

Questions and Comments - Union Square Neighbors General Meeting, 6/4/2017

Please see slides for notes on each topic on the agenda. This write-up includes questions and comments made.

Housing questions/comments:

- **What size are the units?** There are no square footage requirements, but there are requirements as to the number of bedrooms. One person suggested we should ask for four-bedroom units.
- **Discussion of “off-site” family-friendly affordable units.** One person said that having a concentration of affordable housing is a problem. Another said that because 80% of current residents need subsidy of some type and because families are more likely to face housing constraints and needs, it’s a good idea to have mixed income, family-oriented housing.
- **What are the ownership opportunities?** US2 has not addressed this goal.
- **How many units will go to Somerville residents?** Depends on the funding source. If it uses public funds, there are rules about how much units can be restricted to Somerville residents.

Jobs and business development questions/comments:

- **Commercial vs Residential phasing.** One person said that he thinks that if the developers have completed two commercial buildings, as required in the initial development phases, they will be poised to and interested in doing the rest of the commercial buildings once a “commercial cluster” is established..
- **Lab space:** One person commented that studies show that the impact of commercial is five times that of residential in terms of the tax base, and lab space is the most lucrative for city finances, in part because lab equipment can be taxed as personal property. With lab jobs, “50% of lab jobs go to people who don’t have college degrees but can complete training program.”
- **Somerville revenue needs:** A commenter said: “We have taken on significant capital commitments (SHS, infrastructure for Boynton Yards and Union Square, Green Line), so we need the revenue.”
- **Workforce development:** Suggestion: “Could we include ‘recently displaced’ Somerville residents in addition to Somerville residents” in the group that’s targeted for employment in the new developments?
- **Height on D6 block:** Would limiting the height to 85 feet allow for lab space? Some participants said no – lab space requires the taller height per floor, while others said, yes, there is precedent for lab space in the lower height ceilings. One person asked if there could be lab space elsewhere or a four-story lab space in that target location.

Process questions/comments:

- **What was the timeframe for the Planning Board to approve the final draft of the Neighborhood Plan?** Community members had about two weeks to review the final neighborhood plan.
- **What are the Neighborhood Council next steps?** The first community meeting will be June 21st and then there will be a second set of meetings, July 1st. The candidate platform and voting will be on July 27th.

Design and open space questions/comments:

- **How tall is the two residential towers?** The base is 24. If the developer does a larger open space or more family-sized affordable units, they'll be able to build up to 27 stories. This will get decided during the coordinated special permit process.
- Could our open space be a "community path", such as more of a linear park?
- **Who is doing the enforcement of LEED standards?** Check on if it certifiable or certified – that's an important distinction. There's a cost to getting a certification. Amendments pending on this right now.

Other questions:

- **How do we leave Union more authentic? How do we avoid turning it into Yuppyville? How do we keep the personality?** When the D1 parcel is disposed of from the City to the master developer – the BOA could designate a 25 or 25K civic space along the criteria as discussed. Probably won't go into the covenant agreement. Whenever anything is designated as surplus, the BOA has to vote on it, so can add conditions.