UNION SQUARE
PLACEMAKING
AGENDA

1. Introduction
2. Placemaking Objectives
3. Placemaking Ideas
4. Retail as an Activator
5. Small-Business Support Program
6. Exercise
INTRODUCTION
Our Mission.

Collaborate to create a viable development plan that realizes the SomerVision goals for the Union Square neighborhood
It starts with you...

...we will engage, listen, synthesize and create
we are here
February workshops
Development opportunities and realities

1. Placemaking, Retail, Public Realm, Art
   February 4

2. Real Estate Markets/Development Economics
   February 11

3. Project Realities
   February 18

4. Giving Shape to D2/D3
   February 25
WORKSHOP GOALS

Discuss our findings with you and learn more about your views
WORKSHOP GOALS
Start applying ideas and what we learn to the development plans for D2 & D3...the train is coming!
WHY PLACEMAKING FIRST?

You asked us to make it a priority. In the December survey, placemaking and public spaces received the most votes as a workshop topic.
WHY PLACEMAKING FIRST?

SomerVision, the RFP and the Revitalization Plan Goals

The Union Square zoning already in place strongly encourages active uses by creating multiple opportunities to enhance the space in the public realm. It is a part of the urban renewal plan to expand sidewalks to the maximum extent possible to include outdoor cafes, markets, public seating, and street trees and other landscaped open areas. Throughout the Revitalization Area, the public realm should include:

• Active uses that integrate the public realm outdoors and the private level so that shops and restaurants spill out onto the sidewalk in good weather.

The sidewalk have a sense of activity and items of interest behind them. People on the sidewalk have a sense of activity and items of interest behind them. Articulated leaves will be encouraged, along with well-lit gateways or thresholds letting people know when they are entering a new space. The plan has a priority on expanding sidewalks to the maximum extent possible to include urban renewal plan to expand sidewalks to the maximum extent possible to include outdoor cafes, markets, public seating, and street trees and other landscaped open areas. Throughout the Revitalization Area, the public realm should include: active uses that integrate the public realm outdoors and the private level so that shops and restaurants spill out onto the sidewalk in good weather.
WHY PLACEMAKING FIRST?

It’s critical to a vital mixed-use neighborhood and transformation of Union Square into an employment center.
PLACEMAKING CONCEPTS
Pre-requisites:
Perception of safety
Accessibility / convenience
Activity and things to do
(high-quality) space
DEVELOPMENT OF CITY LIFE FROM 1880 TO 2005

ACTIVE

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES
(Urban recreation)

NECESSARY ACTIVITIES

WILL HAPPEN REGARDLESS OF QUALITY

WILL HAPPEN ONLY WHEN GOOD QUALITY CITY SPACE EXISTS

CAR INVASION

RESEARCH AND PLANNING A RENAISSANCE OF CITY SPACE
- pedestrian promenades
- city life and activities
- bicycle renaissance
- pacifying traffic

JAN GEHL
Necessary Activities vs. Optional Activities

Necessary Activities: Will happen regardless of the quality of the environment
- Circulation
- Distribution of goods
- Community services

Optional Activities: Will only happen in high-quality environments
- Recreation
- Socializing
- Leisure
- Entertainment
- Cultural

High-social-value areas become attractive to creative companies and business
HESTER STREET, NEW YORK, CIRCA 1900

Deliveries

Strolling

Commerce

Socializing
Entire width of the road used as public space
Retail
Parking
Car circulation
Sidewalks

HESTER STREET, NEW YORK, 2014
At best, only half the width of the road used as public space.
Balanced use of the public realm

MERCADO DE SAN MIGUEL, MADRID
Balanced use of the public realm

Sitting/Staying

Destination

Car circulation

Unobtrusive parking

Residential

Neighborhood retail

Generous sidewalks

MERCADO DE SAN MIGUEL, MADRID
Land use synergies

SOURCE: URBAN LAND INSTITUTE
Guiding Principles for Union Square

- Successful places fuse a great public realm, sensible architectural forms and interesting things to do.

- Places are for people; therefore, they have to create an emotional connection with users.

- Places succeed when they strike a careful balance among activation, design quality and community appropriation.

- Understanding the synergies among different uses gives us a powerful tool for calibrating the mix to a place’s specific cultural, social and environmental conditions.
Developing a Vision

What kind of place do we envision for Union Square?

Authentic and usable
Fun, active and funky
Interesting
Comfortable/inviting
COMMUNITY OUTPUT:
The following principles and ideas represent the synthesized output of the three-part community-driven visioning process titled “The Space in Between: Art, Green Space and the Public Realm”.

A complete list of speakers and appears at the end of the report.
These concepts have inspired a lot of thinking. Initial ideas include:

• Re-connect the neighborhood.
• Respect the edge between public and private.
• Recognize the environment as the product of design and financial decisions.
• Use art to bring spaces into the community’s awareness.
• Include a bus-stop-consolidation strategy.
You already shared several placemaking ideas at the D2/D3 visioning sessions on January 7 and 31.
D2/D3 Visioning Ideas

- Store
- Spaces
- Green
- Bike
- Variety
- Housing
- Public
- Art
- Trees
- Community
- Jobs
- Neighborhood
- Park
- Parking
- screes
- Parking
- city
- Green
- Lalance
- Retail
- Store
- Union
- Little
- Businesses
- Art
- Varied
- Access
- People
- Numerous
- Storm
- Hall/Government
- Affordability
- Good
- Sightline
- Nice
- Community
- Information
- Color
- Breakup
- Personal
- Shallow
- Open
- Open
- New
Your ideas

**Space/hardware:**
- Plants/trees
- Wider sidewalks
- Steps/ramp next to T station
- Covered or partially covered stairs
- Variety of materials
- Heated and covered access to T
- Meeting spaces
- Green walls
Your ideas

Space/hardware:
• “Interrupted” facades
• Grand stair incorporating sitting/meeting spaces
• Variety of shapes, buildings, storefronts
• Second-level retail
• No monolithic structures
• Internal passages/mid-block connections
• Areas to mingle, public places to sit
Your ideas

**Inhabit/software:**
- **Cultural:** Library, performance space, music venue
- **Housing:** Increase density to relieve market pressure. Affordability.
- **Office:** Bring a large employer like Harvard Vanguard in Davis—ideally one that provides a valuable public service.
- **Art:** …in some form.
- **Making it yours:** Allow skateboard, rollerblade and bike access; events; something that says “Welcome to Somerville”; spaces to mingle.
Union Square’s Assets
The foundation of a great place
PLACEMAKING IDEAS
WHERE IS UNION SQUARE?
WHO IS HERE?
CITYWIDE POPULATION = 35.7% SPEAK FOREIGN LANGUAGE AT HOME (11,110 HOUSEHOLDS)
User Group

Foodie  Artist  Family  Neighbor  Student
WHAT IS UNION SQUARE’S IDENTITY?
Preserving Somerville
HOW DO PUBLIC SPACES AMPLIFY SOMERVILLE’S IDENTITY?
UNION SQUARE
Design Scope 01: Prospect Street

Prospect Street Corridor
Existing Condition
Site Section / Current Condition
Temporary Surface - Union Square
Painted Surface - Aspirations
Long Term Surface - Aspirations

Copacabana Beach Boardwalk, Rio de Janeiro, Brasil
Intervention 02: Union Square
Screened Surface - Aspirations
Screened Surface - Aspirations
Intervention 04: Lighting, Current Condition
Lighting - Current Condition
"NEW YORK IS THE ONLY CITY THAT HAS MORE ARTISTS PER CAPITA THAN SOMERVILLE IN U.S."
1. PROPOSED SITE FOR PUBLIC ART PLAZA

2. PROPOSED SITE FOR PUBLIC ART PEDESTAL
Green Space - Aspirations

TRIANGULAR SCORING PATTERN W/ CIRCULAR HOLES
HOW DOES IT ALL COME TOGETHER?
HOW DO WE MAKE THE FIRST 600’ AWESOME?
currently on the way to Union Square ...
lets avoid this ...
RETAIL AS AN ACTIVATOR
Retail...

• Creates safer, brighter streets.
• Enhances walkability.
• Acts as a catalyst for public life.
• Works as an amenity for residents and workers.
• Establishes brand and identity.
Listen  ||  Plan  ||  Recruit  ||  Execute
• What’s already working here?
• What makes Union Square a special retail place?
• What themes and trends can we embrace moving forward?
• How can we supplement and improve the existing retail mix?
Listen | Plan | Recruit | Execute

- Zones—Where in the square(s)?
- Premises SF, constraints, cost
- Retail use preferences
- Independents vs. chains
- Public and private realms
- Data and research
• Zones—Where in the square(s)?
Listen || Plan || Recruit || Execute

- Premises SF, constraints, cost
Listen || Plan || Recruit || Execute

• Type: Use preferences

Can’t just be about cafes, what’s missing from the main street?

FOOD
- Cafe
- Bar
- American
- Italian
- Asian
- Middle Eastern
- Pizza
- Seafood
- Bakery
- Vegetarian
- Latin
- Ice Cream
- Breakfast
- Grocery
- Deli
- Sports Bar
- Irish
- Fine Dining
- Brewery

RETAIL
- Gift
- Home Accessory
- Furniture
- Sporting
- Liquor
- Apparel - womens
- Apparel - mens
- Apparel - junior
- Apparel
- Shoes
- Technology
- Toys
- Music
- Books
- Apothecary
- Personal Accessories
- Pharmacy
- Hardware
- Handmade
- Antiques

SERVICE
- Dry Cleaner
- Laundromat
- Bank
- Gym
- Shipping/Copying
- Locksmith
Listen | | Plan | | Recruit | | Execute

- Type: Independents vs. chains
Listen | | Plan | | Recruit | | Execute

- Public and private realms
• Data and research
Amplify and enhance existing value set
Local first, local most
Provide needed/missing services
Artisans, innovators and makers
Food as culture
“a diverse mix of businesses that can start here, grow here, stay here”
US2 and the City of Somerville introduce Retail Visioning On-Site Technical Assistance

Helping improve your business…

• For a new audience.
• So you can do well during and after construction, as you prepare for new competition.
• Because it’s good for Union Square!
On-Site Technical Assistance

What we can help with.

• Refreshing the look of your store.
• Re-positioning an outdated concept.
• Finding new ways to market your business.
• Helping you deliver better customer experience.
On-Site Technical Assistance Step 1

On-site meeting with Retail Visioning:

• 1–1.5-hour meeting in your store, salon, restaurant to assess the entire customer experience.
• We take lots of pictures.
• We listen to you.
On-Site Technical Assistance Step 2

Retail Visioning produces a recommendations report:

- 4 or 5 specific recommendations for improving your business.
- The report tells you the “why” and the “how.”
On-Site Technical Assistance Step 3

Implementing the recommendations:
Retail Visioning works with you—investing time, expertise and up to $1,000 from the program—to help carry out recommendations that will meet your goals and improve your business.
ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Case Study: Mabell’s Hair Salon

- Updated front windows to improve on-street visibility
- Added face-flattering lighting at each styling station
- Created a website to help new clients find the salon
ON-SITE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Case Study: Royal Bengal Restaurant

- Designed a wall to separate kitchen from dining area
- Installed a 6’x6’ menu next to a window for placing orders
- Created new catering menues and a new website to reach both of his business-critical audiences