

## **Application for Special Permit Narrative Description**

Lotus Yoga Studio is applying for a special permit for the retail space located at 288 Highland Ave, Somerville, MA 02145 to be used as a Yoga Studio.

We believe that Lotus Yoga Studio has met the following criteria:

### **SZO 15.2.1.e and SZO 4.2.13.b.b:**

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

Lotus Yoga Studio aligns with the City's plan and standards by aligning with its values and mission to enhance the experience of Somerville's residents by creating more spaces for community, health and wellness.

Lotus Yoga Studio loves getting involved with local events such as Town Day, health fairs etc and engaging with the community. Lotus Yoga Studio makes it a priority to give back to the local community in Arlington and plans to do the same in Somerville when we open our business here.

Lotus Yoga Studio wants to engage with and support the Somerville community as best we can by bringing yoga, mindfulness and fitness to the neighborhood.

Lotus Yoga Studio aligns with the City of Somerville's plan and standards as we will bring in more business, activity and diversity to the neighborhood. Lotus Yoga Studio is a LGBTQ+ Woman Owned Small Business for 5 years. Lotus Yoga Studio values diversity, inclusivity, community engagement, and offers a variety of classes and trainings striving to make yoga accessible for all levels, ages, races, orientations, genders, backgrounds, and abilities. Last year Lotus Yoga received a grant to provide ASL interpretation for our Yoga Teacher Training program making it accessible for our Deaf yoga students. We offer free special events such Yoga Book Club, and create safe spaces in the studio with ASL Yoga, prenatal yoga, chair yoga, etc. We plan to continue to offer these wonderful events, and invite more students to join us in the Somerville space and bring more health, wellness and community connection to the neighborhood.

- **The intent of the zoning district where the property is located**

The building is a mixed use MR4 residential and commercial building on a pedestrian walkway on a main street, Highland Ave. The residents and owner of 288 Highland Ave

feel that a yoga studio on the ground floor would support a harmonious building and enhance the neighborhood.

- **The maintenance of a diverse blend of commercial uses within the neighborhood.**

This neighborhood does not have any other yoga studio in the area, and the addition of Lotus Yoga would help add to the diverse blend of businesses in the community. Due to the lack of yoga studios in Somerville at this time, our Arlington Lotus Yoga Studio location is seeing many residents from Somerville coming to Arlington to practice. Adding this location would allow them to practice in their hometown.

- **The availability of the same services within the neighborhood.**

The Somerville community lost almost all of its yoga studios due to the pandemic leaving a need for more health and wellness businesses in the area. Lotus Yoga wants to bring health and wellness to Somerville and specifically, the Highland Ave Neighborhood.

- **The existing concentration of uses from the same use category within the neighborhood.**

There are no other yoga studios within 1 mile of the Lotus Yoga Studio proposed at 288 Highland Ave.

- **The availability of comparable commercial spaces within the neighborhood.**

The building at 288 Highland Ave, has been used as a Yoga Studio in the past by O2 Yoga for many years until they closed in 2021. Since they closed, it has been vacant. The space is already set up for a yoga studio and is the only available commercial space in the area that is set up for this use currently, without work needing to be done.

We hope this explains what we intend to do to the space and with our business. We are hopeful that this yoga studio will enhance the neighborhood. We ask that the special permit for yoga studio use at 288 Highland Ave, Somerville, MA 02143 please be approved.

Thank you for considering our application.

*Lauren Farenga-Kosmidis, Owner Lotus Yoga Studio*

