

# comment about the Volpe site

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Tue 2/24/2015 12:38 AM

Inbox

To:

Dear Paul A. Creedon:

I was the one who spoke on Dennis Carlone's Policy Order Resolution tonight.

The following is an expanded version of my statement at the meeting.

Please add this to the public record.

Thank you,

Bjorn Poonen

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February 23, 2015

Dear City Council:

I strongly support retaining the option of a 7.5-acre public park on the Volpe site as part of any redevelopment of that site.

Here is why this is so important for the City's future:

1) It would enable the City to realize the goal of a chain of parks similar to the Emerald Necklace in Boston. As written in a June 10, 2012 letter from the Kendall Square Residents Association to Iram Farooq and the Kendall Square Advisory Committee,

"On the Volpe site, we recommend establishing, by policy and zoning language, that its northwest 5-acre square (current parking lot) and its southeast 2.5-acre rectangle (bordered by Broadway, Third Street, and Potter Street, and an internal driveway) be reserved for public parks. The open space requirement for this PUD should specify these two areas for open spaces. These two areas would form a chain of parks connecting via Point Park to MIT's proposed "Riverwalk" along Wadsworth Street leading to the Charles."

2) This park area would be heavily used! There are already over 1000 residents living within one block of the southeast Volpe rectangle alone, including many families with young children. This number will grow even larger if MIT builds housing along the eastern end of Main St. as in its recent upzoning proposal.

3) Placing a park right at the heart of Kendall Square will change people's mental image of the Square. Right now, the predominant image is that of a conglomeration of tall corporate buildings. A highly visible park will make people think of Kendall Square as a special place to live and work.

4) Point Park is currently surrounded by 200-foot-high buildings in all directions except in the Volpe direction. Open space

is desperately needed here!

5) Many upzoning proposals in the area (MIT, Alexandria, Boston Properties for Broad expansion) were promoted while citing the future 7.5-acre Volpe park as part of the rationale for permitting such development. Now that these proposals have been approved, the need for open space in the heart of Kendall Square is greater than ever.

It is not just local residents who think that a park at the heart of Kendall Square makes sense. Three of the four finalists in the Connect Kendall Square Open Space Competition included a major public open space at the southeast corner of the Volpe site, with some making it the centerpiece of their vision.

As consultant David Dixon of Goody Clancy said while leading a City-sponsored study,

"The proposed park at the Volpe site is going to be the heart of Kendall Square before too long."

Let's get it right!

Bjorn Poonen  
(homeowner at 303 Third St. and MIT Professor of Mathematics)