



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS  
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
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MAYOR

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

December 4, 2015

Dear CAC members and Strategy Leaders:

As a follow up to the initial public benefits strategy session led by Locus, a program of Smart Growth America, we thought it might be helpful to enunciate some of this administration's hopes and goals for the outcomes of that process. In the administration's point of view, the Locus process is meant to provide further experience, insight and strategies to the Union Square Civic Advisory Committee (CAC) as it formulates its priorities and recommendations in helping to create a public benefits agreement. In advancing this discussion on public benefits, it would be helpful to recall the initial expectations and goals of the Union Square redevelopment process as a measure of where we are currently and where we hope to move toward in the days ahead.

In December of 2013, the Request for Qualifications for a Master Developer partner was issued. One of the most important selection criteria in choosing a Master Developer partner was the following: *"Ability to demonstrate past success in using large scale, mixed use development as a means of formulating a community benefits and mitigation package, especially in providing new employment opportunities for local residents."*

The 2014 Master Developer Designation Agreement amplified that expectation by referring to the requirement that Union Square Station Associates (US2) enter into an *"agreement expected to address the following subject areas: affordable housing, workforce development, local hiring, support to independent local retailers, sustainability in building design and site development, improvements to the public realm, and other matters consistent with the City's goals and values identified in SomerVision."*

While there is debate and discussion on the best means of achieving a benefits agreement, there is at least a general meeting of the minds as to many of the elements such an agreement might address. Consider how well the priorities that have often been mentioned by members of Union United (affordable housing, arts and culture, local jobs and worker rights, small business protection and opportunity, green design, environment and open space) closely align with the provisions of the Master Developer agreement with US2.



It is the hope and expectation of the administration that this Locus-facilitated process will result in a guiding document, one that will shape the recommendations of the CAC and then frame negotiations with US2 regarding a benefits agreement in the near term, and in the longer term, with other developers that come along, whether in Union Square, Boynton Yards or elsewhere. Moreover, whatever form the public benefits agreement with US2 finally takes, the CAC, as the appointed advisory body to the City, would be a party to what will likely be a tri-party agreement.

The Locus process is the next logical step in the community based planning process that shapes the City of Somerville. The initial step in that process was SomerVision, which set goals and values for the City's future growth. Following upon that process is the current draft Neighborhood Plan for Union Square, which is meant to be the visualization of those goals and values as we move ahead. Perhaps the most important point that might come out of this Locus process is the formation of a strategy on how best to manage the implementation and enforcement of the agreements and the benefits---monetary or otherwise---that may come from US 2 and from other developers. To that end, we look to the Strategy Leaders to serve the CAC and from that, the CAC to advise the administration in its negotiations with the developer.

We hope this clarifies matters a bit; thank you for your continuing commitment to the City of Somerville.

Sincerely,



Edward C. O'Donnell  
Director of Economic Development