

**DRAFT** – to be discussed at May 23 USNC general meeting

To the Honorable Board of Aldermen,

We are writing you regarding the proposed development of the D2 parcel by Union Square Associates, particularly in light of its pending consideration before the Design Review Committee and its request for the transfer of additional public lands.

We have considered [the proposal](#) as presented during their “Neighborhood Meeting” on April 19th, and found it utterly lacking. Of primary concern is the overall massing of the proposed structures, which are bulky, alienating, and divide the neighborhood rather than unite it. By placing a parking garage that backs on Allen St., this design effectively forecloses all possibility for future public space, circulation, or commerce on that side of the super-block. Additionally, the so-called “sunken plaza” on the Webster St side of [the proposal](#) is merely a set of stairs that is necessary for commuters to access the Green Line station. **This is not a ‘pocket park’, it is a stairwell.**

The proposed private pool atop the parking garage raises additional concerns. It establishes a distressing contrast between the “haves” and “have-nots”, deepening the class divisions in our city. Though we are not in favor of a parking garage, **we believe that any recreational space created by this development should be fully accessible to the general public, and that the programming of that space be elaborated through community process.**

It has come to our attention that someone has requested that the Board of Aldermen approve the transfer of an additional parcel (Agenda Item #204755; parcel 82-D-1) from public into private hands through the Somerville Redevelopment Authority. We insist that the Board hold adequate **public hearings** on this potential transfer of land, and that they give the community enough time to review the proposals. It is apparent that US2’s architectural plans are not mature enough to move forward.

Furthermore, US2 has not yet secured the support of the community for their project through a Community Benefits Agreement. The Union Square Neighborhood Council has been hoping to meet with US2 in order to begin formal negotiations for a Community Benefits Agreement, as described in the covenant between US2 and the Mayor of Somerville. A basic requirement of beginning formal negotiations, as described in this covenant, is for the Board of Aldermen to recognize the Neighborhood Council as the negotiating entity of the CBA.

US2 has not yet agreed to the simple enabling amendment that the City of Somerville has proposed, which would allow the Board of Aldermen to initiate a process for formal recognition of the Neighborhood Council. The City’s proposed amendment does not materially change the terms of the agreed covenant. We therefore ask that the Board of Aldermen decline to approve any transfers of land to US2 unless and until US2 agrees to the City’s proposed amendment to the covenant in order that formal negotiations of a CBA can begin promptly. Otherwise, US2 is poised to reap the benefits of its public partnership and designation as Master Developer without regard to the responsibilities of that role.

Respectfully,

The Union Square Neighborhood Council Board