



City of Somerville

# **ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS**

City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**TO:** Zoning Board of Appeals  
**FROM:** Planning, Preservation, & Zoning (PPZ) Staff  
**SUBJECT:** 7 Louisburg Place, ZP25-000056  
**POSTED:** July 29, 2025

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approve with Conditions (Special Permit Finding)

Staff memos are used to communicate background information, analysis, responses to public comments, review of statutory requirements and other information from PPZ staff to the Review Board members.

This memo summarizes the Special Permit Finding request submitted for 7 Louisburg Place, identifies any additional discretionary or administrative development review that is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and provides related analysis or feedback as necessary. The application was deemed complete on June 30, 2025, and is scheduled for a public hearing on August 6, 2025. Any Staff recommended findings, conditions, and decisions in this memo are based on the information available to-date prior to any public comment at the scheduled public hearing.

## **LEGAL NOTICE**

7-9 Louisburg Place LLC seek to expand an existing nonconformity for the width of the main massing in the Neighborhood Residence (NR) district, which requires a Special Permit Finding.

## **SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL**

7-9 Louisburg Place LLC ("the Applicant") is proposing to expand an existing nonconforming property. The proposed modification will extend the width of the main massing.

## **BACKGROUND**

7 Louisburg Place is located in the Neighborhood Residential (NR) zoning district in the East Somerville neighborhood represented by Ward 1 Councilor Matt McLaughlin. Following the Board's decision regarding the Special Permit Finding, the proposal will be by-right. The Zoning Board of Appeals is the decision-making authority for all discretionary or administrative permits required for the NR zoning district.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS**

The neighborhood meeting was held by the Applicant on June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025. There was one comment by a neighbor wondering about the overall scope of the project.

## ANALYSIS

The property at 7 Louisburg Place is a two-unit detached house at the end of a short, dead-end street. The applicant is proposing to expand the main massing of the building. The allowed width of the main massing for a detached house in the NR district is 28 feet, and the current main massing stands at 40'10". The extension would expand the main massing by seven feet and one inch (7'1") for a total width of 47'11". ISD Staff have determined that because the structure fronts the side lot line, and the side of the house is along the front lot line, the width and depth of the building have been swapped – what looks like the side of the house is interpreted as the front, and what looks like the front of the house is interpreted as the side. Considered in the context of the unusually shaped lot and the placement of the building on that lot, the proposed changes to the building are not unreasonable, and do not have a negative impact on the streetscape.

Upon analysis of the material submitted by the Applicant, PPZ Staff does not believe that the granting for the Special Permit Findings would cause a substantial detriment to the public good or nullify or substantially derogate from the intent and purpose of the Neighborhood Residence (NR) district, copied here:

### Intent:

- To implement the objectives or the comprehensive plan of the City of Somerville.
- To conserve already established areas of detached and semi-detached residential buildings.

### Purpose

- To permit the development of one-, two-, and three-unit detached and semi-detached residential buildings on individual lots.
- To permit contextual modifications to existing detached and semi-detached residential buildings.
- To permit the adaptive reuse of certain existing nonconforming buildings for arts & creative uses compatible with residential areas.
- To create dwelling unit types, sizes, and bedroom counts ideal for larger households in houses, semi-attached houses, duplexes, and triple-deckers.
- To create dwelling unit types, sizes, and bedroom counts ideal for smaller households in cottages and backyard cottages.

## CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

The Zoning Board of Appeals is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance and M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 6, to deliberate each of the following considerations at the public hearing:

### Special Permit Finding Consideration:

- Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 6, "Pre-existing nonconforming structures or uses may be extended or altered, provided, that no such extension or alteration shall be permitted unless there is a finding by the permit granting

authority or by the special permit granting authority designated by ordinance or by-law that such change, extension or alteration *shall not be substantially more detrimental than the existing nonconforming use to the neighborhood.*"

Staff does not believe that the extension and alteration is substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming structure.

## **PERMIT CONDITIONS**

Should the Board approve the required Special Permit Finding to increase the main massing of an existing nonconforming structure, Staff recommend the following conditions:

### **Validity**

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

### **Public Record**

2. 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.