



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

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

TO: Planning Board
FROM: OSPCD Staff
SUBJECT: 2-4 Alpine Street, P&Z 21-119
POSTED: December 14, 2023

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions (SPA)
Approve with Conditions (SP)

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

This memo summarizes the development review application submitted for 2-4 Alpine St, 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 September 25, 2023, and is scheduled for a public hearing on December 07, 2023. 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

2-4 Alpine Somerville, LLC proposes to develop a four (4)-story General building and establish a Household Living use in the Mid-Rise 4 zoning (MR4) district, which requires Site Plan Approval and one (1) Special Permit for the Household Living use.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

2-4 Alpine Somerville, LLC is proposing to construct a four (4)-story General building type. The proposed development will produce 1,384 square feet of commercial space, 26 dwelling units of which 5 are affordable units, no motor vehicle parking spaces, 30 long-term bicycle parking spaces, and 8 short-term bicycle parking spaces.

BACKGROUND

2-4 Alpine Street is located in the 0.5mi Transit Area in the Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) zoning district in the Magoun Square neighborhood represented by Ward 5 Councilor Beatriz Gomez Mouakad. Establishing a general building requires Site Plan Approval. Site Plan Approval is the administrative review and approval of conforming development to address any potential impacts as necessary. The Applicant is also seeking to establish a Household Living principal use, which requires a Special Permit. The Planning Board is the decision-making authority for all (non-variance) discretionary or administrative

permits required for the MR4 zoning district.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

The first neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward 5 Councilor Mark Niedergang and the Applicant on October 21, 2021, via the Zoom meeting platform. The second neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward 5 Councilor Beatriz Gomez-Mouakad and the development team on March 23, 2022, via the Zoom meeting platform. The Applicant's neighborhood meeting and design report provide greater detailed responses to community feedback and design recommendations from the UDC.

DESIGN REVIEW

The proposal was reviewed by Somerville Urban Design Commission via the GoToWebinar meeting platform on March 01, 2022. The Commission provided its official recommendation on March 01, 2022.

ANALYSIS

At the required neighborhood meetings for the proposed general building, community members raised comments and concerns about the bedroom types, traffic and parking, and construction impacts. These concerns were addressed by the Applicant team both during the neighborhood meetings and with the submitted plans. The Applicant removed parking from the basement relieving concerns about additional traffic coming to and from the building. Additionally, the Applicant team confirmed that construction work will be limited to those hours and days permitted by Inspectional Services Department (ISD). The Applicant is proposing commercial space on the ground floor with residential on the upper floors.

Sustainability

The Applicant is proposing the building's energy profile to be both LEED Gold Certifiable and Net-Zero Ready Passive House. It is estimated that the project will receive 77.5 credits of the required 60 credits to achieve the LEED Gold rating.

Sustainability highlighted a few recommendations for the Applicant including, but not limited to;

- Encouraging the Applicant to research incentives for renewables and heat pumps
- Projects over 7,000 GSF may need to upgrade electric capacity through Eversource, as such the Applicant contact Eversource to discuss.

Additionally, Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE) Staff noted several outstanding concerns that the Applicant will need to address prior to building permit. The Applicant should reach out to OSE Staff to discuss any outstanding concerns.

Site Design

The Applicant is proposing to underground the transformer vault on the northeast side of the property directly adjacent to the building façade. PPZ Staff have recommended a condition that if the transformer vault can no longer be located underground at a future stage in the development process, that change will constitute a Major Amendment, requiring board review.

Parking and Mobility

The Applicant is not proposing any motor vehicle parking onsite as this property is located within the 0.5 mile Transit area. The site is served by a several bus lines. As this site is located within a transit area, onsite motor vehicle parking is not required by zoning. Mobility Staff approved the Applicant's Transportation Access Plan and Mobility Management Plan on December 07, 2021. In March of 2023 the Applicant submitted updated plans and Transportation Access Plan to Mobility Staff showing the removal of eleven parking spots originally depicted in the first set of plans. Mobility Staff reviewed the updated plans and provided their approval on March 15, 2023. The Applicant has committed to several mobility management techniques as outlined in their approved Mobility Management Plan (MMP). Some of these commitments include, but are not limited to:

- Control the percentage of trips made by automobile at 37.5% or less
- Host annual mobility education meetings for all the residents
- Distribute TDM program information on the Project's websites, in related media or newsletters

Green Score and Landscaping

The Applicant is compliant with the landscape and open space zoning requirements and exceeds the minimum green score for the MR4 zoning district. The Applicant is proposing a common roof deck with a green roof, public realm enhancements including new street trees, decorative permeable pavers, and multiple plantings are proposed around the building. PSUF Staff noted in their review that the Green Score submitted by the Applicant is incorrect and the total area is 7,565 sq ft as opposed to the 7,579 sq ft calculated by the Applicant. Additionally, the Applicant will need MBTA / MassDOT approval as the community path is not City Owned and the MBTA / MassDOT reviews projects within 30' Zone of Influence.

Housing

Twenty (20) percent of the dwelling units must be affordable dwelling units (ADUs). Twenty (20) percent of twenty-seven (26) is 5.2 ADUs. When the calculation for affordable dwelling units results in a fractional value, the fractional value is either rounded up to the next whole number and regarded as a whole unit or, alternatively, a buyout may be paid for the fractional value in accordance with Section 12.3 Buyouts &

Payments. The Applicant has decided to do the latter and provide a payment for the fractional value.

The Applicant had submitted an AHIP to Housing, dated February 13, 2022, stating there would be eleven parking spaces in the basement. The Applicant has since removed the parking due to ground water issues. Housing Staff has reviewed the change and has no outstanding concerns in regards to parking spaces. The Housing Office will require that the development team reserve a proportion of the bicycle parking for IZ tenants.

Due to the changed plans that were submitted between the previous AHIP being approved and the final application being submitted to the Planning Board the Housing Division identified that an amended AHIP will be needed prior to Building permit. A new condition has been proposed to ensure that no Building Permit will be issued prior to an amended AHIP being approved by the Housing Division.

Engineering

The Applicant is compliant with Engineering; however, Engineering Staff had several issues for the Applicant to consider before Building permit. Preservation Staff encourages the Applicant to reach out to Engineering to address these concerns. Additionally, PPZ Staff has drafted conditions to address these concerns below.

CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

The Planning Board is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to deliberate on 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. Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.

Household Living Special Permit 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. The suitability of the site for a household living principal use compared to other potential principal uses.
4. The ability of the development proposal to meet the demand for dwelling units of various types, sizes, and bedroom counts.

5. The increase or decrease in the number or price of any previously existing ADUs.
6. The number of motor vehicle parking spaces proposed for development within a Transit Area.

Information relative to the required considerations is provided below:

Site Plan Approval + Special Permit:

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

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

- Significantly increase housing stock to keep up with demand while pursuing the goals of increasing the proportion of affordable housing and housing stock diversity.
- Promote a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces car dependence, and is accessible, inviting, and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.
- Minimize the overall land use in Somerville dedicated to personal vehicles while encouraging alternative modes.

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

Staff believes the proposal is consistent with the intent of the MR4 zoning district which is, in part, “[T]o create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for smaller scale, multi-use and mixed-use buildings and neighborhood serving uses.”

Site Plan Approval:

3. 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.

Household Living Special Permit:

4. The suitability of the site for a household living principal use compared to other potential principal uses.

PPZ Staff believes the development site is highly suitable for a residential use as it is within the ½ mile transit area, close to multiple bus stops, and located along a major corridor that contains many districts zoned for mixed-use development and high-density residential development.

5. The ability of the development proposal to meet the demand for dwelling units of various types, sizes, and bedroom counts.

The proposal includes two (2) studio units, twenty-two (22) one-bedroom units, two (2) two-bedroom units. Five (5) one-bedroom units will be ADUs.

6. The increase or decrease in the number or price of any previously existing ADUs.

There are no previously existing ADUs on the site.

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

No motor vehicle parking is proposed for this development; thus Staff believe this finding is not applicable.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

Should the Board approve the required **Site Plan Approval** for the four-story General building, Planning, Preservation & Zoning Staff does not recommend any conditions at this time.

Permit Validity

- This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds. Construction documents must be substantially equivalent to the approved plans and other materials submitted for development review.
- Alterations to the design or location of the transformer vault is a major amendment to the approved plans and is permitted only as a Plan Revision in accordance with Article 15 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.
- 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.

Public Record

- One (1) digital copy of all required application materials reflecting any physical changes required by the Board, if applicable, must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation, & Zoning Division for the public record. Materials must be submitted in accordance with the document format standards of relevant Submittal Requirements.
- A copy of the Recorded Decision stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds must be submitted for the public record.

Mobility

- The property owner and applicable future tenants shall comply with the Mobility Management Plan as approved and conditioned by the Director of Mobility on December 7, 2021.

Housing:

- An amended Affordable Housing Implementation Plan (AHIP) must be submitted and approved by the Director of Housing prior to applying for a Certificate of Occupancy.

Engineering:

- The Applicant shall obtain an easement executed by MBTA to allow balconies over the Community Path prior to execution of a building permit.
- The Applicant shall provide an engineered grading plan at building permit so Engineering Staff can determine if the proposed sidewalks and entries are compliant with ADA requirements.
- The 12' sidewalk design shall include a 5' wide, clear and continuous cementitious walkway.
- The Applicant shall include a clear line of pavers drawn in about 2' on both property lines unless tree locations are amended/removed or the curb line is amended so as to address that the current tree pit locations currently pinch the cementitious walkway to 3' wide
- A pedestrian access easement shall be required for any of the 5' continuous walkway that encroaches on private property.

Sustainability

- All Stage 2 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements.
- All Stage 3 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements.

Landscape & Green Score:

- The Applicant shall obtain MBTA / MassDOT approval for their Landscape plans prior to execution of a building permit.

Construction Documents

- Construction documents must be substantially equivalent to the approved plans and other materials submitted for development review.
- Materials 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 updated 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, lum type, lumens, color temperature, color rendering

index, BUG rating, mounting height, and wattage of all luminaries; and notation of any timing devices used to control the hours set for illumination.

Maintenance

- The property owner is responsible for all regular and long-term maintenance, replacement, insurance, and other applicable costs associated with all on-site sidewalk improvements.

Should the Board approve the required **Special Permit to establish a Household Living Use**, Planning, Preservation & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions:

Housing

- An amended Affordable Housing Implementation Plan (AHIP) must be submitted and approved by the Director of Housing prior to issuance of a Building Permit.
- A deed restriction limiting the sale or rental of all affordable dwelling units to eligible households in perpetuity must be executed and recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.

Parking

- Dwelling units must be advertised as ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission.
- All buyers, grantees, lessees, renters, and tenants must be notified in writing prior to sale or lease of any dwelling unit that the residents are ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission.
- Formal acknowledgement that residents are ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission, must be filed with this decision.