



City of Somerville

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

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

TO: Planning Board
FROM: OSPCD Staff
SUBJECT: 59 Bow Street, ZP24-000098 (Major Amendment to Special Permit),
ZP24-000099 (Major Amendment to Site Plan Approval)
POSTED: August 27, 2025

RECOMMENDATION: No change

This memo is supplemental to the PPZ Staff Memo dated August 1, 2025, found [here](#). Since the original Staff Memo was posted, an [updated submission memo from the applicant](#) (dated August 5, 2025) and [updated plans](#) (dated July 30, 2025) were submitted.

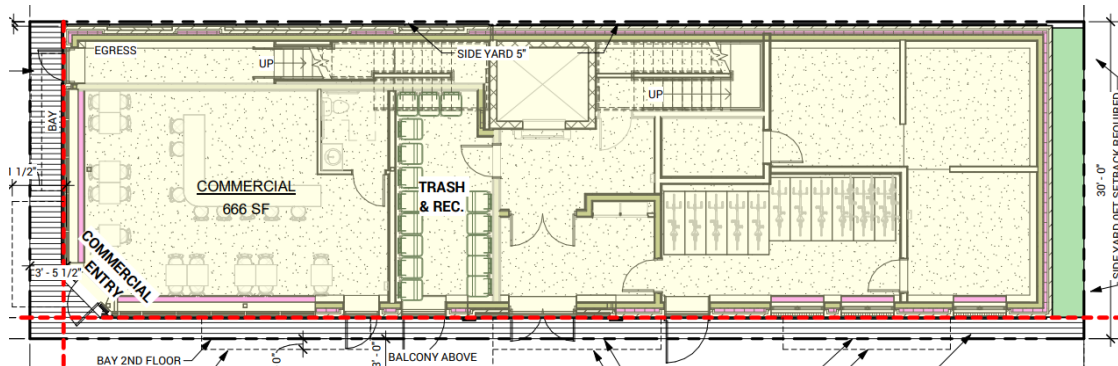
BACKGROUND

This case was originally advertised for the August 7, 2025 Planning Board meeting. The applicant submitted updated plans on August 6, 2025. They then decided to request a continuance to give ISD and PPZ staff time to review the updated plans and issue a supplemental memo on the changes.

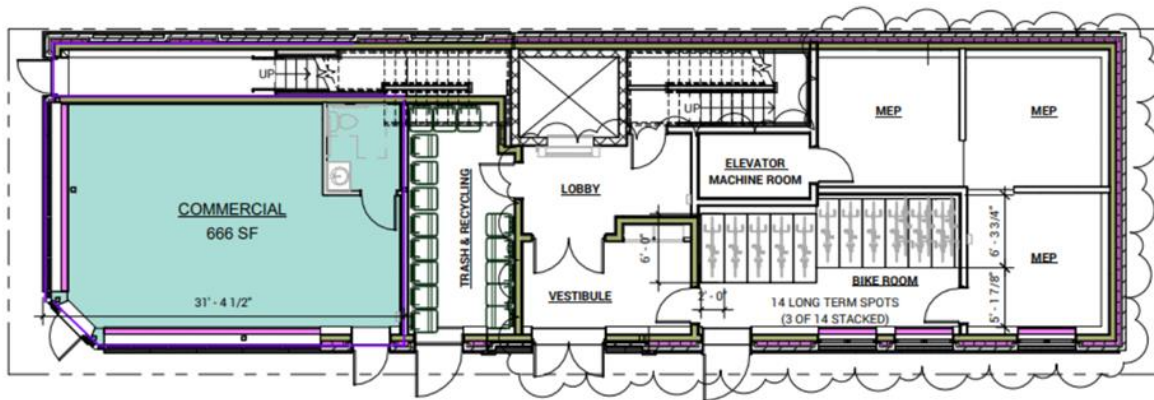
ANALYSIS

The following changes have been made on the updated plans:

- The first-floor floorplan was rearranged to increase the space provided for the proposed commercial/restaurant area and decrease the amount of mechanical space. The bicycle storage room was also rearranged in accordance with their most recent TAP.



Above: first-floor floorplans from March 25, 2024 plan set.



Above: first-floor floorplans from July 30, 2025 plan set.

- Elimination of the faux Juliet balconies placed on the six (6) windows of the units that had previously had their balconies removed. In the original approved SPA and Special Permit (P&Z 21-017), all units facing Bow Street Place had balconies.



Above: Rendering showing the exterior from the March 25, 2024 plan set.



Above: Rendering showing the exterior from the July 30, 2025 plan set.

- Solid walls were added to the main entrance of the commercial space.

Above: Rendering showing the exterior from the March 25, 2024 plan set.

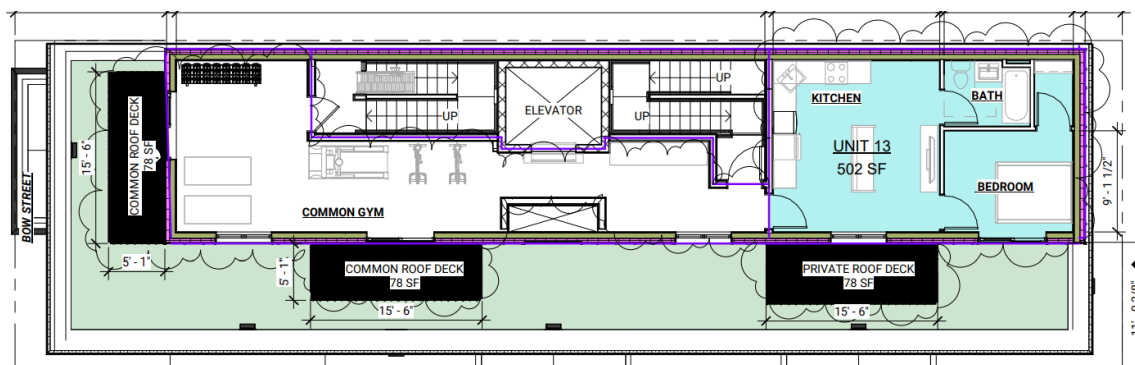


Above: Rendering showing the main entrance to the commercial space on the March 25, 2024, plan set.

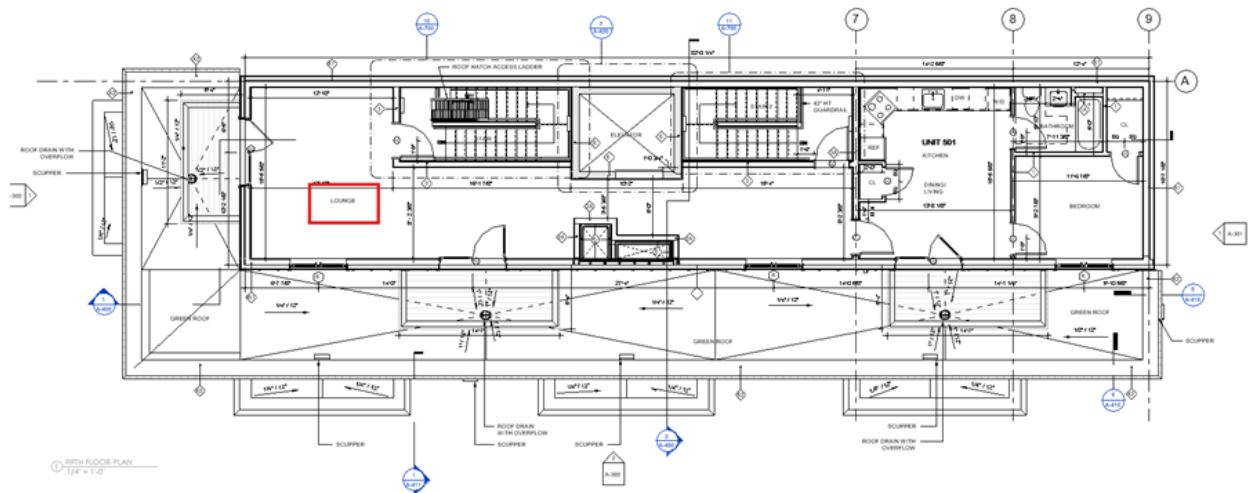


Above: Rendering showing the main entrance to the commercial space on the July 30, 2025 plan set.

- The fifth-floor common space is now proposed as a lounge, rather than a gym.



Above: Fifth-floor floorplan on the March 25, 2024 plan set.



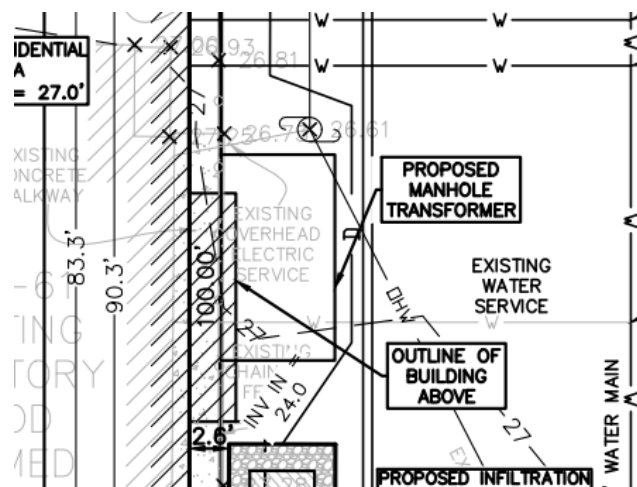
Above: Fifth-floor floorplan on the July 30, 2025 plan set.

- An underground vaulted transformer is explicitly shown on the updated (July 30, 2025) plans. Previously (on the March 25, 2024 plans), a transformer was shown in the Bow Street Place frontage of the lot on renderings included in the architectural plans. This would have been a violation of the Zoning Ordinance, as this is a corner lot with two frontage areas (along both Bow Street and Bow Street Place). The underground transformer in the updated plans is in compliance.

In order to ensure that the construction of the transformer will be zoning-compliant, Staff suggests that *before* granting approval of the project, the Planning Board, require the Applicant provide a letter of intent from Eversource demonstrating that Eversource has agreed to an underground transformer in this location.



Above: Rendering of the exterior showing a transformer in the frontage area on the March 25, 2024 plan set.



Above: The updated site plan showing an underground transformer on the July 30, 2025 plan set.

The changes listed above create no new zoning non-conformities.

CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

Considerations and findings for permits ZP24-000098 (Special Permit) and ZP24-000099 (SPA) remain the same.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

Should the Board approve the required amendment to a Special Permit to establish a Household Living use, Planning, Preservation & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions¹:

1. This decision must be recorded with the Middlesex 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.

Public Record

3. 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.
4. A 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.

Housing

5. An affordable housing implementation plan (AHIP) must be submitted to the Director of Housing prior to applying for a Certificate of Occupancy.
6. A deed restriction limiting the sale or rental of all affordable dwelling units to eligible households in perpetuity must be executed and recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.

Mobility

7. Dwelling units must be advertised as ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission

¹ Special Permit Conditions 1-6 are all carried over from the original decision. They are listed for reference and will be listed on the new decision as well. Condition 7 is a new condition that has become a standard condition since this project was last approved.

Should the Board approve the required amendment to a Site Plan Approval, Planning, Preservation & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions²:

Permit Validity

1. This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
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.
3. 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.
4. Alterations to the design or location of the transformer vault is a major amendment to the approved plans and is permitted only as a Plan Revision in accordance with Article 15 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

Public Record

5. Digital copies of all development review submittal materials, permitted by the Planning Board, must be submitted to the Planning, Preservation & Zoning (PPZ) Division for the public record.

Site & Building Design

6. Full, solid brick shall be used on the exterior of the building, not brick veneer.
7. Utility meters and electrical equipment are not permitted on the facade or within the frontage area of the lot.

Construction Documents

8. Construction documents must be substantially equivalent to the approved plans and other materials submitted for development review.
9. Material specifications from suppliers must be submitted to confirm fenestration glazing is compliant with the VLT and VLR ratings required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.
10. An outdoor lighting plan and supplier cut sheet specifications of chosen lighting fixtures must be submitted to confirm compliance with Section 10.7 Outdoor Lighting of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The site photometric plan must include a keyed site plan identifying the location of all luminaires; total site lumen limit table (calculations from the SZO); lighting fixture schedule indicating the fixture type, description, lamp type, lumens, color temperature, color rendering index, BUG rating, mounting height, and wattage of all luminaires; and notation of any timing devices used to control the hours set for illumination.

² Site Plan Approval Conditions 1-17 are all carried over from the original decision. They are listed for reference and will be listed on the new decision as well. Site Plan Approval Conditions 18-25 are new conditions recommended by various divisions as part of this application's review.

Sustainability

11. All Step 2 documentation required by the Net Zero Ready Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.
12. All Step 3 documentation required by the Net Zero Ready Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.
13. All Step 2 documentation required by the LEED Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.
14. All Step 3 documentation required by the LEED Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.

Parking

15. Dwelling units must be advertised as ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission.
16. All buyers, grantees, lessees, renters, and tenants must be notified in writing prior to sale or lease of any dwelling unit that the residents are ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission.
17. Formal acknowledgement that residents are ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission, must be filed with this Decision.

ISD

18. Balconies projecting over the sidewalk require a grant of location license from the City and must comply with all relevant City Ordinances, per SZO 4.3.10.k.ii.b

Mobility

19. The Applicant shall coordinate with relevant City Departments to ensure a compliant Motor Vehicle Movement Plan prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.

Engineering

20. Inflow & Infiltration sewer mitigation is required for all projects that increase sewer flows to the City wastewater system. By City ordinance & policy, the City only accepts I&I mitigation via fee. This program is managed by the Engineering Division. See Somerville's Sewer, Drain, and Infiltration/Inflow Policy for more information.
21. Project must be in compliance with Engineering Site Construction Rules and Regulations (available at <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/department-infrastructure-and-asset-management-iam/engineering>) and implement stormwater management BMPs to meet runoff requirements as necessary. Current proposal appears to meet the requirements of a Medium Project Review.

22. This application does not include proposed groundwater management best practices. Final design will need to eliminate groundwater dewatering for permanent conditions; if minor dewatering is required, calculations must show that they can be discharged onsite, without entering the City storm drainage system. Construction dewatering may be required. and will be acceptable to the City in compliance with all state & federal requirements
23. The Applicant shall submit a Construction Management Plan (CMP) for Engineering and Mobility Division review and comment twenty-one (21) days prior to submission of the Foundation Permit. Zero lot line construction on an Urban Principal Arterial street will require engineered site logistic plans to minimize construction impacts to the high-volume public right of way.
24. Upper floor balconies overhang the public right of way. Overhang requires a Section 12-14 license with the City Council via the clerk's office. License must be secured prior to issuance of main Building Permit.
25. Bow Street is under the 5-year street pavement moratorium; trench patches are not permitted. Provide mill & overlay from curb to curb and 12 feet on each side of utility trench.