



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

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

DECISION

2025 FEB 24 P 12: 29

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 53 Chester Street
CASE NUMBER: ZP24-000055
OWNER: G2 PAR SOMERVILLE LLC
OWNER ADDRESS: 62 Black Rock Road, Cohasset, MA 02125
APPLICANT: John Greenip
APPLICANT ADDRESS: 62 Black Rock Road, Cohasset, MA 02125
DECISION: Approved with Conditions (Special Permit)
DATE OF VOTE: February 20, 2025
DECISION ISSUED: February 24, 2025

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
SOMERVILLE, MA

This decision summarizes the findings made by the Planning Board (the "Board") regarding the Special Permit application submitted for 53 Chester Street.

LEGAL NOTICE

John Greenip proposes to establish a Residential Housing principal use along a Pedestrian street in the Mid-Rise 4 zoning district, which a Special Permit.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

On February 6, 2025, the Planning Board held a public hearing advertised in accordance with M.G.L. 40A and the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. Present and sitting at the public hearing were Board Members Chair Michael Capuano, Vice-Chair Amelia Aboff, Clerk Habib, and Lynn Richards. The applicant team presented their proposal for a mixed-use building with three (3) 3-bedroom units and a commercial space on the ground floor. After the presentation by the applicant, Chair Capuano opened up the public testimony portion of the public hearing. Public testimony was largely supportive of the project, with several residents emphasizing the need to improve the existing site. Concerns were raised about the proposed parking supply, with several commenters suggesting a reduction in spaces given the proximity to transit. One resident requested a color other than gray for the building's exterior.

The Board expressed concerns regarding the building's design, particularly the blank side walls and the non-contextual façade, requesting the applicant consider options like vines, varied metal paneling, or a mural to add visual interest. They also discussed the commercial space, questioning its appropriateness in a primarily residential area and its potential impact on the neighborhood, despite the applicant's commitment to avoiding restaurant or coffee shop uses. The Board asked the applicant to explore modifications to the ground floor that would accommodate all permitted uses as of right and to revisit the façade design, specifically the roof line, cornices, and sunroom. The applicant agreed to bring the UDC-reviewed designs back to the Board for a more detailed discussion. The Board continued the public hearing.

On February 21, 2025, the Board resumed the public hearing. Present and sitting at the public hearing were Board Members Chair Michael Capuano, Vice-Chair Ameila Aboff, Clerk Jahan Habib, Michael McNeley, and Lynn Richards. The applicant presented revisions to their project based on feedback from the Design Commission and previous board meetings. Design revisions included transforming the corner into a more inviting, glazed porch with a Juliet balcony, and raising the bay windows to the building's top band for better proportions. Additionally, blank walls were modified with a metal panel system, though incorporating planting was deemed infeasible due to property access issues. Board members expressed appreciation for the applicant's responsiveness to their concerns. One board member voiced support for the proposed parking configuration, echoing a previous comment about the developer's justification for the number of spaces based on market signals. The board moved to approve the Special Permit.

PLANS & DOCUMENTS

Application plans, documents, and supporting materials submitted and incorporated are identified below.

Document	Pages	Prepared By	Date	Revision Date
53 Chester Street Development Narrative	1	Law Offices of Richard G. Di Girolamo, 424 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145	August 15, 2024	n/a
53 Chester Street Architectural Plans	37	Peter Quinn Architects LLC, 259 Elm St, STE 301, Somerville, MA 02144	January 18, 2024	August 26, 2024 September 5, 2024 October 8, 2024 November 6, 2024 February 14, 2025
53 Chester Street Certified Plot Plan	1	Boston Survey, Inc. Unit C-4 Shipway Place, Charlestown, MA 02129	March 14, 2024	n/a
53 Chester Street Landscape Plans	9	Verdant Landscape Architects, 318 Harvard Street, STE 25, Brookline, MA 02146	June 17, 2024	September 3, 2024 September 16, 2024 November 8, 2024
53 Chester Street Transportation Access Plan	19	BSC Group, 803 Summer Street, Boston, MA 02127	January 2024	November 2024
53 Chester Street Shadow Study	3	Peter Quinn Architects LLC, 259 Elm St, STE 301, Somerville, MA 02144	January 18, 2024	n/a
53 Chester Street Neighborhood Meeting Report	6	Law Offices of Richard G. Di Girolamo, 424 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145	June 16, 2024	n/a
53 Chester Street Design Review Report	2	Peter Quinn Architects LLC, 259 Elm St, STE 301, Somerville, MA 02144	January 24, 2024	n/a

SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS

In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, the Board may approve or deny a Special Permit upon making findings considering, at least, each of the following:

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

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

- Significantly increase housing stock to keep up with demand while pursuing the goals of increasing the proportion of affordable housing and housing stock diversity.
- 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.*

The Board finds that this project meets 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 commercial uses."

The Board finds that this project also meets the intent of the SZO (§1.1.4), including, but not limited to the following:

- To develop and maintain complete, mixed-use, walkable, transit-oriented, and environmentally sustainable neighborhoods that foster a strong sense of community throughout the city.
- To preserve and enhance the design of Somerville's public realm.
- To encourage the use of public transportation, bicycling, and walking in lieu of motor vehicle use when a choice of travel mode exists.

DECISION

Following public testimony, review of the submitted plans, and discussion of the statutorily required considerations, Chair Capuano moved to approve the **Special Permit** to establish a Residential Housing principal use along a Pedestrian street in the Mid-Rise 4 zoning district with the conditions included in the staff memo. Vice-Chair Aboff seconded. The Board voted **5-0** to approve the permit, subject to the following conditions:

Permit Validity

1. This decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.

Transportation

2. The Applicant shall install a bike corral containing a minimum of four (4) short-term bicycle parking spaces onsite.
3. The Applicant shall install a minimum of three (3) long-term bicycle parking spaces onsite.

Prior to Building Permit

4. If the Board requires any changes to the submitted plans, digital copies of all applicable application materials reflecting those changes 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.
5. A digital 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.

Prior to Certificate of Occupancy

6. 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.

Attest, by the Planning Board:

Michael Capuano, *Chair*
 Amelia Aboff, *Vice-Chair*
 Jahan Habib, *Clerk*
 Lynn Richards
 Michael McNeley

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

Any appeal of this decision must be filed within twenty days after the date this notice is filed in the Office of the City Clerk, and must be filed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 17 and SZO sec. 15.5.3.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, no variance shall take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title.

Also in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, a special permit shall not take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and either that no appeal has been filed or the appeal has been filed within such time, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title. The person exercising rights under a duly appealed Special Permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone.

The owner or applicant shall pay the fee for recording or registering. Furthermore, a permit from the Division of Inspectional Services shall be required in order to proceed with any project favorably decided upon by this decision, and upon request, the Applicant shall present evidence to the Building Official that this decision is properly recorded.

This is a true and correct copy of the decision filed on _____ in the Office of the City Clerk, and twenty days have elapsed, and

FOR VARIANCE(S) WITHIN

_____ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or
 _____ any appeals that were filed have been finally dismissed or denied.

FOR SPECIAL PERMIT(S) WITHIN

_____ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or
 _____ there has been an appeal filed.

FOR SITE PLAN APPROVAL(S) WITHIN

_____ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or
 _____ there has been an appeal filed.

Signed _____ City Clerk Date _____