

DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE SPECIAL PERMIT

Property: 3 Craigie Street/675 Somerville Avenue
Applicant/Owner: 675 Somerville, LLC
Agent: Adam Dash, Esq.
Zoning District: MR3
One-Half Mile Transit Area
Not in a Pedestrian Street District

Summary

Applicant seeks to demolish the existing gas station and garage and to construct in their place a new three-story structure with fourteen dwelling units (of which two units are affordable), with ground floor commercial space fronting Somerville Avenue.

There will be no motor vehicle parking provided, however, there will be fourteen long-term bicycle parking spaces and four short-term bicycle parking spaces.

The project is dimensionally compliant with all zoning requirements, but needs Site Plan Approval for a General Building, as well as a Special Permit for the Residential Housing use.

The existing structures are in a series of blocks along Somerville Avenue which are zoned as MR3 near Porter Square, and they sit at the corner of Craigie Street and Somerville Avenue.

Across the street from the subject property is a car wash and train tracks. To the left of the subject property, across Craigie Street, is a three-story mixed-use General Building structure with a ground floor commercial use, and to the right is a three-story multi-family dwelling. A two-and-one-half story residential dwelling which faces Craigie Street abuts the rear of the subject property, and said dwelling is at a higher elevation than the Property at issue.

The proposed structure will allow for emergency egress by the property to its right.

Relief Requested

Special Permit

Applicant seeks a Special Permit pursuant to SZO Section 15.2.1.

Per Somerville Zoning Ordinance Section 15.2.1.e:

In its discretion to approve or deny a Special Permit required by this Ordinance, the review board shall make findings considering, at least, each of the following:

- a). The COMPREHENSIVE PLAN and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.*
- b). The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.*
- c). Considerations indicated elsewhere in this Ordinance for the required Special Permit.*

Regarding the Special Permit findings in SZO Section 15.2.1.e, Applicant states as follows:

a) The project will comply with the goals of the SomerVision strategic plan because it will "facilitate transit-oriented neighborhood in-fill development", create a "healthier, more prosperous and more attractive place to live, work, play and raise a family", and "preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods". This will ensure that "properties can adapt and change to meet the needs of residents, while respecting the character of the neighborhood".

According to SomerVision, "housing costs are rising, resulting in the displacement of many residents and a shortage of available housing stock", "even more housing will be needed to potentially slow the increase in housing prices", and "to make an impact on housing affordability in Somerville, we must not only add to the existing building stock but also increase the share of housing that will be preserved as affordable forever."

The project will provide badly needed residential units, including two affordable units.

Being on a stretch of Somerville Avenue which is made up of residential, commercial, and mixed-use structures of varying sizes and shapes, the proposed structure will fit into the existing building type and pattern.

The project removes an automotive use, which City policy disfavors, and replaces it with housing and first-floor commercial space, which City policy wants in the MR3 zoning district.

The proposed structure is the same number of stories as the existing structures on either side of it, and is dimensionally compliant, thereby conforming with the City's policy plans and standards. The proposed structure is seeking to carry out the goals of locating three-story mixed-use structures on this part of Somerville Avenue, which will further activate the area.

- b) Per Section 4.1.3 of the SZO, the purpose of the MR3 district is:
- a. To permit the development of multi-unit and mixed-use buildings that do not exceed three (3) stories in height.*
 - b. To provide quality commercial spaces and permit small-scale, neighborhood serving commercial uses.*
 - c. To create dwelling unit types, sizes, and bedroom counts ideal for larger households in apartment buildings.*
 - d. To create dwelling unit types, sizes, and bedroom counts ideal for smaller households in general buildings.*
 - e. To permit increased residential density for buildings that meet the definition of a net zero ready building.*

The proposed project is exactly that. It is a mixed-use, three-story General Building structure providing quality commercial space to serve the neighborhood and dwelling units of various sizes, ideal for smaller households, of which two are affordable.

Sustainability will be addressed in a number of ways.

The project will not have any motor vehicle parking, such that it will not add to traffic and will not promote adding fossil-fuel burning vehicles to the City. This also allows the wide existing curb cuts along Somerville Avenue to be filled in for increased pedestrian safety. The Project will have the required bicycle parking.

The project will comply with the Green Score requirements.

The project provides green space on a site which is currently paved, and provides an extensive green roof, both of which will help mitigate the heat island effect.

The project will remove the current motor vehicle use on the site.

The orientation of the building openings will allow for more natural cross-ventilation of the units.

The project will pursue a HERS Certification (for projects under 12,000 sf of residential) to meet the standards of the Specialized Energy Code.

The project promotes the goals of the Somerville Pollinator Action Plan with pollinator's safe planting, as well as natural phytoremediation due to the productive planting species selected.

- c) There are no additional Special Permit considerations stated in the SZO for this project.

Conclusion.

Applicant respectfully requests approval of the requested Special Permit to develop a Residential Housing use in a mixed-use principal building.