



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

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Melissa Woods, Senior Planner
DATE: August 22, 2019
SUBJECT: Davis Square Neighborhood Plan

This evening, if not earlier, you've received the Davis Square Neighborhood Plan and all comments submitted thus far. The comment period closes on August 30, 2019 – Planning Staff will send another package of comments after the comment period closes.

As standard practice, all letters addressed to the Planning Board are forwarded. However, Staff wanted to provide some context about the upcoming hearing on September 5th. The Davis Square Neighborhood Plan will be presented for adoption. The spirit of the plan is mostly unchanged from the version presented to the Planning Board in 2018, make Davis Square a place for people. The plan is divided into three chapters organized around Jan Gehl's methodology of life first, then space, then buildings.

Recently, a land lease was signed between a property developer that specializes in student housing and the property owner of 233-249 Elm Street. This includes properties from the Burren through Dragon Pizza as well as the parking lots behind. The transaction has muddied the waters between what is being presented to the Planning Board on September 5th and is reflected in the comment letters.

At this time, the Planning and Zoning department has not received an application for a redevelopment of 233-249 Elm Street. A community process is required for any project of this size, Planning Staff anticipates that neighborhood meetings would begin prior to a formal application for development review.

In the neighborhood planning process, we held two mini-series relating to redevelopment of the Square. The first meetings focused on infill development within Davis Square's core –what uses and scale of building should be built? The Buildings chapter is the outcome of this process. Stakeholders are more comfortable with taller building heights in the center of the Square, away from neighborhoods, and step backs on developments over four stories in height.

The other process that informed the buildings chapter was focused on identifying Davis Square's



character. At the end of the process, it was identified that the streetscape and storefronts are the most important elements. These are addressed in the design guidelines section of the plan. We chose two sites to illustrate the outcome of the infill development process – Rite Aid and 233-249 Elm Street. These illustrate the building massing with the character elements that people identified in the processes.

On September 5th, Planning Staff will make a brief presentation on the neighborhood plan and will be happy to answer questions. We wanted to provide context to some of the letters you've receiving as it relates to the agenda item.