities, which as we know are then driven out by developers and gentrification. I hope you are able to continue to value industrial zones.

I'm an artist tenant at 86 Joy Street where North River is my landlord. At the September 7th meeting I was concerned by Ms Keefe's presentation which focused naturally on the actual zone in question but specifically called out a building I recognized as 86 Joy Street, without actually mentioning what was there —as being directly impacted by her plan. Her drawing indicates 86 Joy as being the location of the pedestrian bridge.

Naturally at Joy Street we are all concerned for the future of our building, which is an old industrial building converted into a rich community of artists' studios, populated by artists in wide ranging disciplines— fine marquetry furniture, tintype photography, quilting, conceptual art, sound art, all kinds of painting, printmaking, photography and sculpture. We are an integral part of what makes Somerville famously an artist's city. And Somerville's reputation for the Arts is what makes people want to be here. I implore you to continue to keep that foremost in your minds as you make changes to the fabric of the city.

Thank you again for the opportunity to make ourselves heard.

Anne Randolph

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