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Project Description

In accordance with Article 15 of the City of Somerville Zoning Code (the “Zoning Ordinance”), Boynton Yards LandCo LLC (a joint venture between DLJ Real Estate Capital Partners and Leggat McCall Properties LLC, collectively the “Proponent”), respectfully submits this development review application (DRA) to continue the Site Plan review and approval process for components of the Boynton Yards Master Plan Development (also known as the “Boynton Yards Project”) located on 7.93 acres of land in the Boynton Yards neighborhood (also referred to herein as the “BY Sub-Area”) of Somerville, Massachusetts (the “Development Site”).

This DRA is specifically to review and approve a new 45,863square foot (SF), approximately 1.05 acres thoroughfare known as “Thoroughfare 1,” that is most consistent with the “Commercial Shared Street” typology. Thoroughfare 1 will be constructed on Lot T1 of the Development Site, a central corridor and shared street abutted by Buildings 5 and 6 and Civic Space 3 to the north; Buildings 1, 2, and 3 and Civic Space 1 to the south; Windsor Place directly to the west, at the intersection with Windsor Street; and wrapping the corner on to Harding Street, at the intersection with Lot T4 (also known as the “Thoroughfare 1 Site”, or “153 South Street”). The construction of Thoroughfare 1 will continue the dramatic revitalization of the BY Sub-Area by creating a vibrant, publicly accessible and sustainably designed Commercial Shared Street that will activate the district and will equally serve the future tenants and residents of the proposed Boynton Yards Project as well as the resident community from the surrounding neighborhood. Thoroughfare 1 is the first thoroughfare to go through the Site Plan Approval process in the City of Somerville. Its intent is to function as a publicly accessible space for pedestrians and cyclists and provide an area for celebrations, gatherings, and connection that will benefit the wider neighborhood and the full build out of the Boynton Yards Project.

A concurrent DRA has been submitted for the construction of 99 South Street, which is also referred to as “Building 3.” Refer to Figure 1.1 for a neighborhood context diagram.

This chapter describes the existing Thoroughfare 1 Site conditions, Project review history, proposed Thoroughfare 1 improvements, conformance to key requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, and the Project schedule.

1.1 Existing Conditions

The Boynton Yards Project is proposed on a 7.93-acre Development Site that is bounded by the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) Commuter Rail train tracks to the north, South Street to the south, Harding Street to the east, and

Windsor Street to the west. The Development Site is bisected by an existing vehicular access drive, which is currently privately owned land with existing access and utility easements.

Thoroughfare 1, an approximately 1.05 acres lot will be constructed on Lot T1 of the Development Site, a central corridor and shared street adjacent to Buildings 5 and 6 and Civic Space 3 to the north; Buildings 1, 2, and 3 and Civic Space 2 to the south; Windsor Place directly to the west, at the intersection with Windsor Street; and terminating at Civic Space 2 to the east, at the intersection with Lot T4. The existing area that makes up the proposed Thoroughfare 1 lot, currently roughly aligns with Windsor Place Extension which currently terminates at Earle Street. Thoroughfare 1 will extend east after the demolition of the Gentle Giant warehouse building, terminating at the proposed Civic Space 2 and turning south onto Harding Street and terminate at the intersection of Ward Street.

Refer to Figure 1.2 for an existing conditions plan, and Figure 1.3 for existing site photos. Refer to Appendix A for the plot plan.

1.2 Project Review History

On August 18, 2020, the Proponent filed a Master Plan Special Permit (MPSP) application with the City of Somerville to build up to 1.37 million SF of commercial, retail, and residential development with 1,002 below-grade parking spaces on 6.55 acres of land. The Somerville Planning Board issued a decision approving the MPSP on February 4, 2021. Subsequently, the Proponent gained control of the properties at 561 Windsor Street, known primarily as the headquarters for the Taza Chocolate company, and an existing parking lot at 0 Windsor Place north of 808 Windsor Street. On December 21, 2021, the Proponent filed a Master Plan Special Permit Amendment application with the City of Somerville to incorporate these lots and associated proposed development into the existing Master Plan, which was approved by the Somerville Planning Board on January 20, 2022. Table 1-1 below shows a comparison of the proposed development programs of the original and amended Master Plan Special Permit.

Table 1-1 Boynton Yards Master Plan Development Program Comparison Table

Use/Element	Original Project	Amended Project	Change
Development Site	6.55 acres	7.93 acres	+1.38 acres
Commercial	984,500 SF	1,363,000 SF	+378,000 SF
Retail	42,500 SF	49,000 SF	+6,500 SF
Residential	338,000 SF (330 units)	450,000 SF (440 units)	+112,000 SF (110 Units)
Total	1,365,000 SF	1,862,000 SF	+497,000 SF
Below-Grade Parking	1,002 spaces	1,117 spaces	+115 spaces

Buildout of the Boynton Yards development is underway. Building 1 at 101 South Street officially opened in November 2021 and construction of Civic Space 1 and Building 2 at 808 Windsor Street are ongoing. This Development Review Application continues the local review process for Thoroughfare 1. The process will run in tandem with the Site Plan Review process for Building 3 located at 99 South Street.

Refer to Figure 1.4 for the project key plan that illustrates the conceptual location of the approved buildings and thoroughfare on the Development Site.

1.3 Thoroughfare 1 Description

Consistent with the Approved Master Plan, Thoroughfare 1 is a 45,863 SF (1.05 acres) signature thoroughfare that will be constructed as a Commercial Shared Street.

The summary in Table 1-2 below outlines Thoroughfare 1's conformance to key provisions of Section 13 of the Zoning Ordinance. Refer to Figure 1.5 for an illustrative site plan, Figure 1.6 (a-e) for perspective images, and Figure 1.7 for a zoning compliance plan. Detailed street layout, landscape design, and furnishings are addressed below in Section 1.4.

Table 1-2 Thoroughfare 1 Zoning Compliance Summary Table

	Permitted	Proposed
Proposed Thoroughfare Type	Commercial Shared Street	
Lot Development		
Total Right-of-Way Width (min)	52 ft. ¹	62 ft.
Walkway Zone Width (min)	6 ft.	6 ft.
Furnishing Zone Width (min)	6 ft.	6 ft.
Frontage Zones Width (max)	4.5 ft.	NA
Vegetation		
Tree Separation Distance (min/max)	35/45 ft. on center	13/40 ft. (PSUF)
Soil Volume Space per Tree (min)	1,000 gcf ²	Min. 1,000 gcf ²
Soil Radius from Tree Trunk (max)	27 ft.	27 ft.
Tree Height when Planted (min) ³	10 ft.	Min. 10 ft.
Tree Caliper when Planted (min) ³	2 in.	3 in.
Tree Pits – Open Soil Area (min) ⁴	36 sf	36 sf
Tree Guard Height (min)	18 in.	18 in.
Groundcover Mulch Depth (min)	2 in.	2 in.

gcf = Gross Cubic Feet

sf = Square Feet

1. May be reduced by 7 feet for each parking lane that is not provided.
2. Where required soil volumes for nearby trees overlap, up to 25 percent of the required soil volume per tree may be shared between trees.
3. Trees, when planted, are required to meet only one of these standards.
4. Must be centered at tree trunk.

1.3.1 Design Summary

1.3.1.1 Transportation Planning and Street Design

Thoroughfare 1 will be a commercial shared street. Shared streets maintain access for vehicles operating at low speeds and are designed to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle activity. The flush design of Thoroughfare 1 reinforces the pedestrian-priority operation of the street and delineates a non-linear path of travel. The street is divided into three zones: a 20-foot wide “movement” zone, a hybrid or flexible-use zone between 12 feet and 15 feet in width, and an 8-foot to 11-foot wide pedestrian sidewalk zone.

The hybrid zone accommodates street trees; planting and bio-infiltration zones; site furnishings, such as pedestrian seating, lighting, and bicycle parking; and car parking or parklet areas. The street is designed so that it can easily be closed and turned into a pedestrian-only environment for hosting events. Thoroughfare 1 is not designed to accommodate public transit access.

The flush curb design of Thoroughfare 1 promotes the idea of universal accessibility. Three dedicated, van-accessible parking zones have also been integrated into the design, exceeding State and Federal requirements. Tactile warnings are shown at the crossing zones and as well as within the hybrid zone, warning visually impaired users that they are entering an active roadway.

Refer to Figure 1.8a-b for a circulation and access plan, Figure 1.9a-c for typical street sections, Figure 1.10a-c for plan details of intersections and curb cuts, and Figure 1.11 for a scaled street layout plan. Refer also to Figure 1.12 for a preliminary traffic controls and signage plan and Figure 1.13 for a bicycle parking plan.

1.3.1.2 Landscape and Furnishings Design

Sustainability is a key consideration in the design of Thoroughfare 1. Stormwater will be directed to six bio-infiltration planters along the southern edge of the thoroughfare. These planters will detain, filter, and infiltrate storm water runoff.

Although only 41 street trees (totaling 82 caliper inches) are required per the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, the design proposes 60 street trees totaling 180 caliper inches at the time of installation. These street trees will provide numerous environmental benefits including absorbing and storing atmospheric carbon and other toxic aerosol pollutants, reducing the urban heat island, and absorbing storm water runoff.

Soil cell systems and protected planting zones prioritize the long-term health and survivability of street trees. Finally, the understory planting strategy prioritizes hardy native species that tolerate urban conditions and attract priority pollinator species such as the Long-horned bee, Monarch butterfly, and Great Spangled Fritillary. A minimum of 50 percent all planting will be native.

A palette of site furnishings was established for Boynton Yards during the master plan approval process. Together these materials help create unified identity for the Boynton yards district. The palette includes tree guards to protect street trees, metal and timber benches that serve as public seating, but also help protect planted areas, bicycle racks, bollards, and trash and recycling receptacles.

Refer to Figure 1.14 for a grading and drainage plan, Figure 1.15 for an existing tree plan, and Figure 1.16 for a planting plan. Refer also to Figure 1.17 for an illustrative landscape plan, Figure 1.18 for a tree soil area plan, and Figures 1.19 and 1.20 for street tree section and detail plans. To review affixed design elements, see Figure 1.21 for a paving plan, 1.22 for an illustrated furnishings list, 1.23 for a furnishings plan, and 1.24 for a lighting plan.

1.4 Thoroughfare 1 Schedule

Thoroughfare 1 will be developed and constructed over approximately three to four years. The following summarizes estimated timelines associated activities during each phase of construction.

- › Conceptual Design and Permitting – Q1 2022 through Q3 2022
- › Detail Design and Engineering – Q3 2022 through Q2 2023
- › Phase 1 Construction (Windsor Street to Earle Street, southern zone) – Q2 2023 through Q2 2024;
- › Phase 2 Construction (Earle Street to Harding Street, southern zone) – Q3 2023 through Q4 2025; and
- › Phase 3 Construction (Windsor Street to Harding Street, northern zone/full completion) – Q2 2025 through Q4 2026

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Zoning Compliance Narrative

This chapter briefly describes how Thoroughfare 1 complies with applicable provisions of the Zoning Ordinance.

2.1 ARTICLE 13: PUBLIC REALM

13.2.1 Development Review

a. The development of any new thoroughfare requires Site Plan Approval followed by a Thoroughfare Permit, in accordance with Chapter 15: Administration.

This DRA is to initiate the Site Plan review and approval process for Thoroughfare 1.

b. All development, excluding normal maintenance, requires the issuance of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance prior to the issuance of a Thoroughfare Permit.

The Proponent will seek a Thoroughfare Permit after issuance of the Certificate of Zoning Compliance.

Consistent with this the approved Master Plan, and with Section 8.4.7.c of the Zoning Code, Thoroughfare 1 will be dedicated to the public in perpetuity by a covenant or other appropriate deed restriction. Pursuant to the Development Covenant between the Proponent and the City, the Proponent intends to transfer all of its fee interest in Thoroughfare 1 to the City.

13.2.2 Thoroughfare Network

a. The general location of all proposed thoroughfares must conform with official maps and existing policy plans of the City of Somerville.

In addition to conformance with the approved Boynton Yards Master Plan, Thoroughfare 1 is consistent with the Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework that was adopted by the Somerville Planning Board on July 16, 2020. As noted in the section on "Connections," a "New Street" is to be established which primarily serves as a *"primary pedestrian-oriented street connecting new civic spaces and commercial building sites via a short walk to Union Square Station."*

b. All thoroughfares must intersect with other thoroughfares, forming a network. Cul-de-sacs and other dead-end thoroughfares, excluding alleys, are prohibited.

As noted in Chapter 1, Thoroughfare 1 will connect with existing public roadways, specifically Windsor Place directly to the west, at the intersection with Windsor Street, and wrapping the corner on to Harding Street, terminating at the intersection of Harding Street and Ward Street.

13.2.4 Standards for all Thoroughfare Types

b. Thoroughfares must be designed in accordance with the current edition of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) street design guidelines.

As decided by the Urban Design Commission on April 26, 2022 and May 10, 2022, the Project conforms to all applicable NACTO street design guidelines.

13.2.5 Standards for Specific Thoroughfare Types

c. Commercial Shared Street

The Project is most consistent with the Commercial Shared Street type. The summary in Table 1-1 of Chapter 1, *Project Description*, outlines Thoroughfare 1's conformance to key provisions of Section 13 of the Zoning Ordinance.

2.2 ARTICLE 15: ADMINISTRATION

15.3 Administrative Permits

15.3.2 Site Plan Approval

a. Purpose

(ii). The Site Plan Approval process provides an applicant with the opportunity to submit architectural, site, landscape, and engineering plans so that compliance to the provisions of this Ordinance can be determined prior to preparation of construction documents.

The Project complies with this requirement. In addition to the narrative, both illustrative and scaled site and detail plans, including the required stamped plans, are submitted with this DRA package.

d. Procedure

(ii). The review procedures required for a Site Plan Approval may, at the discretion of the designated review board, be conducted simultaneously with the review procedures required for other discretionary or administrative permits.

A concurrent DRA has been submitted for the construction of 99 South Street (Building 3), which is located in the southeast corner of the Development Site.

e. Review Criteria

(i). The review board shall approve a development review application requiring Site Plan Approval upon verifying that the submitted plan conforms with the provisions of this Ordinance and demonstrates consistency to the following:

a). The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.

Thoroughfare 1 is a component of the Approved Master Plan which is located within the Boynton Yards Sub-Area. The Boynton Yards Project is consistent with the Union Square Neighborhood Plan and the Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework. According to the guiding city planning documents, the urban design goals for Boynton Yards include, but are not limited to: *create a street network with blocks appropriately sized for commercial buildings; design complete streets; provide 2.59 acres of open space; and build enough residential development to create a vibrant, mixed-use neighborhood.*

A key principle identified in the Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework (UDF), adopted by the Somerville Planning board July 16, 2020, is to “create a new walkable street network, including alleys, that minimizes pedestrian and vehicular conflicts.” The “new street” (i.e. Thoroughfare 1) “is intended to serve as the primary pedestrian-oriented street connecting new civic spaces and commercial building sites via a short walk to Union Square Station.” The commercial shared street design for Thoroughfare 1 – following NACTO’s guidelines for commercial shared streets – is consistent with this vision.

Additionally, Thoroughfare 1 is consistent with SomerVision, which aims to emphasize pedestrian and transit-oriented planning and design; transform opportunity areas on the eastern and southern edges of Somerville; and focus development around new pedestrian-oriented public places.

b). The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.

The Project is located within the BY Sub-Area, which is presently characterized by industrial uses, including automotive, vehicle storage and dispatch for Gentle Giant Moving Company, and commercial laundry services, as well as one- to three-family structures, warehouse buildings, and parking lots. The intent of the BY Sub-Area zoning is to provide for a greater variety, density, and intensity of land uses with mid- and high-rise buildings, and to establish a new street grid/thoroughfare and civic spaces.

Thoroughfare 1 is the central spine of the Development Site that will ultimately deliver a pedestrian-friendly, publicly accessible, and sustainably designed Commercial Shared Street intended to activate the district and benefit the wider neighborhood and the Project at full build out of the Boynton Yards Project. Thoroughfare 1 is a required thoroughfare satisfying the requirements of Sections 8.4.7 and 8.4.12.g and as shown on Map 8.3.12(b).

c). Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.

No impacts are anticipated with the operation of Thoroughfare 1. Under existing conditions, Lot T1 was almost entirely impervious. The design of Thoroughfare 1 proposes approximately 22 percent pervious area to promote the infiltration of stormwater runoff and increase the resiliency of the Development Site.

The SZO requires a minimum of 41 two-inch diameter-at-breast height (DBH) trees spaced 35 feet apart. This would amount to approximately 82 caliper inches. The proposed plan includes 60 trees at a minimum 3-inch DBH that will increase the caliper inches provided to approximately 180 caliper inches. All proposed trees are on the City's recommended street list. Street trees in planters adjacent to paved surfaces will include soil cells extending beyond the paved area to provide the minimum soil volume per tree required by the SZO.

The Boynton Yards Master Plan committed to providing over 320 permanent short-term bicycle parking spaces including three Bluebike stations (19 bikes per station). The plan for Thoroughfare 1 includes 66 permanent short-term bicycle parking spaces.

d). Considerations indicated elsewhere in this Ordinance for the required Site Plan Approval.

The Project is consistent with all considerations in the Zoning Ordinance required for Site Plan approval and meets the requirements of Section 8.4.12.g for the Thoroughfare Network in the BY Sub-Area.