



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Planning, Preservation & Zoning Staff
RE: 2, 8, and 29 Harding Street (99 South Street and Building 3), P&Z 22-007
POSTED: October 20, 2022

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions (SPA)

Staff memos are used to communicate background information, analysis, responses to public comments, review of statutory requirements and other information from the Planning & Zoning staff to the Review Board members.

This memo summarizes the development review application submitted for 99 South Street, identifies any additional discretionary or administrative development review that is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and provides related analysis or feedback as necessary. The application was deemed complete on August 23, 2022 and is scheduled for a public hearing on October 27, 2022. Any Staff recommended findings, conditions, and decisions in this memo are based on the information available to date prior to any public comment at the scheduled public hearing.

LEGAL NOTICE

Boynton Yards LandCo, LLC proposes to develop a 12-story LEED Platinum lab building in the High Rise (HR) zoning district, which requires Site Plan Approval.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Boynton Yards LandCo LLC is proposing to construct a 12-story, 240 feet wide, LEED Platinum lab building that will be 360,000 gross square feet (GSF). The building will have 280 below-grade parking spaces, 115 interior long-term secured bicycle parking spaces, and approximately 64 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The proposed landscape design will earn a compliant Green Score of 0.202, meeting the district minimum of 0.20.

BACKGROUND

99 South Street, also known as Building 3, is a development component of the Boynton Yards Master Plan authorized by the Master Plan Special Permit (MPSP) P&Z 21-097, as amended and approved by the Planning Board on January 20, 2022. Each component of a Master Plan (building, civic space, or thoroughfare) must go through a subsequent entitlement process after approval of the MPSP. Building 3 is part of phase two (2) of the Master Plan, and preceded in permitting by 101 South Street (Building 1), 808 Windsor Street (Building 2), and 111 South Street (Civic Space 1).

Building 3 is located in the High Rise (HR) zoning district in the Boynton Yards Subarea Master Planned Development overlay district and the Boynton Yards neighborhood represented by Ward 2 Councilor J.T. Scott. A lab building is permitted by Site Plan Approval. Site Plan Approval is the administrative review and approval of conforming development to address and potential development impacts, if necessary. The Planning Board is the decision-making authority for all (non-Variance) discretionary or administrative permits required by the HR zoning district.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

An initial neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward Councilor J.T. Scott and the development team on April 6, 2022, via the GoToWebinar meeting platform. A second neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward Councilor J.T. Scott and the development team on June 9, 2022, via the GoToWebinar meeting platform.

DESIGN REVIEW

The proposal was reviewed by the Somerville Urban Design Commission via GoToWebinar meeting platform on April 26, 2022, and May 10, 2022. The Commission provided its official recommendation on May 19, 2022.

ANALYSIS

Concurrent with this project, a Land Court process to subdivide the parcels at 2, 8 and 29 Harding Street is occurring, which will create a conforming lot for Building 3. The Plaza space in front of Building 3 (Lot 0) will be the primary frontage for Building 3. Part of that proposed plaza is intended to be absorbed into the right of way for South Street, as part of a future proposed independent process to realign and widen South Street.

Programming

The proposed uses, including a laboratory building with retail on the ground floor, are consistent with the SZO and the MPSP. The project proposes 355,000 SF of Office/Lab/R&D space and 5000 SF¹ of Arts & Creative Enterprise (ACE)/retail space. The ground floor design of Building 3 places active uses (retail/or ACE) fronting South Street plaza, Harding Street, and Thoroughfare 1. The primary lobby entrance will be located at the corner of the Building along South Street frontage with a secondary entry into the building from Thoroughfare 1/Archibald Query Way.

On the east side of the building along Harding Street, the Applicant intends to use a portion of space as a gallery or art mural to further activate the ground floor. As mentioned in the neighborhood meeting report, the space is about 4 feet wide and is meant to function as a gallery space. The Applicant has informed Staff that the

¹ Consistent with section 8.4.12. (e)(ii)(a) of the SZO and the approved MPSP, ten (10) percent of the non-residential gross square footage in the overall Master Plan Development Area, approximately 141,200 SF, must be designated for ACE use and may be allocated to any building in the MPSP area at the discretion of the Applicant.

feasibility of this space as an arts display is still being explored, as well as looking at possibly relocating some of the back of house uses to allow increasing this area for additional retail and ACE spaces following Site Plan Approval.

Environmental and Sustainability

As part of the application, the Applicant has submitted an Environmental Report including the Sustainable & Resilient Buildings Questionnaire, LEED Compliance Report, Shadow Study, Pedestrian Level Wind Analysis, and Solar Glare Analysis. Compliant with the zoning, the building is proposed to be LEED Platinum Certifiable. Of the 280 proposed vehicle parking space, 15% of the spaces will be equipped with Level 2 Type EV Chargers, and all remaining available parking spaces will be EV Ready Spaces. To help further advance City goals related to sustainability, Staff have recommended a condition that the Applicant provide a document to the Office of Sustainability and Environment that provides a feasibility assessment for examining the possibility of providing at least twenty-five percent (25%) of the motor vehicle parking space with electric vehicle charging equipment over the next two (2) years.

As reported in the LEED documentation of the application materials, the building is supportive of the City of Somerville's net-zero goals and the project's path to LEED platinum. The project intends to purchase Green-e Energy certified renewable energy credits and Green-e Climate certified carbon offsets to offset 100 percent of the building's total annual energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. As stated in the applicants Sustainability and Energy Questionnaire, the project proposes a high albedo rating for the building to limit the heat island effect and contribute to a more comfortable outdoor space. The existing at-grade parking will be removed and replaced with underground parking; the roofs and hardscaping will be selected to comply with the LEED Heat Island Reduction credit; hardscapes will include vegetation and be of a lighter color with the inclusion of native and adapted vegetation to provide some localized evaporative cooling impacts; and the incorporation of an extensive green roof.

The proposal is on track to be LEED certifiable and is targeting 85 points of the 80 required to reach Platinum. As currently designed, the proposed lab building will use Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHPs) as part of their heating plan, along with heat recovery chiller and high efficiency condensing boilers to provide some level of electrification. The heat recovery chiller will allow for energy to be reused when simultaneous heating and cooling loads occur. This will reduce natural gas usage by approximately 94 percent.

The presented shadow study for the site demonstrates shadowing caused by Building 3 at the spring and fall equinoxes and at the summer and winter solstices, as well as the cumulative new shadows cast on adjacent sites. Building 3 will produce new net casted shadows on several public spaces during the spring and autumn equinox's, including shadows casted onto a portion of Thoroughfare 1 from the morning to afternoon hours, as well as shadowing on Civic Space in the early evening, and the plaza space in front of Building's 6A and 6B during the early afternoon. During the summer months,

shadows cast by Building 3 will be limited and not as impactful compared to the winter months when shadows will be most pronounced. As Building 3 is one of several proposed buildings part of the Master Plan, shadowing on areas frequently used by pedestrians will be contributed from multiple buildings in this area which range in height from nine (9) to twenty (20) stories.

The Applicant has presented a pedestrian level wind study prepared by Rowan Williams Davies & Irwin Inc. (RWDI). The City requires a wind analysis to determine the suitability of various locations for outdoor activities and requires that mean wind speed and effective gust speeds not be exceeded for particular activities more than one percent (1%) of the time without mitigation. The report concludes that at full build configuration, wind conditions are predicted to be comfortable for the intended pedestrian usage in most areas. Slightly higher winds are predicted locally in a few areas, however, conditions are primarily comfortable for walking or more passive uses in most areas assessed. There is an increase in wind speeds observed at the outdoor seating areas to the north of the building, with conditions comfortable for standing during the summer season. Overall, with the prediction in wind speeds at full build configuration, the effective gust criterion is predicted to be met at all assessed locations on an annual and seasonal basis.

A solar glare analysis (solar reflection study), also prepared by RWDI, was submitted as the final portion of the Environmental Report. The analysis used computer modeling to evaluate sunlight reflecting from the proposed building as it relates to the potential heat impacts on people and facades of other buildings and the potential visual glare impacts on drivers, pedestrians, and façades. The study finds that the thermal impacts on people and property will be minimal, and the impacts are not expected to lead to significant additional cooling load for surrounding buildings. Increased visual glare on drivers is predicted for less than 2% of the daytime annual, which the report notes is typical in an urban area. Typical levels of visual glare are predicted for pedestrians and façades (individuals within surrounding buildings). The impacts of reflections caused by this building are predicated to be typical of any modern building of this size.

Mobility

The Application proposes 280 vehicle parking spaces and 115 long-term bicycle parking spaces in an underground garage, as well as outdoor bicycle racks for 64 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The underground, four-level parking garage will be accessed via east side of Earle Street. The Application also proposes a loading/service area to be accessed from the east side of Earle Street.

Pedestrians have access to the main lobby and retail areas from the plaza space fronting South Street and have access to the building and other retail spaces from Haring Street and Thoroughfare 1. The Transportation Access Plan (TAP) Bicycle Parking Plan describes how the project will provide 64 short-term bicycle parking spaces and 115 secure, long-term bicycle parking spaces, as required by zoning. The short-term bicycle parking will be provided in outdoor bicycle racks around the building's

primary entrances, and the long-term bicycle parking spaces will be within the building on the first floor of the garage level. The TAP states that cyclists will access the underground bicycle storage room from the lobby using designated elevators.

To help encourage more people to bike to the site and meet City climate goals relating to greenhouse gas emissions reduction, Mobility Staff have a strong preference for an at-grade long-term bicycle parking or long-term bicycle parking with improved access. Mobility Staff recommends that SPA approval be conditioned that the Applicant will provide at least thirty percent (30%) of the required long-term bicycle parking at-grade on the ground level or via a ramp with a slope of less than 5% or less than 8% with a landing every thirty (30) feet.

After review of the submitted TAP, Mobility Staff recommend that all vehicle trips relating to loading/unloading activities off of Earle Street, happen from entering onto Earle Street via South Street only in perpetuity. Thoroughfare 1 is proposed to be a pedestrian-oriented street and to further facilitate the desired commercial-shared street condition, Staff recommend that all vehicles going to Building 3 for all loading/unloading activities, do so from South Street and not from Thoroughfare 1.

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 detailed below but may make additional findings beyond this minimum statutory requirement.

Site Plan Approval Considerations

1. The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.
2. The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.
3. Consistency with the approved Urban Design Framework for the sub-area where the subject property is located.
4. Conformance with any approved Master Plan Special Permit and any other Special Permits applicable to the subject lot.
5. Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.

Information relative to the above considerations is provided below:

1. *The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.*

Staff believe that this proposal will help to achieve the following from SomerVision, the comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Somerville:

- Invest in the growth of a resilient economic base that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency.

2. The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.

Staff believe that this proposal is consistent with the intent of the HR zoning district which is, in part, "To accommodate the development of areas appropriate for an intense mix of multi-story multi-unit, mixed-use, and commercial buildings; neighborhood-, community-, and regional-serving uses; and a wide variety of employment opportunities.

Staff also believe that this proposal is consistent with the intent of the Boynton Yards overlay district which, is in, part, to permit the development of multiple lots including buildings, civic spaces, and thoroughfares as identified in the Master Plan.

3. Consistency with the approved Urban Design Framework for the sub-area where the subject property is located.

Staff believe that this proposal is consistent with the approved Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework.

4. Conformance with any approved Master Plan Special Permit and any other Special Permits applicable to the subject lot.

Staff believe that this proposed thoroughfare is in conformance with the approved and amended Boynton Yards Master Plan Special Permit (P&Z 21-097).

5. Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.

Staff believe, as conditioned, the proposal does not produce any impacts that require additional mitigation.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

Should the Board approve the *required* **Site Plan Approval for the 12-story LEED Platinum lab building**, Planning & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions:

Permit Validity

- This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
- This Decision is not valid unless a land plat is approved to establish the 99 South Street lot and recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
- This Decision does not authorize the removal of any public shade trees or private trees, which is subject to the Tree Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 12, Article VI) of the Somerville Code of Ordinances.

- The Applicant must apply for a Streetscape Construction permit for Thoroughfare 1 (AQW) prior to applying for a Building Permit.

Public Record

- Physical copies of all development review submittal materials, as permitted by the Planning Board, must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation, & Zoning Division for the public record.
- A copy of the recorded Decision stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds must be submitted to the Planning Preservation, & Zoning Division for the public record.

Construction Documents

- Construction documents must be substantially equivalent to the approved plans and other materials submitted for development review.
- Material specifications from suppliers must be submitted to confirm fenestration glazing is compliant with the VLT and VLR ratings required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.
- An outdoor lighting plan and supplier cut sheet specifications of chosen lighting fixtures must be submitted to confirm compliance with Section 10.7 Outdoor Lighting of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The site photometric plan must include a keyed site plan identifying the location of all luminaires; total site lumen limit table (calculations from the SZO); lighting fixture schedule indicating the fixture type, description, lamp type, lumens, color temperature, color rendering index, BUG rating, mounting height, and wattage of all luminaires; and notation of any timing devices used to control the hours set for illumination.

Transportation Mitigation

- At least thirty percent (30%) of the required long-term bicycle parking spaces must be provided at-grade or via a ramp with a slope of less than 5% or less than 8% with a landing every thirty (30) feet
- To mitigate transportation impacts, the intersection of South St. & Harding St. must be improved to, at minimum, to interconnect the required bicycle facilities of each segment of South Street. Final intersection design must be approved by relevant City departments.
- To mitigate transportation impacts, the intersection of Ward St. & Harding St. must be improved in a manner that permits the later extension of Harding Street northward. Final intersection design must be approved by relevant City departments.
- Access to the loading and unloading area is only permitted from Earle Street via South Street. Access is prohibited from Thoroughfare 1/Archibald Query Way.
- An updated Transportation Access Plan demonstrating compliance with these conditions must be submitted to the Mobility Division for review and approval prior to applying for a Building Permit.

Site & Building Design

- Utility meters are not permitted on any facade or within the frontage area of the lot.

Sustainability

- All Stage 2 documentation required by the LEED Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment and must include the following:
 - A feasibility assessment for providing at least twenty five percent (25%) of the motor vehicle parking spaces with electric vehicle charging equipment over the next two (2) years must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.
- All Stage 3 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.

Use

- The underground structured parking must be operated as a Commercial Parking facility principal use.
- The underground structured parking must have a parking access and revenue control system to manage vehicular access and collect parking revenues from patrons.

Parking

- The initial operations plan for the Commercial Parking facility identifying, at least, the type and pricing of various passes, rates, and fees must be submitted to the Director of Mobility.
- A pedestrian warning system must be provided for the vehicular entrance to the underground structured parking and loading docks to address potential conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles. Final design must be approved by the Director of Mobility and the City Engineer.
- A sign must be provided near the vehicular entrance to the underground parking structured parking that identifies, at minimum, the number of spaces available in real time.
- An annual report, including documentation of any changes to the layout plan or operations plan of the parking facility, must be submitted to the Mobility Division to validate continued compliance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, this Decision, and the Director of Mobility's standards for monitoring and annual reporting.

Mobility

- The property owner and applicable future tenants shall comply with the Mobility Management Plan (MMP), as approved and conditioned by the Director of Mobility on June 8, 2022.

General Conditions

- Development must comply with the approved and amended Master Plan Special Permit dated January 20, 2022, as applicable.
- All Phase 2 conditions of the amended Master Plan Special Permit dated January 20, 2022, must be completed prior to applying for a Certificate of Occupancy.
- A written narrative or descriptive checklist identifying the completion or compliance with permit conditions must be to the Inspectional Services Department at least ten (10) working days in advance of a request for a final inspection.