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SOMERVILLE

## Land swap would expand park

The Boston Globe

Hidden oasis to gain access, improvements



Ellin Reisner, shown near the Winter Hill Yacht Club, says Draw 7 Park is one of the largest pieces of open space in Somerville. (Matthew J. Lee/Globe Staff)

By Danielle Dreilinger  
Globe Correspondent / September 14, 2008

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With demolition of the Good Time Emporium set to start as early as Friday, the undeveloped part of Assembly Square looks ever more derelict. But follow Foley Street's cracked pavement past the cab company and construction fencing, and there's a small oasis of green.

A home-rule petition signed last month as part of the Assembly Square development promises to expand and rejuvenate a little-known park on the Mystic River.

The expansion will follow a planned land swap between the state Department of Conservation and Recreation and the developer, Federal Realty Investment Trust. Currently the conservation department manages Draw 7 Park southeast of Foley Street and a thin strip of riverside land with a bike path heading northwest to Route 28. The swap will enlarge the northwestern part.

DCR Commissioner Rick Sullivan said the trade is still being negotiated but that the state approval last August "sets the ball rolling to make this development in the city a reality."

The conservation department will give a boat storage lot to the developers in exchange for land along the river, Sullivan said, creating "an enhanced park."

With lack of green space a persistent complaint in Somerville, it may be surprising that Draw 7 Park - named for a railroad drawbridge that used to be at the end of Foley Street - is so little known.

"This is one of the largest pieces of open space in Somerville," said Ellin Reisner, president of the Somerville Transportation Equity Partnership, but "most people in Somerville wouldn't even know where it is."

But the people who know the park really know the park.

The shouts of touch-football players drifted over to where two men sat in portable chairs overlooking the river on a beautiful Sunday afternoon recently.

"This is my park; I'm here almost every day," said Tom Tavares of Somerville, 77, holding the leash of his shaggy puppy, Devil.

"It's a sanctuary in the city," said Vic Mangiacotti of Arlington, 68, a retired crane operator. "We come down, we poke around, fish, and all that. Never seen no one else down here - no rapists or anything."

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