



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

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

DECISION

2025 MAY 12 A 7:15

PROPERTY ADDRESS: 375 Harold Cohen Way
CASE NUMBER: ZP24-000124
OWNER: Street Retail LLC
OWNER ADDRESS: 455 Grand Union Blvd, Suite 600, Somerville, MA 02145
APPLICANT: VHB, Inc.
APPLICANT ADDRESS: PO Box 9151, Watertown, MA 02471
DECISION: Approved (Major Amendment)
DATE OF VOTE: May 1, 2025
DECISION ISSUED: May 9, 2025

CITY CLERK'S OFFICE
SOMERVILLE, MA

This decision summarizes the findings made by the Planning Board (the "Board") regarding the Major Amendment to Assembly Square Planned Unit Development-Preliminary Master Plan, Case # PB 2006-59 (as amended), submitted for 375 Harold Cohen Way.

LEGAL NOTICE

Street Retail, LLC, seeks a Major Amendment to Assembly Square Planned Unit Development-Preliminary Master Plan, Case # PB 2006-59 (as amended), to incorporate Block 9 Design Guidelines for 375 Harold Cohen Way.

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

On March 20, 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 Vice-Chair Amelia Aboff, Clerk Jahan Habib, Michael McNeley, Lynn Richards, and Alternate Luc Schuster. The case was opened but no presentation or discussion took place. The Board continued the public hearing.

On April 17, 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, Michael McNeley, Lynn Richards, and Alternate Luc Schuster. The Applicant gave an overview of the need for design guidelines as part of the Planned Unit Development – Preliminary Master Plan (PUD-PMP) requirements that govern the Assembly Row project (ZP24-000124) prior to the joint hearing with the Land Use Committee of the City Council. When the Planning Board reconvened, the Applicant presented the material for the Site Plan Approval (ZP24-000118) with Special Permit (ZP25-000034). The board discussed the visual permeability of the ground floor along Grand Union Boulevard, the utility requirements to meet Passive House standard, the paving material on the open space under the building, stormwater management, and

the landscape design to improve the pedestrian experience. The Board continued the public hearing.

On May 1, 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, Michael McNeley, Lynn Richards, and Alternate Luc Schuster. The Applicant made a presentation of the updates to the landscape plan in response to the board's questions and comments.

PLANS & DOCUMENTS

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

Document	Pages	Prepared By	Date	Revision Date
Block 9: Multi-Family Development Key Urban Elements & Urban Design	1	DiMella Shaffer 24 Farnsworth Street, Boston, MA 02210	September 24, 2024	n/a

SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS

In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, the Board may approve a Major Amendment upon making Special Permit 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:

- Reduce the carbon footprint of Somerville's buildings through green technology and higher energy efficiency.
- 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, and secures Somerville's fiscal self-sufficiency.
- 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.

The Board believes that the proposal will assist in the planning goals set for neighborhood by the October 2000 Assembly Square Planning Study and ongoing work on the Assembly Square Neighborhood Plan.

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

The Board finds that the proposal will amply support the intent of the Assembly Square Mixed-Use (ASMD) zoning district which is, in part:

- To implement the recommendations of SomerVision for transformational redevelopment.
- To 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.
- To improve utility infrastructure, thoroughfares, off-street pedestrian and bicycle paths, and physical connections to surrounding areas, including East Somerville, Ten Hills, and Sullivan Square.

375 Harold Cohen Way (Block 9) continues the development of the Assembly Square neighborhood and meets the intent of the current zoning district.

DECISION

Following public testimony, review of the submitted plans, and discussion of the statutorily required considerations, Chair Michael Capuano moved to approve the Major Amendment to Assembly Square Planned Unit Development-Preliminary Master Plan, Case # PB 2006-59 (as amended), to incorporate Block 9 Design Guidelines for 375 Harold Cohen Way. Vice-Chair Amelia Aboff seconded. The Board voted **5-0** to approve the permit.

Attest, by the Planning Board:

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

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 _____