

UNION SQUARE NEIGHBORS

May 4, 2016

Somerville Planning Board
c/o George Proakis
Planning Director, OSPCD
City Hall
93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Members of the Planning Board,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide written feedback on the revised version of the Union Square Neighborhood Plan. We agree with much of the public testimony given at last week's hearing in support of the plan and greatly appreciate the significant efforts staff within OSPCD have made in guiding the plan's creation and responding to feedback.

Union Square Neighbors (USN) has advocated for the creation of a master plan for Union Square for several years, and we have **collectively spent hundreds of hours analyzing the initial draft** of the Neighborhood Plan in an effort to help create the best possible plan for the future of our neighborhood. While we would have preferred more time to review and understand the revised plan, **we support adoption of the Neighborhood Plan as part of a strategy to demonstrate to MassDOT that Union Square is ready and able to maximize the economic benefits of the GLX.**

Overall, the Neighborhood Plan is truly exceptional at capturing and articulating the goals, aspirations and vision of the community. Similar plans that have been created in other places are often less successful at clearly reflecting the unique character of the people it is being created for, and this plan should be commended for its efforts to include this and to reflect the diverse range of feedback received.

Following the release of the initial draft of the plan in October 2015, USN submitted a detailed letter commenting on the plan's contents and recommending a series of improvements and clarifications. We have not had a chance to review the revised draft of the plan in the same level of detail, however we would like to submit for your consideration our analysis (or "**Report Card**") of how well the revised version addresses the recommendations we made on the earlier draft of the Neighborhood Plan. (See attachment entitled, "Union Square Neighborhood Plan – Report Card.") Our general feedback on the revised Neighborhood Plan is summarized below:

- **Translating a Vision into specific Planning Recommendations:** The written aspirations in the plan have been improved significantly from the draft, becoming more balanced and complete. Where the plan is not yet as successful as it could be is in translating the written goals and aspirations into physical guidelines for development, particularly for the so-called 'D' blocks. Throughout the process of creating the plan, relatively few D-block alternatives were evaluated,

and it appears that almost no updates to plans or building diagrams have been made based on feedback received on the previous draft. Though we are generally pleased with the streetscape designs included in the plan, there remains work to do to shape buildings and public spaces into exceptional places. Given this, we will advocate for zoning in Union Square that preserves the opportunity for public input and the flexibility for the Planning Board to weigh this in guiding the design of buildings and public spaces during the approvals process.

- **Transportation Infrastructure and Mobility Management:** Our previous comments on the plan articulated why a transportation analysis is important. While we agree with the goals described in the Neighborhood Plan are right, we are extremely concerned about the lack of transportation analysis which is critical to the feasibility and viability of the plan and its development goals. While we generally support lowering parking to the extent possible, there are too few specifics in the plan on parking. We recommend that a complete transportation analysis be conducted and added to the plan.
- **Commercial Space as a First Priority:** We were concerned about what appeared to be a largely residential development being shown on the D2 block, and this is unchanged from the prior version. While we generally agree with the overall commercial/residential mix in the updated plan, we believe building commercial space during the first phase is critical, and we will advocate for this as part of the development review process.
- **Open/Green Space:** The initial draft proposed approximately 10 acres of open space in Union Square. The Union Square Civic Advisory Committee had recommended 20.4 acres, and we agreed. The updated version of the plan includes a recommendation for 15.3 acres, but a strategy for achieving only 12.3 acres, stating that a plan to achieve other 3 acres is to be determined. (We note that the updated plan has significantly improved open space planning in Boynton Yards and Grand Junction/Milk Square). While the plan recommends 15 percent open space requirement for development across Union Square and Boynton Yards, a 20 percent requirement would result in the additional 3 acres the plan also recommends. We suggest this be noted in the plan and evaluated during zoning process.
- **Family Housing as a Priority:** We recommended in our earlier comments that the average unit size be increased and planning for housing typologies such as townhouse and courtyard housing types that are attractive for families be added. It appears the average unit size has increased, but the housing types we recommended do not appear to be included. There also does not appear to be a recommendation for proportion of larger unit sizes. Careful attention will need to be paid to make sure revised zoning ordinances requires and/or incentivizes (as appropriate) housing suitable for families.
- **Human Scaled Design:** Very few changes were made to physical plans which are apparently intended to serve as basis for development guidelines. Our previous letter included detailed recommendations for clarifications and improvements, and our members also submitted specific comments through the online comment tool.
 - We appreciate that the revised version notes the importance of views from Prospect Hill Park, but wish a more detailed study had been done of proposed allowable building heights in relation to it. This will need to be done in the future if allowable heights are proposed to be increased.

- We also appreciate the recommendation to modify allowable heights along Washington Street.
- We recommend that language in the plan be modified to describe massing shown as a potential outcome rather than implying this is recommended or preferred.
- **Public and Civic Buildings:** This version of the Neighborhood Plan appears to include even less on civic space than the initial draft, which is a major shortcoming. D1, the so-called “Civic Block” in the Union Square Revitalization Plan and Master Developer Request for Qualifications, has no public or civic uses, such as branch library, community or recreation center, teen center, etc. A true neighborhood plan is not complete without planning for the civic and public buildings that are critical to making a complete neighborhood. We have made this point time and again and will continue to do so.
- **Scattered Site Developments:** We appreciate that the development potential for sites outside D blocks in Union Square (pp. 196-201) has been evaluated. However, what is shown has never been seen by the public before. Accordingly, these should not be described as recommended or preferred.
- **Implementation Plan:** We appreciate the implementation table (p. 264) has been included, though we have not yet reviewed it in detail.

Somerville has already done more than any other metro-area community to aggressively zone for transit oriented development, pass a neighborhood revitalization plan, and select a master developer to expedite and leverage the benefits of new transportation infrastructure. The Union Square Neighborhood Plan is yet more evidence of Somerville’s commitment to deliver on these opportunities. We look forward to continued engagement and refinement of development specifics through the zoning ordinance overhaul and development review processes in the future.

Sincerely,

Rob Buchanan, Chairperson
Union Square Neighbors

Union Square Neighbors Steering Committee:

Rob Buchanan (chair), Suzanne Bremer, Stuart Dash, Sam Engelstad, Andy Greenspon, Stephanie Hirsch, Jim McGinnis, Annette McGloin, Philip Parsons, JT Scott, Tim Talun, Shu Talun, Bonnie Tominack

Union Square Neighbors Neighborhood Plan Work Group:

Tori Antonio, Rob Buchanan, Stuart Dash, Stephanie Hirsch, Jim McGinnis, Philip Parsons, Bill Shelton, Tim Talun

CC:

Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor, City of Somerville
Somerville Board of Alderman

Union Square Neighborhood Plan – Report Card
Union Square Neighbors

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
1.0	Transportation and Mobility Management		
1.1	Transportation Impact Analysis: We recommend that the Neighborhood Plan include a transportation analysis of the impact of new development on both arterial and neighborhood streets. The transportation impact analysis should estimate new trip generation and parking demand based on the size and intensity of proposed development (both in and outside of the Revitalization Plan blocks). The Neighborhood Plan should include a gap analysis (i.e. the number of new parking spaces needed versus existing), so stakeholders can understand the scope of new infrastructure needed and impact on road use. To the extent assumptions are made with respect to transportation demand management strategies, the impact analysis should show “with” and “without” impacts of these strategies, so stakeholders can understand their importance and influence on need.	F	Transportation analysis is not included. (See p. 254.) We understand a brief analysis may be forthcoming.
1.2	Transportation Demand Management: The Neighborhood Plan should indicate which parcels will be subject to transportation demand management strategies and provide details on how the City of Somerville plans to finance and operationalize implementation and oversight. For example, will land owners be required to contribute toward oversight costs? The draft Neighborhood Plan notes that transportation demand management requirements must be included in Somerville’s future zoning code. Therefore, we believe the Neighborhood Plan process should result in a recommendation for which parcels will be subject to the new zoning requirements.	C	A section of the plan makes a strong case for implementing transportation demand management strategies, but it does not appear to recommend which parcels or buildings should be subject to demand management zoning requirements (p. 116 -123).

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
1.3	<p>Parking Infrastructure: Based on the transportation impact analysis, the Neighborhood Plan should include options for location, size (estimated number of parking spaces), and type of parking infrastructure that is contemplated (e.g. surface-level parking, structured parking within a building, underground parking, or off-site parking) to meet demand. Assumptions regarding the estimated number of spaces and square feet of parking per land use type (i.e. residential, office, lab, retail, etc.) required should be transparent, so stakeholders can evaluate their reasonableness. This level of detail will to inform future zoning ordinance changes that will impact Union Square, Boynton Yards, Grand Junction, and Brickbottom.</p>	C	<p>The plan calls for at least 1,130 new parking spaces across D blocks. It remains unclear whether and how this will be meet commercial and residential demand for parking to support development goals and whether the local road network can support additional traffic impact, since the Transportation Analysis is incomplete.</p> <p>D1 = 525 spaces, podium (p.179) D2 = 345 spaces, podium (p. 181) D3 = 260 spaces (p. 247) D6 = 0 (p. 191) D7 = not specified (p. 195) Approximate Total = 1,130</p>
1.4	<p>Neighborhood Traffic Calming: The Neighborhood Plan includes a significant emphasis on streetscape design for the heart of Union Square and Boynton Yards; however, there are relatively few details on needed traffic calming interventions for the residential neighborhoods surrounding these areas. Earlier this year, USN submitted a letter co-signed by more than 50 neighbors as well as Aldermen Heuston, McWatters, and Sullivan to the City of Somerville and Somerville by Design asking that the Neighborhood Plan address neighborhood streets as well as the square’s main arterial streets, so we were disappointed this was not addressed. We recommend that the Neighborhood Plan be amended to include the potential locations and interventions for traffic calming, including neighborhood round-a-bouts (e.g. Prospect Hill Parkway and Munroe Streets), “safe routes to school” and “neighborways.” Areas of particular concern include Concord Avenue, Prospect Hill Avenue in particular intersections with Munroe Street, Boston Street and McGrath Highway, Walnut Street at the park and at Boston Street/Summit, and Vinal Avenue. We request that the traffic calming materials included with our letter be reviewed and incorporated in the plan.</p>	B-	<p>A section was added to the plan that discusses the importance and need for neighborhood traffic calming (pp 146-149) and highlights streets neighborhood residents identified in need of traffic calming interventions; however, the potential locations of specific traffic calming interventions are not identified, stating: <i>“While this neighborhood plan has identified the need for a strategy to slow speed and reduce cut-through traffic, it could not evaluate the best options for each street. The Mayor’s Office of Strategic Planning and community development is pursuing a citywide mobility plan that can provide a more comprehensive strategy for calming neighborhood streets” (p. 148).</i></p>

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
1.5	Intermodal Connections: The location of taxi stands, bus stops, and paratransit (“The Ride”) locations relative to the Union Square GLX station, street intersections, and bike infrastructure and parking is an important element of promoting intermodal transportation and identifying potential conflicts and barriers. We recommend that intermodal connections be added to the proposed streetscape designs to illustrate where there might be conflicts and infrastructure limitations. (For example, the current draft of the Neighborhood Plan contemplates widening Allen Street; however, it is unclear how bus and paratransit services would be impacted if Allen Street is not widened before the Union Square GLX station opens. Moreover, ride-sharing services have increased on-street pick-ups and drop-offs, often in bike lanes and bus stops.)	C+	Relatively little detail is included on location of taxi stands, bus stops, and paratransit (“The Ride”) locations relative to the Union Square GLX station. USN recognizes plans for the GLX are fluid. These issues will need to be addressed in the future.
1.6	Bike Infrastructure - Somerville Avenue: We advocate a two-way protected bike lane that extends from the heart of Union Square to the Community Path via the north side of Somerville Avenue, across McGrath Boulevard, and through the Brickbottom neighborhood. This will provide a continuous and safe bicycling experience that will strengthen ties from Union Square to Brickbottom.	B	The Neighborhood Plan does not adopt USN’s recommendation to include a two-way protected bike lane that connects Union Square to Brickbottom via Somerville Avenue; however it does call for one-way protected bike infrastructure on Somerville Avenue between Union Square and Brickbottom (p. 135, 179). It is not clear why the two-way bike lane is not carried through from Union Square to Brickbottom for purpose of continuity.
1.7	Bike Infrastructure - Prospect and Washington Streets: We recommend altering the draft plan by moving the location of a proposed two-way protected bike lane from the west and north sides of Prospect and Washington Streets to the east and south sides respectively. This will facilitate connections with the Union Square and Washington Street GLX stations.	D	The Neighborhood Plan does not adopt USN’s recommendation to show two-way protected bike lane on GLX-side of Prospect and Washington Streets. (See p. 141.) It is not clear why this recommendation was not integrated into the plan.

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
1.8	Bike Infrastructure - Boynton Yards Path: We recommend that the plan show and describe the location of the proposed path that would run parallel to Fitchburg Railroad tracks and connect to Community Path and/or Grand Junction Path. The Neighborhood Plan should include implementation strategies (i.e. zoning, land purchase, public/private partnerships, and developer obligations) for parcels that will be affected in order to make the path a reality. This spur could have the potential to dramatically increase safe bicycle connectivity between Union Square, Kendall Square, MIT, and potentially Boston University.	C	The Neighborhood Plan does not appear to adopt USN's recommendation for a community path parallel to Fitchburg railroad tracks on p. 135; however, the image on p. 143 suggests green/open space in this approximate location, so perhaps this will be addressed in the future.
2.0	Balancing Commercial and Residential Development		
2.1	We think the Neighborhood Plan needs more analysis and greater specificity with respect to where and when commercial development will occur and whether a 60/40 split across new commercial and residential development contains sufficient commercial space our community's goals. Public input throughout the process has consistently expressed a preference for greater proportions of commercial space.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan.
2.2	Commercial Development Analysis: Based on the proposed land uses in the plan, include a 30-year analysis, by parcel, of the estimated number of new jobs (including number of retail, office, lab, maker jobs), commercial square feet developed, and parking spaces required to meet commercial need. As a community, we need to understand where we want these jobs to be located, so the affected parcels are appropriately zoned to incentivize this level of commercial growth.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan.
2.3	Housing Development Analysis: Based on the proposed land uses in the plan, include 30-year analysis of estimated number of new housing units by parcel. Include estimated size of units, number of bedrooms, number of residents (stratified by adults, school aged children), parking spaces; stratify housing analysis by market-rate versus affordable.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan.

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
2.4	Development Blocks: While the plan outlines a broad 60/40 split of commercial and residential development across Union Square and Boynton Yards, it does not provide the level of detail necessary to shape expectations with respect to the Union Square Revitalization blocks. At a minimum, the plan should include, for each development block, the estimated square footage of retail, residential, office/lab, and parking. It should also include an estimate of the number of housing units produced, the number of jobs created, and the number of parking spaces required to support proposed uses.	TBD	Some details have been added with respect to square feet and parking; however, USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan in detail.
2.5	Build Commercial Space First: We agree with the plan’s aspiration of spurring commercial development and returning Union Square to its historic role as a commercial center, and believe that to accomplish this, it is essential that significant commercial space be part of what is built on the D2 block as part of the first phase of US2’s redevelopment plan instead of the largely residential development that appears to be shown in this draft of the plan. The vast majority of the commercial space should be on upper floors suitable for office or lab tenants.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan, and we remain concerned about phasing of D2, particularly the large residential tower proposed adjacent to the GLX station.
3.0	Creating Public and Green Spaces		
3.1	Amount of Open Space: In a city with the lowest ratio of open space to residents in the Commonwealth, SomerVision boldly set a goal of 125 new acres for the city. The Union Square Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) called for 20.4 acres of new open space in the area covered by the Neighborhood Plan. However, the draft Neighborhood Plan proposed only 12 acres. Moreover, the Neighborhood Plan counts “shared space” featuring a mix of moving vehicles and other uses as open space. After subtracting these areas, it appears the draft only includes approximately 9 acres of open space, some of which is existing area, such as the Union Square Plaza. This plan for new open space is inadequate and should be revised to reflect the CAC’s recommendation. Significant new open space should be provided on the redevelopment blocks and be created as part of an early phase of development.	B-	The plan does not adopt the CAC’s recommendation for 20.4 acres of new open space in Union Square and instead provides only 15.3 acres. It does, however, recommend establishing a 15% useable open space requirement for the D Parcels in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (p. 80), and contemplates consolidating green space among D parcels onto D4 (p. 186-187). It includes expansion of Concord Square park (p.171) and a variety of other parks in Boynton Yards, Milk Square, and Charlestown Street.

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
3.2	Type of Open Space: In order to meet the needs of Somerville’s diverse population, the CAC recommended a mix of typologies for new open space in Union Square and Boynton Yards. Some, but not all, of these open space areas are included in the draft plan. Specifically, the draft Neighborhood Plan includes plazas, playing fields, passive recreation areas, active streets and sidewalks, and outdoor seating and events spaces. However, the plan lacks the creation of green networks and urban paths that connect open spaces to each other. Moreover, it does not include larger green (park) spaces and ecological spaces to create green habitat and help better improve storm water management such as a pond or other alternative green spaces. Also missing is an emphasis on vertical gardens, roof top uses, and an increase in food gardens. These elements should be included in the next version of the Neighborhood Plan, including an alternative option that “daylights” a portion of the Miller’s River, potentially in the Grand Junction area. This alternative merits future study regarding feasibility and impact.	B	The plan does include a mix of open space types including plazas, playing fields, passive recreation areas, active streets and sidewalks, and outdoor seating and events spaces. It does not appear to include ecological spaces to create green habitat and help better improve storm water management.
4.0	Creating Family-Friendly Housing		
4.1	Housing design: The plan should guide the design of residential buildings and public spaces to create places that families will choose to call home. It should include housing typologies such as townhouses and courtyard housing and provide for access to private and public outdoor spaces, shared play spaces, teen rooms, etc., in residential developments.	D	The plan does not appear to add these housing typologies.
4.2	Homeownership: While many of Somerville’s families own their home, many young families leave Somerville when they are ready to purchase a home due to lack of family-friendly housing that is for sale. It is important that some new market rate residential units be for-sale (rather than just rentals) to allow families to live long-term and invest in their neighborhood.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate whether the plan addresses homeownership goals.

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
4.3	Location of Inclusionary Housing Units: The Neighborhood Plan states that 20 percent of the units on the master development blocks will be “affordable.” However, it is not clear what percentage will be provided onsite versus at alternative locations, and if so, how far away these units will be built. We are concerned that locating all of the affordable units in separate areas or neighborhoods will create economic segregation and undermine our community’s goals for addressing social equity, displacement, and economic and social isolation. The Neighborhood Plan, in anticipation of Somerville’s zoning reforms, should identify what percentage of affordable units must be provided on the master development blocks and what percentage may be provided on other parcels and under what conditions. (It may, for example, be beneficial to use a disproportionate share of inclusionary unit spending to build a family-oriented housing development with a mix of market-rate housing, middle-income housing, and low-income housing and with amenities directly suited to families, such as common outdoor space, visual/physical access to that space, and an easy path to a neighborhood school.)	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate how the plan addresses the location of inclusionary housing units, although we are aware of efforts to consolidate some or most of the D-block inclusionary housing units on the Goodyear site.
4.4	Size of Housing Units: The Neighborhood Plan should identify goals for the approximate size and number of bedrooms for residential units. We believe that, to the extent possible, zoning should require development of some larger 2 and 3 bedroom housing units. Consideration should be given to requiring higher percentage of inclusionary units to be larger to address needs of Somerville’s current low-income families.	B	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate how the plan addresses the size of housing units in great detail, although we understand they have increased.
4.5	D7 Block (Goodyear/Citizens): The draft Neighborhood Plan states that the D7 parcels make particularly good family housing opportunities due to their proximity to the residential neighborhood and a short walk to the Argenziano School. We agree. However, the descriptions and massing of these buildings in the plan should reflect family friendly design, including features such as outdoor gathering and play space, townhouse/stacked townhouse housing typologies, square footage and number of bedroom requirements, porches, a community room, etc.	D	Designs for D7 remain unchanged from previous version.
5.0	Enhancing the Public Realm		

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
5.1	Urban paths: Within the Neighborhood Plan, we recommend including specific designs to spatially connect alleys and parks using physical design features such as differentiated pavement, street furniture, planters, lighting, and wayfinding signage. Plans for Bow Street, Emerson Street, and Boynton Yards emphasize these types of urban pathway and shared street concepts, yet none of the D2 blocks display this kind of continuous pedestrian experience, particularly where alleys and mid-block connectors are contemplated. Allen Street, Stone Avenue, and Washington Terrace could benefit from this kind of street treatment to further connect neighborhoods to parks and pathways. For example, using visual design elements such as pavers, poles, sidewalk “tattoos” and/or signage, one could imagine a continuous urban path that connects Prospect Hill Park to Union Square, the MBTA station, and across a pedestrian footbridge to Boynton Yards. The Union Square plaza could be designed in such a way that emphasizes pedestrian desire lines, including the axis connecting Sanborn Court with the proposed pedestrian passage/alley between D6.1 and D6.2.	C	The Neighborhood Plan continues to show exciting images of a redesigned Bow Street, Sanborn Court, and Boynton Yards (see pp. 165-168), but it does not extend this quality of pedestrian experience to the master development blocks , notably alleys on D1, D2, and D6. The alleys on D2 and D3 are characterized for use as “rear access and loading for any future development” (p. 181, p. 247). The plan states that pedestrian passage on D6 should serve should serve as the vehicular access point and drop-off for a potential hotel (p. 191), an unremarkable outcome for the heart of Union Square.
5.2	Eversource Substation: Include a plan for a rotating mural or some other public art installation associated with the location.	C	The revised Neighborhood Plan makes mention of screening the transformer site on p. 142.
5.3	Public Art: The Neighborhood Plan does not include plans for how and where we would encourage more public art. For example, the plan could Identify areas where artists and performers can make sculpture, music, and installations featuring light, sound, and water. The likelihood of enabling public art opportunities is strongest on the redevelopment blocks because of the City’s relationship with the master developer (versus other private owners). We recommend identifying potential parcels where existing or future walls, garage/loading doors, or street/sidewalk surfaces that can be painted by anyone at any time, as well as other opportunities for public art in new public or publicly accessible open spaces that are being created	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate how public art is addressed in the revised plan.
5.4	Connect Interior and Exterior Spaces: The Neighborhood Plan should identify how we will encourage permeable buildings such as the installation folding or roll-up doors, windows, and exterior walls that allow for temporarily connecting interior and exterior spaces.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate how connecting interior and exterior spaces is addressed in the revised plan.

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
5.5	Massing Diagrams: The draft Neighborhood Plan includes massing diagrams that are insufficient to evaluate what is being proposed, particularly with respect to how the buildings will interact with the public realm. Moreover, some of the massing diagrams do not match the corresponding streetscape sketches included in the Neighborhood Plan. We recommend greater consistency and specificity in the description of what will be built and where, so stakeholders can read the plan and make reasonable and accurate interpretations of the material.	D	The revised version of the Neighborhood Plan does not make changes to the massing diagrams for the D blocks to suggest context sensitive façade design and human-scaled buildings. The Neighborhood Plan does recommend adoption of minimum design standards for façade articulation and storefronts in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (p. 104).
5.6	D6: The massing diagrams for D6 show two large, five story buildings without the level of detail that was presented at the design charrettes, in which a five-story and four-story building were presented. Additionally, the massing diagrams do not reflect the sketches of the same block which appear in various places in the Neighborhood Plan The sketches show diversity in design, height, and scale, the massing diagrams do not. The images and written narrative describing D6 should indicate that they shall be designed in such a way that they appear as a series of narrower buildings that are adjacent to one-another; provide a continuous, yet differentiated street wall articulated in a way that reflects traditional Somerville streetscape (i.e. mix of approximately 50', 75', 100' building frontage and varying roofline design, height).	D	The revised version of the Neighborhood Plan does not make changes to the massing diagrams for the D6 blocks to suggest context sensitive façade design and human-scaled buildings (see p. 191); however, p. 104 discusses importance of human-scaled buildings.
5.7	Pavilion: The pavilion on the corner of Prospect Street and Somerville Avenue is shown on page 129, but it is missing from page 114.	B	The pavilion on the corner of Prospect Street and Somerville Avenue in the previous version of the plan has been removed. (p. 181); however, images show an active streetscape.

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
5.8	Topography and Building Height: The Neighborhood Plan should include an analysis of proposed building heights in relation to existing topography including Prospect Hill. Shadow studies should indicate, for example, how much of the Union Square plaza would be covered in shade and for what part of the year. Prospect Hill Monument should continue to dominate the Union Square skyline, and having the tallest element in Union Square remain the tower which marks a public space is something many prefer. Many are very concerned about the 20 story tower proposed on the D2 block, noting that this is out of scale for Union Square. While we do not necessarily oppose taller buildings, and like the idea of variation in building height, increase in building height above that permitted by current zoning should only be done in return for significant benefit such as provision of open/green space. We recommend some analysis of view corridors, particularly where larger buildings are proposed.	C	The Neighborhood Plan recommends requiring that large redevelopment projects submit context analysis and skyline view studies for Development Review, and includes images showing up to 20-story buildings (see plan coverage page and pp. 104-105). USN will continue advocate for zoning in Union Square that preserves historic views of Boston from the top of Prospect Hill and ensure the monument continues to dominate the local skyline.
5.9	Retail: Nearly every building in the Neighborhood Plan appears to have some ground floor retail in it, however it is unlikely that Union Square will ever be able to support this much retail space. A more specific plan for where retail is to be located should be included, and this should also address how new development will support and create a more vibrant and successful retail environment in Union Square's existing commercial center	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate retail plans in the revised plan.
6.0	Public and Civic Buildings		

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
6.1	Planning for Public and Civic Buildings: The Neighborhood Plan should not just guide private development, but should also include capital planning for public and civic buildings and schools. Throughout the public input process, USN members expressed interest in seeing ideas put forward for public/civic buildings such as branch library, community or recreation center, teen center, etc. In July 2015, USN submitted a letter in response to a call for public feedback on neighborhood planning, and it does not appear that our suggestions were integrated into the draft Neighborhood plan other than a general mention that public or civic buildings could be part of the D1 block. A lack of public and civic buildings has been cited as reason that other large developments such as the Seaport or Assembly Square do not feel like neighborhoods, and it is critical that this mistake be avoided in the development of our own neighborhood center. The plan should also estimate impacts on school enrollment if 2,500 new residential units are constructed as planned.	D-	The Neighborhood Plan does not include any public or civic buildings on the Civic Block (D1). The only mention of a new public/civic use building appears in the captions to images on pp. 186-187, which contemplates potential re-use of an auto garage on D4.3 for public use, a welcome idea, but one that is not developed in any meaningful way.
7.0	Historic Buildings and Spaces		
7.1	Preserving Historic Buildings and Spaces: The Neighborhood Plan discusses completion and passage of Local Historic District designation for areas in Union Square. We agree local historic district designation for Union Square is critical and overdue. However, we believe there are specific interventions that should be presented for preserving, honoring, and restoring historic structures and public spaces.	B-	The Neighborhood Plan shows 304-322 Somerville Ave as a fully redeveloped 5-story building despite ongoing efforts and an agreement to preserve and protect historic structure(s) on the site, including 314-316 Somerville Avenue. The plan also shows demolition of a building with historic interest on the northwest corner of McGrath/Medford St and Washington Street.
7.2	Old Fire Station cupola: Restoration of the historic cupola on the SCATV building (old fire station) as a condition of redevelopment of the D1 block and relocation of SCATV should be included.	F	Restoration of historic cupola on SCATV building (old fire station) is not included (p. 162).
7.3	WWI Monument: Preservation of the World War I monument in Union Square should be noted. The monument can be preserved and prominently located within a redesigned Union Square plaza.	A	World War I monument, or some similarly sized obelisk, appears in several watercolor images and locations (in front of Reliable Market on p. 158, in front Barrister's Hall on p. 159, in front of old fire station on p. 162).

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
8.0	Addressing Implementation, Phasing, and Tracking Success		
8.1	Implementation and Phasing: Issues of phasing and implementation do not appear to be addressed in the Neighborhood Plan in great detail. We believe the Plan as a whole demands too little from the redevelopment blocks, where the City has the most influence over what will happen given its relationship with the master developer, and assumes other areas in Boynton Yards will and Grand Junction will “pick up the slack.” This sentiment is consistent across virtually all areas of concern, from open space to commercial development. The parks, shared streets, and other amenities in Boynton Yards are attractive, but these ideas do not carry over to the redevelopment blocks. We believe it is important to identify where, when, and how open space and commercial development targets will be made.	TBD	We appreciate the implementation table (p. 264) has been included, though we have not yet reviewed it in detail.
8.2	Build-out Assumptions: The plan shows every redevelopment block built out and every other block in union square unchanged, which is unrealistic for a 30-year plan. The Neighborhood Plan should show anticipated build out in Union Square’s existing commercial center based on current zoning or whatever zoning changes are being proposed. This is important if this plan is to be the basis for changes to zoning, and particularly important to guide development on Somerville Avenue which the plan calls Union Square’s “Main Street.”	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan in detail, which includes some scattered site development.
8.3	Future Revisions: The plan is silent about when and how it will be revised in the future to address changing economic conditions or build-out plans for the GLX. We suggest including a plan for revision and amendments.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan.
8.4	Performance Metrics: The plan does not include a set of performance metrics and baseline data to measure progress in meeting the plan’s goals. We believe it will be important to have an ongoing strategy in place to monitor and measure performance against employment, residential, and open space targets. If targets go unmet, we believe it should trigger an ongoing review and revaluation as to why.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan.

	Previous USN Recommendations (Oct 2015 draft of Neighborhood Plan)	Grade	USN Comments (April 2016 draft of Neighborhood Plan)
8.5	Implementation and Zoning: There should be more emphasis on the need for implementation policies and strategies will real teeth, so that planning principles cannot be compromised or abandoned in the course of the build out. This means more specificity of how urban design principles are realized in the plan to allow for evaluation of how they are being realized through zoning, and a more integrated and transparent linking of planning studies and zoning revisions.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan.
8.6	Brickbottom/Inner Belt: The area included in the Union Square and Boynton Yards Neighborhood Plan borders, and in some cases overlaps, with the area included in the Brickbottom/Inner Belt Neighborhood Plan. The interface between these two plans should be addressed with particular emphasis on transit connections between Brickbottom, Washington Street station, and Union Square.	TBD	USN did not have an opportunity to evaluate this element of the revised plan. We note there are differences between the Neighborhood Plan and MassDOT's early McGrath Blvd redesigns.

Scoring Key:

A = Excellent: Fully adopts and exceeds USN's recommendation; addresses USN's concern(s)

B = Good: Adopts USN's recommendation and mostly addresses USN's concern(s)

C = Acceptable: Partially adopts USN's recommendation, but generally and acceptably addresses USN's concern(s)

D = Deficient: Does not adopt USN's recommendation and only marginally addresses USN's concern(s)

F = Unacceptable: Does not adopt USN's recommendation and does not address USN's concern(s)