

Union Square Re-Zoning

What Does It Mean For Our Neighborhood?

WHO WE ARE Union Square Neighbors (USN) is a group of area residents who are concerned with the future of Union Square. We believe that economic development, careful planning, and a cohesive community vision are critical to the future of the Square. We have been working over the past year-and-a-half to ensure that development builds upon the scale and character of Union Square and surrounding neighborhoods. We invite you to join us.

THE SITUATION The City of Somerville has been working on a proposal to change the zoning in Union Square which will be finalized this Fall. It will greatly affect the character of the Square. Two previous proposals have been allowed to expire by the Board of Alderman. This past spring, the City convened a focus group including representatives from various city agencies and businesses along with two representatives from our group. While our participation brought about some changes in the City's proposal, there are still significant differences that are critical to the future livability of Union Square area.

WHAT WE SUPPORT

APPROPRIATE HEIGHT & DENSITY: Buildings over 70 feet will be out of scale with the neighborhood and historic square and taller than Prospect Hill. Inappropriate density crowds out sunlight and open space.

	Current Situation	USN Proposal
In the Square	50 feet / 2.0 FAR	55 feet / 3.0 FAR
Public Safety Site	50 feet / 2.0 FAR	70 feet / 3.0 FAR
Along Prospect Street	50 feet / 2.0 FAR	70 feet / 3.0 FAR
In Boynton Yards	100 feet / 2.0 FAR	100 feet / 4.0 FAR

Note: A residential story is approx. 10 feet. A commercial story is approx. 15 feet. FAR (Floor Area Ratio) = floor area / lot area. Higher FAR = more density.

LIMITED HEIGHT & DENSITY BONUSES: Bonuses allow developers to exceed stated maximums.

No bonuses.	Like the City, we support bonuses for green buildings and arts uses, but within our maximum height and density limits.
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SETBACKS FROM RESIDENTIAL AREAS: Setbacks from big buildings protect residents and abutters from being squeezed. The unique topography of Prospect Hill means more attention needs to be paid to the effects of tall buildings.

Setbacks vary from zone to zone.	All developments to be set back a minimum of 20 feet from residential lots or districts. Limit new developments within 30 feet of a residential lot or district to 40 feet tall.
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INCREASED OPEN SPACE: As one of the most dense cities in the nation, access to open space and green spaces is critical.

Limited open space in Union Square and no green space.	Require open space to be developed in conjunction with and adjacent to new projects for maximum utility and enjoyment.
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WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Join the USN email list to keep updated on new developments. To add your name, write to: unionsquareneighbors@gmail.com
- Call your Aldermen

