



City of Somerville

# PLANNING BOARD

City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**TO:** Planning Board  
**FROM:** Planning, Preservation, & Zoning (PPZ) Staff  
**SUBJECT:** 28-44 Broadway, P&Z 21-029  
**POSTED:** June 13, 2022

**RECOMMENDATION:** No change

This memo is supplemental to the PPZ Staff Memos dated December 8, 2021, March 11, 2022, and May 26, 2022, and provides additional analysis and additional potential conditions pursuant to the concerns about parking and traffic raised at the June 2, 2022, Planning Board meeting.

## BACKGROUND

The Board most recently heard this case at the June 2, 2022 public hearing, following a neighborhood meeting that was held on May 9, 2022. During the June 2 hearing and following comments and concerns about traffic and parking by members of the public, the Board raised questions about the impact of the project, which includes 26 parking spaces, on the traffic in the immediate and surrounding area. The Board asked to confirm the anticipated traffic impacts of the development and whether any additional mitigation could be done. Planning Staff stated they would work with Mobility Staff to respond to the Board's concerns.

## ANALYSIS

Mobility reviewed the Transportation Impact Study (TIS) and Mobility Management Plan (MMP) before this project first appeared before the Board, and have reconfirmed that the approved MMP satisfies their concerns regarding traffic impacts. MMP. Mobility noted that the trip generation described in the TIS is based on the number of units, rather than the number of parking spaces, which is a standard but relatively conservative approach to trip generation. Because many residents will not have either dedicated parking spaces in the proposed garage or access to the City's resident permit parking program, Mobility noted that the development's trip generation could be less than what the TIS anticipates. The Mobility Division notes that academic research has established strong links between motor vehicle parking supply and motor vehicle mode share in new development. The over-supply of parking may create challenges to achieving the non-automobile mode share required by SomerVision; the emissions reductions required by Somerville Climate Forward; and the safety outcomes required by Somerville's Vision Zero Action Plan. Therefore, if the Planning Board wishes to further mitigate the impacts of new vehicle trips, the Mobility Division recommends the following strategies:

- Reduce the number of motor vehicle parking spaces. Mobility noted that this project is within the 0.25mi Transit Area, and they would be supportive of eliminating or reducing the total number of parking spaces.
- Expand the provision of transit passes. The MMP already states that the property owner will provide up to two (2) MBTA Monthly Link Passes or an equivalent stored value MBTA Charlie Cards to each residential tenant household during the first month of initial occupancy. This requirement renews each time a new household moves in to incentivize new households to use public transportation. If motor vehicle parking is retained for the proposed development, Mobility recommends strengthening this transportation demand management (TDM) measure by requiring the Applicant to subsidize transit passes for up to 2 adult members of new households for a longer period of time.
- Expand the provision of Bluebikes passes. Similar to the transit pass subsidy, the MMP already states that the Applicant shall provide a one-month Bluebikes membership to each adult member of a new household during the first month of initial occupancy of a new household (up to 2 one-month Bluebikes memberships total per household are required). This requirement renews each time a household moves in to incentivize new households to use the bikeshare system. If motor vehicle parking is retained for the proposed development, Mobility recommends strengthening this TDM measure by requiring the Applicant to provide bike share memberships to each new household for a longer period of time.

## CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

The Planning Board is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to deliberate each of the following considerations at the public hearing. The Board must discuss and draw conclusions for each consideration, but may make additional findings beyond this minimum statutory requirement.

Findings #3 and 7 from the December 8 and May 26 Staff Memos may be affected by this update.

### Site Plan Approval Considerations

3. *Mitigation proposed to alleviate impacts attributable to the proposed development.*

Neighbors have repeatedly voiced concerns that the project will negatively impact (a) the availability of on-street parking, and (b) traffic and congestion in the surrounding area, and have suggested that motor vehicle parking be eliminated in order to address these concerns. The Board previously requested that Staff work with Mobility to identify additional mitigation strategies to address these concerns, beyond what has previously been recommended by Staff. Planning and Mobility Staff have discussed this proposal

and identified two possible routes of mitigating the impacts that the Board and public have expressed concerns about.

The first strategy is to reduce or possibly eliminate the motor vehicle parking proposed as part of this project, for the reasons identified in the analysis section. The second strategy is to implement additional TDM strategies, namely by extending the time period that new residents of the building would receive subsidized transit passes and Bluebikes memberships. Staff have included possible condition language for each strategy, depending on which the Board thinks will more appropriately address its concerns.

### **Special Permit Considerations**

7. *The number of motor vehicle parking spaces proposed for development within a Transit Area.*

No changes to the number of motor vehicle parking spaces for the development has been proposed since the June 2<sup>nd</sup> public hearing. However, Mobility has noted that reducing the number of motor vehicle parking spaces will have the result of further mitigating traffic impacts. If the Board believes that additional mitigation to parking is required, the statements provided by Staff regarding this consideration in the previous Staff Memos may no longer be relevant, and the Board will need to make a finding regarding this consideration that accounts for any changes the Board may require of the project.

### **PERMIT CONDITIONS**

Depending on the preferred mitigation approach the Board wishes to take, Staff have provided three sets of possible conditions. In each case, these conditions should be added to the conditions already recommended for each permit type as part of the December 8, 2021, and March 11, 2022 Staff Memos.

*If the Board wishes to eliminate the proposed motor vehicle parking:*

Staff recommends adding the following condition to the required Special Permit for a Household Living use:

- To mitigate transportation impacts attributable to the proposed development, motor vehicle parking is not permitted.<sup>1</sup>

*If the Board wishes to reduce the proposed motor vehicle parking:*

Staff recommends adding the following condition to the required Special Permit for a Household Living use:

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<sup>1</sup> If the Board believes that entirely eliminating on-site motor vehicle parking is the only method of mitigating the transportation impacts attributable to this project, there are a number of previously-recommended conditions that would no longer be applicable.

- To mitigate transportation impacts attributable to the proposed development, a maximum of **number (X)** motor vehicle parking spaces are permitted.<sup>2</sup>

Staff recommends adding the following conditions to the required Site Plan Approval for the 6-story LEED Platinum General Building:

- The property owner shall provide two (2) MBTA Monthly LinkPass or an equivalent stored value MBTA Charlie Cards to each residential tenant household during the first month of initial occupancy, and each month for a minimum of one (1) year. This requirement renews each time a new residential tenant moves in.<sup>3</sup>
- The property owner shall provide two (2) bike share memberships to each residential tenant household during the first month of initial occupancy, each of which shall be valid for a minimum of one (1) year. This requirement renews each time a new residential tenant household moves in.<sup>4</sup>

*If the Board wishes to maintain the proposed motor vehicle parking:*

Staff recommends adding the following conditions to the required Site Plan Approval for the 6-story LEED Platinum General Building:

- The property owner shall provide two (2) MBTA Monthly LinkPass or an equivalent stored value MBTA Charlie Cards to each residential tenant household during the first month of initial occupancy, and each month for a minimum of one (1) year. This requirement renews each time a new residential tenant moves in.<sup>5</sup>
- The property owner shall provide two (2) bike share memberships to each residential tenant household during the first month of initial occupancy, each of which shall be valid for a minimum of one (1) year. This requirement renews each time a new residential tenant household moves in.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Board will need to identify the maximum number of motor vehicle parking spaces that are permitted; the text in orange is a temporary placeholder.

<sup>3</sup> Please note that this potential condition would expand the provision of transit passes. The MMP already provides for two (2) month-long passes for each new residential household. The amount of time for the extended provision of transit passes, which Mobility and PPZ Staff currently recommend being for a minimum of one (1) year, should be considered by the Planning Board. Please also note that Mobility considers the expansion of transit passes to be a more impactful mitigation measure than the expansion of bikeshare passes.

<sup>4</sup> Please note that this potential condition would expand the provision of bike share memberships, from one (1) month (as already provided for in the MMP) to one (1) year. Please also note that the amount of time for the extended provision of bikeshare passes, which Mobility and PPZ Staff currently recommend being for a minimum of one (1) year, should be considered by the Planning Board.

<sup>5</sup> See note 3.

<sup>6</sup> See note 4.