



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MEMORANDUM

TO: Board of Alderman
Planning Board

FROM: George Proakis, Director of Planning

DATE: September 6, 2018

SUBJECT: ORDINANCE AMENDING THE SOMERVILLE ZONING ORDINANCE REGARDING
OPEN SPACE IN THE ASSEMBLY SQUARE MIXED USE DISTRICT (ASMD)

A proposed amendment to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) has been submitted to the City Clerk by 22 registered voters. The proposed amendment would amend Section 6.4, Assembly Square Mixed-Use District (ASMD), of the SZO that would establish new open space requirements for mid-rise and high-rise buildings in the ASMD District. The proposed requirements would be based on the overall built square footage of such buildings, which differs from the current open space requirements that are based on a percentage of the total lot size depending on the use.

The proposal would establish a baseline requirement for open space for all projects seeking special permit approval that would equal 25% of the lot size, which is what the current SZO requirement is except for retail uses. Additionally, the proposal would require that one-half of the total required open space be useable open space, which is also a current requirement. Additional open space would be required for residential buildings above 65 feet and commercial buildings above 85 feet. Commercial buildings in the ASMD higher than 85 feet would be required to provide one square foot of additional usable open space for every ten feet of gross square footage where the interior ceiling is at a height above 85 feet. Residential buildings in the ASMD higher than 65 feet would be required to provide two square feet of additional usable open space for every ten feet of gross square footage where the interior ceiling is at a height above 65 feet. The proposal also includes provisions for meeting these requirements off-site and establishing a Land Acquisition Fund.

The Planning and Zoning Division is actively working on methods to increase the quantity and quality of open space across the entire City to help achieve the SomerVision goal of creating 125 new acres of open space. The proposed zoning overhaul includes many provisions that will expand on the quantity and improve the quality of open space in future developments city-wide. The Planning and Zoning Division are also in preparations to begin a neighborhood planning effort in Assembly Square similar to the station area efforts that were undertaken in Davis Square, Winter Hill, Gilman Square, and Lowell Street. Although, the concept of increasing open space in Assembly Square is great idea and would help meet the cities goals, the Planning and Zoning Division recommends that action should not be taken to change the open space requirements in Assembly Square until such time that these planning activities are underway.