

DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE

Property: 120 Beacon Street
Applicant: Animal Care Innovations Ltd.
Owner: 120 Beacon Street Limited Partnership
Agent: Adam Dash, Esq.
Zoning District: Mid-Rise 4 (“MR4”)
Not in a Transit Area
In the Pedestrian Street District

Summary: Application for a Special Permit to establish a Veterinarian use on the first floor facing a Pedestrian Street District.

The Property sits at the corner of Beacon Street and Washington Street and contains an existing, mixed-use commercial structure in Ward 2. The first-floor space in said structure which is the subject of the application faces Beacon Street and was last used as an Xfinity store. The space being leased by Applicant is 4,857 square feet. Said structure will be retained, and the use will be changed to a Veterinarian use which requires a Special Permit due to being on the first floor facing a Pedestrian Street District, which is that part of the structure which borders Beacon Street. The Washington Street side of the Property is also a Pedestrian Street District.

There are no dimensional changes proposed to the existing building at the Property other than new signage for the Veterinarian use.

This Special Permit application only relates to the change in use.

The Property has been vacant for some time, and has parking for 15 cars on the left side of the structure for the street level uses, which will be used by Applicant’s customers. There is a parking garage under the building for the upper story uses, which will be used by Applicant’s employees.

Applicant now seeks a Special Permit under SZO Section 4.2.13 to:

-establish a Veterinarian use, which is required due to the Property being in a Pedestrian Street District.

Special Permit

Per Section 15.2.1.e of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

In its discretion to approve or deny a Special Permit required by this Ordinance, the review board shall make findings considering, at least, each of the following:

a). The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans

and standards established by the City.

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

c). Considerations indicated elsewhere in this Ordinance for the required Special Permit.

- a. Applicant's proposal meets the requirements for a Veterinarian establishment as set forth in Section 9.2.6.a.iv of the SZO. The City amended the SZO in 2022 to permit Veterinarian uses on first floors in Pedestrian Street Districts in order to facilitate the establishment of those uses in locations such as this. This amendment shows that the policy plans and standards as established by the City favor the creation of Veterinarian uses in this particular area, and that Applicant has met such policy plans and standards.
- b. Per Section 4.2.2 of the SZO, the intent of the MR4 zoning district is, in part, "[t]o create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for smaller scale, multi-use and mixed-use buildings, and neighborhood serving uses". Per Section 4.2.3 of the SZO, the purpose of the MR4 zoning district is, in part, "[t]o provide quality commercial spaces and permit small- scale, neighborhood serving commercial uses." The MR4 zoning district was recently amended in 2022 to allow Veterinarian uses on ground floors facing Pedestrian Street Districts. The Property at issue fronts a Pedestrian Street District and meets the intent that Veterinarian uses are appropriate in such locations. The multi-story building is property scaled for MR4, will contain a use which will serve the neighborhood and will provide quality ground story commercial space and employment opportunities, all in accordance with SZO 4.2. The services being proposed by Applicant will serve both Somerville residents and workers, as well as visitors to Somerville.
- c. For Veterinarian uses in the Pedestrian Street District, additional considerations are required.

Per Section 4.2.13.b.i.b of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

In addition to the review criteria for all Special Permits specified in §15.2.1.e. Review Criteria, the review board shall make findings considering the following in its discretion to approve or deny a special permit authorizing a Veterinarian, Fitness Services or Health Care Services use to occupy a ground story commercial space fronting a pedestrian street:

i). The maintenance of a diverse blend of commercial uses within the neighborhood.

ii). The existing concentration of uses from the same use category within the

neighborhood.

iii). The availability of the same services within the neighborhood.

iv). The availability of comparable commercial spaces within the neighborhood.

- i. The Property is located at the intersection of the major thoroughfares of Beacon Street and Washington Street, which is well served by buses and bike lanes and which has a variety of commercial uses. Applicant's Veterinarian use enhances the mix of businesses in the area, where there is currently only one such other Veterinarian establishment nearby, but that other establishment is moving further away. The large number of residents, workers and visitors in the area, which includes Harvard and Inman Squares, need more Veterinarian uses.
- ii. As stated, there are certainly not enough Veterinarian establishments to serve the many residents, workers and visitors in the neighborhood and, without Applicant, there will soon be none. There is not a large concentration of Veterinarian establishments nearby.
- iii. Applicant's business model, which operates under the name Tandem Vet Care, provides services to the community that cannot otherwise be found in this location. Examples of what makes the Applicant's brand different and an amenity to the neighborhood include:
 - being a full-service veterinary provider
 - providing advanced diagnostics and surgery services
 - integrating the in-person veterinary services with an on-line virtual component
 - being inclusive to serve all customers
- iv. There are not many commercial buildings which can accommodate Applicant's business model, while being adjacent to buses and bike lanes and having a parking lot, all while being on the first floor with a storefront. Likewise, the Pedestrian Street District designation limits the number of tenants who could lease the space. The Property is the perfect place for this use. In order for Applicant to serve this neighborhood, it is best for them to operate from this location. Applicant has been unable to find comparable space in this neighborhood for its business, and the Owner has been unable to find a tenant for its long-vacant space. This proposal solves both of their problems while providing a needed service near multiple transit opportunities.

Per Section 9.2.6.a.iv of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

Overnight boarding of animals is limited to patients recovering from medical procedures.

Applicant will not board animals overnight.

Conclusion

As Applicant meets the requirements for a special permit to establish a Veterinarian use in a Pedestrian Street District, Applicant respectfully requests the special permit requested.