

Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Civic Advisory Committee

Date & Time: December 12th, 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://youtu.be/qJNPKPouDdU>

Meeting notes

1. Roll call and approval of previous meeting summary.

The meeting began at 5:38pm.

Roll call vote:

- CAC members present: Councilor Jesse Clingan, Councilor Jake Wilson, Ani Ajemian, Breck Bailey, Denise Lauers, Nick Teklits, Raymond Estrella.
- CAC members absent: Breck Bailey, Arthur Gonçalves, Colby Kyes, Renee LeWinter, Adrian Roman.
- Staff present: Ben Demers (Senior Planner, Economic Development).

CAC members and staff were also joined by two members of Mark Development: Robert Korff, Founding Principal and CEO, and Scott Lombardi, Vice President of Development. Mark Development is part of the development partnership that is developing 299 Broadway, along with Beacon Communities and RISE Together.

2. Development update at 299 Broadway.

R. Korff and S. Lombardi provided an update to CAC members regarding changes to the Building B portion of the 299 Broadway development that they would be proposing to the Zoning Board of Appeals on Wednesday, December 18th.

R. Korff noted that the project is continuing track and is working with the City and State to make the fill the remaining economic gap in the project. The overall real estate market has not shifted sufficiently to close the gap.

The changes that the Mark Development team is proposing to the project include removing one retail space on the Broadway Civic Plaza and one adjacent residential unit and moving the fitness center to

this portion of the project. Five additional residential units would then be added to where the fitness center was located previously, for a four-unit change overall in Building B (200 to 204). They anticipate that the fitness center will be heavily used by tenants of both buildings since Building A does not have a fitness center. The design of the fitness center will remain open so that it encourages an active feeling in the Broadway Civic Plaza.

The other programmatic change is that the coworking space in Building B will shift from the ground floor to an upper floor and the development team will move the club room space to the area where the coworking space was located. This is because Building A will already have its own coworking space, so Building B's coworking space does not need to be located on the first floor where it would be accessible to Building A residents. (Building A and Building B residents will specifically share access to first-floor amenities in each building.)

The Mark Development team is also submitting some small design changes that are largely to improve the sustainability of the design and shift the location of the elevator core.

A CAC member asked where the project stands on financing. Beacon Communities has their financing in place for Building A. Mark Development is slightly behind that timeline, but have construction drawings almost complete. While there is still a gap, Mark Development is still confident they will be able to move forward with the project.

Councilor Clingan reviewed the remaining retail spaces with the development team. He wants to ensure the courtyard retains uses that bring liveliness to the courtyard. He would be curious if existing spaces on the courtyard could be subdivided; the development team said it likely cannot be because of grade changes. R. Korff added that the Post Office is considering renting one of the retail spaces in the new building, and that they hope to find a restaurant for right on the Plaza.

Councilor Clingan asked if the civic space on Sewall Street could be publicly owned, rather than privately owned public space (POPS). Staff can continue this conversation with Beacon Communities.

A CAC member asked why the retail space would be turned into a fitness space. R. Korff answered that retailers have largely expressed that that specific storefront is too far from Broadway to be attractive.

Councilor Wilson asked to confirm the total number of units. This change would bring the project to 319 units, 136 of which are income-restricted.

Councilor Clingan thanked the development team for joining. He also expressed that the Somerville Community Land Trust was very excited to develop the 14-16 Sewall Street lot (Lot 4 in the project approvals).

3. Neighborhood updates from CAC members.

Councilor Clingan noted that the Elizabeth Peabody House was having a Toy Drive on December 17th between 6-8pm.

4. Public comment period.

No public comment was made.

5. Meeting adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:13pm.