



City of Somerville

# PLANNING BOARD

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

## DECISION

**PROPERTY ADDRESS:** 74 Middlesex Avenue  
**CASE NUMBER:** ZP25-000076  
**OWNER/APPLICANT:** 74M Property Owner, LLC  
**ADDRESS:** 465 Meeting Street, Suite #500, Charleston, SC 29403  
**DECISION:** Approved with Conditions (Special Permit)  
**DATE OF VOTE:** August 21, 2025  
**DECISION ISSUED:** August 22, 2025

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CITY CLERK'S OFFICE  
SOMERVILLE, MA

This decision summarizes the findings made by the Planning Board (the "Board") regarding the development review application submitted for 74 Middlesex Avenue.

## LEGAL NOTICE

74M Property Owner, LLC seeks to install non-conforming wall signs in the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District (ASMD) per SZO § 7.4.9.b., which requires a Special Permit.

## RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

On August 21, 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 Chair Michael Capuano, Clerk Jahan Habib, and Board Members Michael McNeley, Luc Schuster, and Lynn Richards. The Applicant explained that the signage was installed with the understanding that they would be considered wayfinding, but Inspectional Services (ISD) informed them that they were considered wall signs, and they are seeking retroactive relief. The Board discussed the non-conforming nature of the proposed signage and the procedure for small improvements like this. The Board moved to approve the Special Permit.

## PLANS & DOCUMENTS

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

Document	Pages	Prepared By	Date	Revision Date
74 Middlesex Ave - Narrative	11	Goulston & Storrs One Post Office Square Boston, MA 02109	July 16, 2025	N/A
74 Middlesex Ave - Building Signage (Site Plan)	1	Greystar 465 Meeting St #500, Charleston, SC 29403	Undated	N/A
74 Middlesex Ave - Elevations	4	Greystar 465 Meeting St #500, Charleston, SC 29403	Undated	N/A
74 Middlesex Ave - Plan of Land (Survey)	2	Design Consultants, Inc. 120 Middlesex Avenue Somerville, MA 02145	June 24, 2021	N/A

## SPECIAL PERMIT FINDINGS

In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, the Board may approve or deny a special permit upon making findings considering, at least, each of the following:

### *Section 15.2.1.e*

- i. The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.*

The Board finds the proposal is compatible with the values of SomerVision 2040, the City's Comprehensive Master Plan, including:

- Prioritizing walking, biking, and transit access.
- Encourage more commercial development.
- Help promote accessibility and universal design in businesses.

The proposed signage will provide wayfinding for pedestrians and cyclists navigating through Assembly Square, and is simple and legible for differently abled community members. Moreover, permitting these signs will allow the commercial development at 74 Middlesex Avenue to move forward.

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

The Board finds the proposal is consistent with the intent of the ASMD zoning district which is, in part, "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", as the proposed signs provide wayfinding.

### *Section 7.4.9.b.iii.a).*

- i. The creation of legible urban environment free from the overuse of signs.*

The proposed signs are visible to the pedestrian realm, but the color of the graphic and text matches the existing color and aesthetic of the facade. The font is minimalist but provides a helpful wayfinding function that contributes to a legible urban environment.

- ii. Aesthetics, proportion, scale of the proposed sign in relation to the building or storefront.*

The building is 16 stories in height, and comparatively the proposed circular signs are small. They complement the façade and are no larger than necessary to convey information to the pedestrian realm.

iii. *Design, location, and context of other signage on the building and on surrounding properties.*

Other visible signs on the building also match the materials used on the façade. The surrounding properties, located to the south on Middlesex Avenue, also have glass curtain walls; the proposed signage is semi-transparent and does not detract from this building's matching glass curtain walls.

## DECISION

Following public testimony, review of the submitted plans, and discussion of the statutorily required considerations, Chair Capuano moved to approve the Special Permit to install non-conforming wall signs in the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District (ASMD) per SZO § 7.4.9.b. with the conditions as discussed at the hearing. Clerk Habib seconded. The Board voted **5-0** to approve the permit, subject to the following conditions:

### Permit Validity

1. This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South 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 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.

Attest, by the Planning Board:

Michael Capuano, *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 \_\_\_\_\_