

# Gilman Square City Redevelopment Parcels

## Civic Advisory Committee

**Date & Time:** Thursday, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2024, from 5:30-7pm

This public meeting of the Gilman Square City Redevelopment Parcels Civic Advisory Committee was conducted via remote participation. We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the project website: <https://voice.somervillema.gov/gilman-square-plan-implementation>.

The meeting was held as a Zoom Webinar.

**Meeting recording:** <https://youtu.be/A0zVKNp3EXk>

### Meeting notes

#### ***1. Roll call and approval of previous meeting summaries.***

Ben Demers, a Senior Economic Development Planner for the City of Somerville, welcomed attendees to the meeting at 5:35pm.

Roll call:

- In attendance: Diana Marsh, Melinda Coneys, Jamie Cragnoine, Jennifer Koerber, Ben Elgart, Councilor Jesse Clingan.
- Not in attendance: Ram Kelath, Jack Lister, Michelle Machado Moreira, Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen.

CAC members did not have any edits regarding the meeting summary for the previous meeting on June 27, 2024. CAC members voted to approve the meeting summary so staff could post it online.

#### ***2. First public comment period.***

No public comment was made.

#### ***3. Update on temporary activation of City-owned land in Gilman Square.***

Staff provided an update on Gilman Pop-Up, which is a temporary public activation of a portion of 350 Medford Street created by the City in partnership with a local placemaking and design firm, CultureHouse. CultureHouse's on-site management of the Pop-Up and support for programming would

be ending September 8<sup>th</sup>, since the project's funding requires their work to be completed by the end of September and they need time for closing elements. The site will remain publicly accessible until a direction for redevelopment is determined or maintenance factors cause it to close, and will still feature artwork, hammocks, furniture, and some shade coverage. However, because of the funding constraints, rented infrastructure on the site (the scaffolding structure, bathrooms, and generator) would need to be removed.

Rishika Dhawan, Senior Community Manager at CultureHouse, joined the meeting to provide other updates on Gilman Pop-up for CAC members. These included numbers of events, how many people have been using the space, and next steps as their management of the site ends.

A CAC member asked how people are arriving to the site when not walking. R. Dhawan noted that the other main mode of transportation has been biking if coming from within the city, or the train/driving if coming from further away, given the site's proximity to the Green Line station.

A CAC member asked if the final report will compare stats for Gilman Pop-Up to other open spaces in Somerville. R. Dhawan noted that they can look into adding this, but may not have easily comparable data.

A CAC member noted that the report should include a section on best practices for temporary activation at other sites in Somerville, rather than only being specific to the site. Staff and CultureHouse agreed, and are planning to include both site-specific recommendations and recommendations related to temporary activation of underused sites more generally.

A CAC member noted that it can be clunky to navigate CultureHouse's website to find the events calendar, and asked if there is a space to get live updates when an event is cancelled. R. Dhawan noted that Instagram is the best space for live updates, since several events have been cancelled last minute due to weather concerns.

R. Dhawan left the meeting.

#### ***4. Drafting of letter to the Somerville Redevelopment Authority regarding urban renewal.***

Staff drafted a letter prior to the meeting that summarized CAC members' goals for development of City-owned land in Gilman Square (350 Medford Street and Gilman Triangle) and their interest in exploring urban renewal as a tool to develop an adjacent Mobil Station (360 Medford Street) in conjunction with 350 Medford Street. CAC members provided live edits to the document. Staff will incorporate these edits ahead of the next meeting to finalize the letter.

***5. Neighborhood updates from CAC members.***

Staff noted that they would be giving a short presentation with CultureHouse to the Boston Society of Architects at Gilman Pop-Up on Saturday, August 31<sup>st</sup>. Members of the public were welcome at the event.

A CAC member noted that the Gilman Square Neighborhood Council and Somerville Arts Council were organizing their annual Gilman Arts and Music Festival on September 14<sup>th</sup> on Pearl Street between Marshall and James Streets. The event is supported by the Mass Cultural Council and many local businesses/organizations.

A CAC member noted that the Central Library will be closed for several hours after school during the week because of threats that staff have received.

***6. Second public comment period.***

No public comment was made.

***7. Meeting adjournment.***

The meeting adjourned at 6:48pm.