



City of Somerville

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

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

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: OSPCD Staff
SUBJECT: 9-15 Taylor Street, ZP24-000015
POSTED: October 10, 2024

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions

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 9-15 Taylor Street, 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 13, 2024 and is scheduled for a public hearing on October 16, 2024. 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

Taylor Mystic LLC seeks relief from the minimum parking requirements in the Urban Residence zoning district, which requires a Special Permit.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Taylor Mystic LLC is proposing to construct a 34-unit residential apartment building, which requires a special permit for the amount of parking spaces provided. Under SZO § 3.2.17, one parking space per dwelling unit is required in the Urban Residence (UR) zoning district. Here, 34 parking spaces is required. However, the applicant is proposing 24 parking spaces: 20 on-site spaces and 4 on-street spaces.

BACKGROUND

9-15 Taylor Street is located in the Urban Residence (UR) zoning district in the Winter Hill neighborhood represented by Ward 4 Councilor Jesse Clingan. Providing less than one parking space per dwelling unit in the UR district requires a Special Permit. Special Permit Approval is the administrative review and approval of conforming development to address any potential impacts as necessary. The Zoning Board of Appeals is the decision-making authority for all discretionary or administrative permits required for the UR zoning district.

Currently, the site consists of two multi-family apartment buildings. the Project will consist of the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a single residential apartment building with 34 dwelling units. The proposed apartment building will be zoning complaint, with the exception of this Special Permit request. Access to the site is proposed by way of a single driveway to Taylor Street.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

The neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward 4 Councilor Jesse Clingan and the applicant on February 14, 2024, via the Zoom meeting platform. Concerns were raised about vibrations and noise created during construction. However, attendees agreed that it seemed like adequate parking.

ANALYSIS

An apartment building in the UR district is required to have one parking space per dwelling unit. This project entails the construction of a new thirty-four (34) unit apartment building in this district. The request to decrease the amount of parking spaces provided to twenty-four (24) triggers the request for a Special Permit, as one is needed to allow this decrease. The project as proposed is otherwise zoning compliant and by-right.

Staff believes the proposed project is consistent with the goals of SomerVision 2040, including minimizing the overall space in Somerville dedicated to personal vehicles. Here, twenty-four parking spaces are still being provided, giving opportunity to most residents who want a parking space to still use one, while decreasing the amount of space dedicated to parking overall.

Staff believes that the project will have only minor impacts to existing on-street parking in the neighborhood. The applicant's request for a decrease in the amount of parking required would bring fewer cars into the neighborhood and reduce overall parking impacts. In addition, there is currently a Zoning Amendment scheduled for a public hearing that, if approved, would eliminate parking minimums all together and nullify the need for a Special Permit.

In the applicant's Mobility Management Plan, they also described multiple strategies for reducing the need for on-site vehicle parking. These strategies include on-site bicycle parking, a transit information board to display the schedules of near-by bus routes (including Bus Routes 89, 90, and 95), and pedestrian-friendly design that provides a major through-connection from Mystic Avenue to Broadway by a series of generally parallel routes.

CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

The Zoning Board of Appeals is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to deliberate each of the following considerations at the public hearing. The Board must

discuss and draw conclusions for each consideration, but may make additional findings beyond this minimum statutory requirement.

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 supply and demand of on-street parking in the neighborhood, as determined through a parking study.
4. Mobility management programs and services provided by the applicant to reduce the demand for parking.
5. That parking provided in excess of any maximum permitted does not result in the increase in impervious lot area.

Information relative to the required considerations is provided below:

Site Plan Approval and Special Permit

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

Staff believes that this project supports the goals laid out in SomerVision 2040, the City's Comprehensive Master Plan, including the following:

- 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.

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

The intent of the UR zoning district is, in part: "To create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for multi-unit residential buildings."

3. *The supply and demand of on-street parking in the neighborhood, as determined through a parking study.*

Staff believe that there will be minor impacts to the existing on-street parking in the neighborhood. The Applicant's traffic study provides data on the neighborhood's on-street parking numbers and existing parking permits.

4. Mobility management programs and services provided by the applicant to reduce the demand for parking.

Staff believes that the Applicant is proposing a robust set of mobility management strategies to help offset the demand for parking for motor vehicles including limiting on site vehicle parking, bicycle accommodations, a transit information board to display the

schedules of near-by bus routes, and pedestrian-friendly design strategies to promote walkability.

5. *The parking provided in excess of any maximum permitted does not result in the increase in impervious lot area.*

This criterion is not applicable, since the Applicant is requesting relief from the minimum parking requirements, not the maximum.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

Should the Board approve the required Special Permit, Planning, Preservation & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions:

Validity

1. This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
2. A written narrative or descriptive checklist identifying the completion or compliance with permit conditions must be provided to the Inspectional Services Department at least ten (10) working days in advance of a request for a final inspection.
- 3.

Public Record

4. A copy of the recorded Decision stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation & Zoning Division for the public record.
5. Digital copies 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.

Mobility

6. As voluntarily communicated in the Mobility Management Plan, the applicant must monitor and report an annual travel survey of the tenants' travel behavior, annual status updates of the progress towards the mode share goal, and biennial counts of parking ins and outs to determine if parking is adequate and submit this information to the Mobility Division. If the project falls short of multimodal travel goals, the applicant must develop new strategies to achieve these goals.
7. The applicant must implement the Transit Information Board, the Bicycle Accommodations, and the Pedestrian-Friendly design strategies, as described in the Mobility Management Plan.