

Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Civic Advisory Committee

Date & Time: October 3rd, 2024

This public meeting of the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Civic Advisory Committee was conducted via remote participation. We will post an audio recording, audio-video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of these proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting on the project website: <https://voice.somervillema.gov/winter-hill-plan-implementation>.

The meeting was held using Zoom Webinar. A recording of the meeting can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3kFUh3EOj0Q>

Meeting notes

The meeting began at 5:35pm.

Staff noted that they would deviate slightly from the agenda because of the number of new CAC members.

1. Welcoming new CAC members.

a. Introductions

Staff welcomed eight new members to the Civic Advisory Committee (CAC): Denise Lauers, Ani Ajemian, Colby Kyes, Arthur Goncalves, Renee LeWinter, Nicholas Teklits, Adrian Roman, and Raymond Estrella. (A. Roman and R. Estrella were unable to join, but all other new members were in attendance.) They joined existing members Breck Bailey, Councilor Jesse Clingan, and Councilor Jake Wilson. Members did a round of introductions to get to know each other.

Staff also noted that two CAC members, Edith Kwok and Will Colan, had left their roles since the previous meeting.

b. Review of meeting structures.

Staff reviewed portions of the CAC's charter, including:

- The purpose, objective, and scope of the CAC;
- The composition of the CAC;
- CAC member roles and responsibilities;
- City staff roles and responsibilities.

Staff then also reviewed the meeting structure commonly used for CAC meetings.

A CAC member asked if CAC members should bring questions they hear from other members of the community to CAC meetings. Staff answered that this would be helpful, yes, but that they could also encourage other community members to attend CAC meetings since they are open to the public. CAC members should also disseminate information that they learn at CAC meetings out to the public.

c. Review of the goals of the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan.

Staff reviewed goals of the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan, which can be found online [here](https://www.somervillebydesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Winter-Hill-Neighborhood-Plan-WEB.pdf). (<https://www.somervillebydesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Winter-Hill-Neighborhood-Plan-WEB.pdf>) This plan was adopted by the Somerville City Council in 2021.

Staff explained that urban renewal is managed in Somerville by the Somerville Redevelopment Authority (SRA), which receives support from staff and is advised by input from various Civic Advisory Committees. Generally the SRA will implement urban renewal by creating an urban renewal plan for an area and then selecting a development partner through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process, in which proposals for site development are submitted for evaluation. This process may also require the SRA to use the power of eminent domain to take private property that is then redeveloped, if the selected development partner is unable to purchase the site directly. In the case of the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan (WHURP), however, after the plan was adopted, a private development deal moved forward that is seen as significantly meeting the goals of the WHURP without the formal involvement of the SRA. The development team for this deal, made up of a partnership between MarkDevelopment, Beacon Communities, and RISE Together, also managed to purchase the 299 Broadway property through a private transaction without the use of eminent domain.

Staff provided a short summary of the 299 Broadway project, which received its comprehensive permit from the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals in February 2023 and amended that approval to allow for a design change in Spring of 2024. The project will create 316 units of new housing, 135 of which are deed-restricted affordable, along with two civic spaces and a connecting path, approximately 12,000 square feet (sf) of ground floor retail, and a 3,000 sf community room. Staff noted that the CAC wrote a letter in support of this project in late 2022 and then went on hiatus until the development team purchased the site.

Staff noted that updates on 299 Broadway will take up a lot of the time of this committee. However, CAC members can also choose to return to discussions of the other parcels that the WHURP identifies—namely 313 Broadway and 9 Temple Street at the intersection of Broadway and Temple Street.

2. Development update at 299 Broadway.

Scott Lombardi, Vice President of Development with MarkDevelopment, and Darcy Jameson, Vice President of Development with Beacon Communities, joined the meeting to introduce themselves to new CAC members and to give more detail about the 299 Broadway project. They shared that they currently have a 95% set of construction documents for Building A and the site, and 75% construction documents for Building B. They are aiming to close in Spring of 2025. They anticipate breaking ground in

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late Spring / early Summer of 2025, and then approximately two years later will have a complete project.

A CAC member asked if the City has taken a position about whether to include the Winter Hill Liquors parcel (313 Broadway) in implementing the WHURP. B. Demers answered that the 299 Broadway team will not be purchasing the property as part of their development, and that the conversation about whether to recommend that the SRA redevelop the site has been put on pause while focusing on 299 Broadway.

A CAC member asked what the purpose would be of integrating the corner properties at 9 Temple Street and 313 Broadway into development plans in this area. B. Demers explained that, because the site is included in the WHURP area, the SRA could decide to redevelop the site to meet the goals outlined in the plan. This would be a separate development from the 299 Broadway development put forward by MarkDevelopment and Beacon Communities. If the SRA was considering this, however, they would collect community input through the CAC and other channels to determine if this was necessary for meeting the plan goals or if the 299 Broadway project sufficiently meets those goals. B. Demers added that part of the appeal of the 299 Broadway proposal by MarkDevelopment and Beacon Communities was that it did not incorporate those sites into redevelopment.

A CAC member asked whether the 299 Broadway project would cause traffic changes on Broadway or Temple during or after construction. S. Lombardi answered that, during construction, the team would need to use the sidewalks, so pedestrian traffic would be rerouted. However, they are planning to minimally impact vehicular traffic: they do not need to close any full lanes, and the bus stop will remain in relatively the same position during construction. The team is finalizing a Construction Management Plan (CMP) now that will need to be approved by City staff. He added that they envision this site as a largely car-free development long-term since transit is easily accessible.

A CAC member noted that neighbors are curious what mitigation measures will be taken to avoid asbestos and other particulates from traveling to nearby sites during demolition and construction, and how the retaining walls on the northern edge of the property would be managed. They recommended that information be shared proactively with neighbors. D. Jameson stressed that they would connect with neighbors before construction starts about these types of logistics. The CAC member added that outreach would need to be multilingual and that some neighbors do not have internet access so would need in-person engagement or mailings. Staff added that any community meetings supported by the City would be offered in English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Haitian Creole.

A CAC member asked if there was any on-site parking provided. S. Lombardi confirmed that there was no on-site parking. The reason for this is because underground parking would be too expensive to build because of the environmental cleanup that would be required to dig in deep soil.

A CAC member asked what type of retail would go into the ground floor spaces. S. Lombardi answered that all spaces will have the potential to be restaurants. All will have a floor plan of around 3,000 sf.

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A CAC member asked if all of the deed-restricted housing was in one of the buildings. S. Lombardi answered that the units are split, but the majority are in Building A, with many amenities shared across both buildings.

A CAC member asked what the plan was for the portion of the lot along Sewall Street that was not becoming Sewall Street Park. S. Lombardi answered that this portion was going to be deeded to the City and/or the Somerville Land Trust to become affordable ownership housing units.

A CAC member asked what sized affordable units would be included. D. Jameson added that it is a mix of 33 1-bedroom, 60 2-bedroom, and 22 3-bedroom units.

A CAC member asked who determines area median income (AMI) breakdown for the project. D. Jameson explained that the AMI breakdown (eg. units available at 30%, 60%, or 80% of AMI) is determined by the funding source, which in this case is largely the Federal Low Income Housing Tax Credit. The actual AMI (of which a percentage is taken to determine maximum rent) is calculated for metropolitan areas.

A member of the public, Ben Elgart, asked how the community room would be accessed. B. Demers explained that staff do not have an exact process yet to program the space, but that the intention is to allow members of the public (including community organizations) to book the space and use it for meetings.

B. Elgart also asked the plan for on-street resident parking permits for future residents of the buildings. S. Lombardi explained that all residents of the affordable units are eligible to apply for on-street parking passes. For the market-rate units, up to 50% of renters will be allowed to apply for Somerville on-street parking permits, but they would need to pay into a fund that would help mitigate transportation impacts.

A CAC member requested that the development team ensure that snow is removed from sidewalks adjacent to the site during the winter.

3. Updates from CAC members regarding community perceptions of 299 Broadway.

No updates were provided.

4. Public comment period.

No additional public comment was made. (A member of the public had asked questions during the earlier 299 Broadway project update.)

5. Meeting adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:51pm.