



March 29, 2023

P&Z 23-012

Planning Board  
c/o Mr. Michael Capuano, Chair  
City of Somerville  
93 Highland Avenue  
Somerville, MA 02143

**P&Z 23-012: Special Permit for Parking Relief**

Dear Mr. Capuano,

Somerville Living LLC ("Applicant"), a DiBiase Companies subsidiary, is requesting a **Special Permit for Parking Relief** from the City of Somerville's Planning Board for the proposed project at 16-20 Medford Street ("Property") as originally approved by the City of Somerville's Planning Board on September 8, 2022 with tracking identification P&Z 21-057 ("Original Project") and as recorded at the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds at Book 80804, Page 074 and at Book 80804, Page 086.

**Original Project**

The Original Project, as approved, includes 41 residential condominium units and approximately 3,500 sf of commercial space located at 16-20 Medford Street. The Original Project fronts on Medford Street, South Street, Bedford Street, and Warren Street. The Original Project includes approximately 67,667 gross square feet of ground up development with 4 stories above grade and a subgrade parking garage. The Original Project includes 43 off-street parking spaces, of which, 11 are at grade, and 32 are subgrade via an internal vehicular ramp. The Original Project includes 8 affordable dwelling units ("ADU"), along with 42 internally bike stations located in the subgrade garage. The Original Project includes 12' wide sidewalks around all street fronts coupled with robust landscaping elements to further enhance the public realm while providing 4 designated short-term delivery, loading and visitor parking spaces located on private property. The Original Project is to be LEED Platinum certifiable.

**Proposed Project**

The proposed updated project submitted herein via P&Z 23-012 and P&Z 23-011 ("Proposed Project") maintains the same building footprint and building height of the Original Project, while incorporating the following modifications/variations:

1. Remove subsurface garage. Proposed parking count reduced from 43 parking spaces to 12 parking spaces. ***Special permit for parking relief is requested.***
2. Increase in total units from 41 to 51. Increase in ADUs from 8 to 10.
3. Revise program from a condominium for-sale format to an apartment, or rental, format.
4. Change building energy goals from LEED Platinum Certifiable to LEED Platinum Certifiable **and** Net Zero Ready construction.
5. Relocate bike room from subsurface garage to grade level. Bike room to be fully enclosed and long-term bike spaces to be increased from 42 spaces to 52 spaces.

### **Request for a Special Permit for Parking Relief**

The Proposed Project seeks a special permit for parking relief on-site. Pursuant to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (“SZO”), the Property is located just outside the half-mile walkshed. As a result, SZO requires one parking space for each residential unit provided on site.

The Applicant’s understanding is that properties located within the 0.5-mile transit walk shed are not required under SZO to provide onsite parking, while properties outside the 0.5-mile transit walk shed are required under SZO to provide parking on site. The Applicant reports that the Property is approximately 0.02 miles (or +/- 100 feet) outside of the current City’s designated transit walkshed (walking distance to Union Square Train Station to/from the Property). The Applicant further reports that using a straight-line method, the Property is well within a 0.5-mile radius to Union Square Train Station.

In addition, the City of Somerville’s OSPCD, Economic Development team provided insight related to a proposed, conceptual pedestrian bridge from Boynton Yards to Union Square train station. If this pedestrian infrastructure is implemented/constructed, the Property will be within the 0.5-mile transit walkshed.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the direct abutter across Medford Street to the subject Property, 36 Medford Street, is designated per the SZO Transit Map to be within the 0.5-mile transit walkshed.

A request by the City of Somerville to reduce on-site parking is well documented during the Planning Board hearings and Development Review Process for the Original Project. Per the Site Plan Approval dated August 18, 2022, and as recorded, the Record of Proceedings on page 1 includes the following comments:

*“After public testimony portion of the hearing was closed, the Board expressed topics that they wanted to be addressed by the Applicant at a future meeting. **Those matters included functionality of deliveries, safety considerations for pedestrians and cyclists, why the Applicant did not pursue a Special Permit for reduced parking...**” [emphasis added]*

Next, the Director of Mobility via the January 28, 2022, Preliminary decision of the Director of Mobility for the Mobility Management Plan for the Original Project stated the following:

*“The Mobility Division is concerned with a parking ratio of 1.05 space per unit but acknowledges that the Applicant is constrained by the existing parking minimums in the SZO. The Mobility Division strongly encourages the applicant to consider whether the Shared Parking provisions of the SZO allow for a reduction in the minimum number of parking spaces required and, if so, reduce the number parking spaces provided. National and local research has demonstrated that excessive motor vehicle parking in new development reduces mass transit ridership and undermines public investment in mass transit infrastructure. **Ideally, the SZO would be amended to require fewer parking spaces in development of this type and location, or the Applicant would seek a variance to construct fewer parking spaces than currently required.**” [emphasis added]*

Lastly, the Applicant submitted “*On-Street Parking Supply/Demand Study and Transportation Demand Management Memorandum Dated 3/21/2023*”, created by GM2, and at the request of Mobility.

Overall, the Applicant is seeking to further align the design and planning of the Proposed Project at the Property to be more in line with the City of Somerville goals and visions pursuant to City’s official comprehensive plan duly adopted by its Planning Board and endorsed by its City Council in October 2021 (*SomerVision*), as well as the general comments issued/offered by the Planning Board and Mobility during the Original Project’s permitting efforts. The Proposed Project is committed to achieving the City’s goal of having the percentage of trips made to the site by automobile be 50% or less, which is consistent with *SomerVision*.

The Proposed Project maintains some parking on-site. The Applicant proposes twelve (12) at-grade level parking spaces located off-of Bedford Street. This retains a similar design to the Original Project but includes one additional parking space. The at-grade parking maintains viable solutions to the concerns of the neighborhood, Mobility, and/or the Planning Board: (1) four (4) spaces will be dedicated to ride share, visitor parking, and/or quick deliveries, (2) vertical distance at the garage entrance enables larger box trucks to enter the open-air parking area for larger deliveries (removing the burden blocking the public way), and (3) properly allocate parking spaces to the Property’s renters on an as-needed basis.

The Applicant, Somerville Living LLC, formally requests from the City of Somerville’s Planning Board a special permit to reduce residential on-site parking from 51 parking spaces to 12 parking spaces for the Proposed Project at 16-20 Medford Street, Somerville, MA.

We look forward to reviewing with the City of Somerville in greater detail.

Sincerely,

*Ugo DiBiase*

Ugo DiBiase, CFA  
Director, Investments & Finance  
Somerville Living, LLC, a DiBiase Companies entity

CC: Paul DiBiase, Manager, Somerville Living LLC  
Tanya Carriere, Khalsa Design, Inc.  
Andrew Graminski, Planner, City of Somerville

Enclosures