



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

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

2025 MAR 20 A 10:10

DECISION

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 20-23 Cummings Street
CASE NUMBER: ZP24-000085
OWNER: 23C Property Owner, LLC
OWNER ADDRESS: One Federal Street, Suite 1804, Boston, Massachusetts, 02110
APPLICANT: Greystar Development East, LLC
APPLICANT ADDRESS: One Federal Street, Suite 1804, Boston, Massachusetts 02110
DECISION: Approved (Special Permits)
DATE OF VOTE: March 6, 2025
DECISION ISSUED: March 20, 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 20-23 Cummings Street.

2025 MAR 20 A 10:10
CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
SOMERVILLE, MA

LEGAL NOTICE

Greystar Development East, LLC seeks waivers from dimensional standards for building height, floor area ratio, and front setback, proposing occupancy of commercial space greater than 10,000 square feet in leasable floor area in the Assembly Square Mixed-use district and modifications to the provisions of Section 11.2 Motor Vehicle Parking, all which requires a Special Permit.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

On December 5, 2024, 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 Jahan Habib, Lynn Richards, and Michael McNeley. The Applicant presented their proposal and the relief needed via special permits. The Applicant noted circulation issues for the property and discussed the transit-oriented nature of the development. The Applicant discussed comments from the Mobility Division and reviewed the landscaping plans. Chair Capuano opened public testimony. Members of the public expressed concern about people accessing the development by utilizing an underpass, skepticism the need for more lab space, and concern about the impacts of large buildings. Chair Capuano closed public testimony and left the written testimony period open. The Board deliberated on connectivity of the development to the Ten Hills neighborhood, the relationship between this project and 74 Middlesex, existing and proposed civic spaces, and the impact of highways on the proposed land uses. The Board asked to see an updated shadow study. The Board continued the public hearing.

On December 19, 2024, the Board resumed the public hearing. Present and sitting at the public hearing were Board Members Chair Michael Capuano, Vice-Chair Amelia Aboff, Clerk Jahan Habib, Lynn Richards, Michael McNeley, and Alternate Luc Schuster. The Applicant presented updated renderings regarding how the parcels relate to adjacent neighborhoods, presented updated shadow studies, and discussed proposed parking ratios and transportation issues. The Applicant agreed to work with the Mobility Division on their concerns. The Board continued the public hearing.

On March 6, 2025, the Board resumed the public hearing. Present and sitting at the public hearing were Board Members Chair Michael Capuano, Vice-Chair Amelia Aboff, Clerk Jahan Habib, Lynn Richards, Michael McNeley, and Alternate Luc Schuster. The Applicant presented their revisions since the previous meeting. The Board discussed their concerns about shadows. The Board, Applicant, and a representative from the Mobility Division discussed the amount of proposed parking and the relevant conditions of approval. Chair Capuano closed the public hearing, and the Board moved to approve the Special Permit application.

PLANS & DOCUMENTS

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

Document	Pages	Prepared By	Date	Revision Date
20-23 Cummings Street Narrative	68	VHB, 99 High Street, 13 th Floor, Boston, MA 02110	May 31, 2024	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street Figures	31	Jacobs, 120 St. James avenue, 5 th Fl. Boston, MA 02116	May 31, 2024	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street Illustrative Plat Plan	4	BSC Group, 802 Summer Street, Boston, MA 02127	November 9, 2023	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street Transportation Documentation	194	VHB, 101 Walnut Street, PO Box 9151, Watertown, MA 02471	May 31, 2024	Transportation Impact Study Follow-Up on October 23, 2024
20-23 Cummings Street Neighborhood Meeting Documentation	52	VHB, 99 High Street, 13 th Floor, Boston, MA 02110	May 31, 2024	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street Environmental Studies	36	Shadow Studies conducted by Jacobs, 120 St. James avenue, 5 th Fl. Boston, MA 02116 Civic Space Study conducted by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc, 231 Concord Ave, Cambridge, MA 02138	May 31, 2024	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street – Meeting Follow Up Memo	35	Greystar Development East, LLC, One Federal Street, Suite 1804, Boston, MA 02110	November 27, 2024	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street – Planning Board Memo	1	Greystar Development East, LLC, One Federal Street, Suite	December 13, 2024	n/a

		1804, Boston, MA 02110		
20-23 Cummings Street – Response to Mobility Staff Memo	3	Greystar Development East, LLC, One Federal Street, Suite 1804, Boston, MA 02110	December 13, 2024	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street – Response to Planning Board Comments from Meeting #1 Memo	13	Greystar Development East, LLC, One Federal Street, Suite 1804, Boston, MA 02110	December 13, 2024	n/a
20-23 Cummings Street – Planning Board Hearings Memo	6	Greystar Development East, LLC, One Federal Street, Suite 1804, Boston, MA 02110	February 26, 2025	n/a

SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS

In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, the Board approved the Master Plan Special Permit upon making findings considering the following:

Special Permit Considerations

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

The Board finds that the proposal will help to achieve the following from SomerVision 2040 which is the comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Somerville:

- Invest in the growth of a resilient economic base that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency.
- Promote a dynamic urban streetscape that embraces public transportation, reduces car dependence, [] and safe for all pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit riders.
- Minimize the overall land use in Somerville dedicated to personal vehicles while encouraging alternative modes.
- Ensure Somerville civic spaces are for the entire community. They should be welcoming and easily accessible, and people should feel empowered to enjoy them and improve them.

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

The Board finds that the proposed Master Plan is consistent with the Assembly Square Mixed-Use (ASMD) special zoning district which, is in, part [t]o redevelop underutilized areas within close walking distance to the Assembly Square T-station with mixed-use, mid-rise and high-rise, transit-oriented development that will support the transformation of Assembly Square into an urban commerce center.

Special Permit Considerations for waivers from dimensional standards*3. Consistency with the ASQ Plan.*

The Board finds that proposed waivers from the dimensional standards of §7.4.7 are consistent with the 2000 ASQ Plan related to research and development uses and the publicly available draft ASQ Plan relating to developing taller buildings closer to I-93 and developing a life science cluster along Middlesex Avenue.

Special Permit Considerations for occupancy of any 10,000 SF of leasable floor space of any permitted use*4. Compatibility with the intensity of activity associated with the surrounding land uses.*

The Board finds that there is compatibility with the intensity of activity associated with surrounding land uses, especially with adjacent sites at 74 Middlesex and 5 Middlesex Avenue, as both buildings are anticipated to have lab and research & development uses. Future development at 120 Middlesex Ave directly adjacent to 23 Cummings Street is also anticipated to have lab and research & development uses along with ground story retail or food & beverage uses.

5. Capacity of the local thoroughfare network providing access to the site and the impact on pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic and circulation patterns in the neighborhood.

The Board finds that as proposed, there is capacity of the local thoroughfare network to provide access to the development site and that the impact on pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic and circulation patterns in the neighborhood will be mitigated as part of the Master Plan development proposal and the future development of the site.

Special Permit Considerations for modifications to the provisions of Section 11.2 Motor Vehicle Parking*6. The ability of alternative technologies and methods of motor vehicle parking to provide equal or greater benefits to motor vehicle users.*

The Board finds that the alternative methods of accessing motor vehicle parking will provide equal or greater benefits to motor vehicle users as a single point of entry for the Building 1 garage and single point of entry for Building's 3 and 1 will be provide easy access to motor vehicle parking while providing a more comfortable pedestrian and bicycle experience on the development site.

DECISION

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 _____

Following public testimony, review of the submitted plans, and discussion of the statutorily required considerations, Chair Capuano moved to approve the **Special Permit** to waive the dimensional standards for building height, floor area ratio, and front setback in the ASMD district and **Special Permits** for occupancy of commercial space greater than 10,000 square feet in leasable floor area in the Assembly Square Mixed-use district and modifications to the provisions of Section 11.2 Motor Vehicle Parking with the conditions included in the staff memo. Vice-Chair Aboff seconded the motion. The Board voted **5-0-1** (McNeley abstained) to approve the permit, subject to the following conditions:

Permit 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.

Prior to Building Permit

3. 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.
4. One (1) digital copy 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.

Attest, by the Planning Board:

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