

Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan Civic Advisory Committee

Date & Time: March 26th, 2025

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=bjJ_d8BN0d8

Meeting notes

1. Roll call and approval of previous meeting summary.

The meeting began at 5:36pm.

Roll call vote:

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

CAC approved the previous meeting summary from December 12, 2024.

2. Development update at 299 Broadway.

CAC members were joined by Robert Korff and Scott Lombardi from Mark Development, Abe Menzin from Samuels & Associates, and Josh Cohen from Beacon Communities. These three teams make up the majority of the development partnership at 299 Broadway.

The Mark Development team described that they had invited Samuels & Associates to join the development partnership, splitting the Building B project 50/50. Samuels & Associates is an experienced developer in the Boston area.

The team provided a general development update at 299 Broadway. Beacon remains slightly ahead of Mark Development and Samuels & Associates in getting the financing together for Building A. Beacon is close to ready to file for a building permit. Mark Development and Samuels & Associates is at 50% Construction Drawings, but their response from the capital market has been strong and they expect to

break ground at the same time as Beacon around July. The teams are preparing for one final round of amendments to their Comprehensive Permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals in late April.

A CAC member asked if design drawings would need to wait for the next ZBA meeting. Mark Development's team answered that they would happen concurrently and would not need to wait.

A CAC asked for a more in depth explanation of the financing of the project. The Beacon team described that, for Building A (which is fully income-restricted), there is a series of state and local funding sources that provide the foundation for the project, and then tax credit investors, MassHousing, and a construction loan investor are involved. Extensive documents are finalized in the months leading up to the closing (securing of financing). Building B relies more heavily on private investment, but similarly significant work is done to assure financiers of the strength of the investment.

A CAC member asked if cuts in Washington would impact this project. The Beacon team responded that the government funds for the project come from local and state sources, so they would not be impacted.

A CAC member asked if there were any early prospects for retail tenants. The development team noted that it is still early in the process to have this information. Their tenancy strategy is meant to prioritize local retail users, who tend to not be able to plan as far ahead as larger businesses.

3. Development update for 14 Sewall Street.

CAC members were joined by Ben Baldwin and Andres Bueno from the Somerville Community Land Trust and Jim Kostaras from Habitat for Humanity Greater Boston, who together are developing 14 Sewall Street in Winter Hill. The team gave an overview of the project, which will comprise 3-5 affordable homeownership units. Their goal is for these units to be family-sized.

A CAC member noted that they have lived on Sewall Street since 1976, and can help SCLT staff understand the site.

A CAC member asked how the other Sewall Street lot in the Winter Hill Urban Renewal Plan is being developed. Staff explained that it is being developed by the 299 Broadway team as a civic space.

A CAC member asked how tall the building can be. SCLT staff answered that the building will likely be a triple decker, and there may be possible for a cottage unit in the back. Habitat for Humanity generally only goes up to three stories as well. However, they are keeping the option on the table to explore greater density on the site. A CAC member expressed that the units should prioritize larger families. Another CAC member agreed.

A CAC member asked if this project is related to the 100 Homes program in Somerville. It is not, no.

A CAC member wanted to ensure that the units have breathing space between adjacent buildings. The development team noted that they will return to this group with design drawings once they have them.

Habitat for Humanity staff mentioned that they will look for volunteers from the neighborhood to help with construction.

4. Neighborhood updates from CAC members.

No updates were shared.

5. Public comment period.

Devan Cody (18 Grant Street) asked if anyone knew what business was going into the old Subway storefront. No one on the call was sure.

A CAC member asked if anyone knew what business was going into the old laundry space. No one on the call was sure.

6. Meeting adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 6:41pm.