



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

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

TO: Planning Board
FROM: OSPCD Staff
SUBJECT: 152-158 Broadway, ZP25-000111
POSTED: January 9, 2025

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions

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

This memo summarizes the Special Permit application for a Fitness Services use in a ground-story commercial space fronting on a Pedestrian Street submitted for 152-158 Broadway, 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 December 22nd, 2025, and is scheduled for a public hearing on January 15th, 2026. 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

The Law Offices of Michael LaRosa, representing Btone Fitness, proposes to establish a Fitness Services use in a ground-story commercial space fronting a Pedestrian Street in the MR5 District, which requires a Special Permit.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

The Law Offices of Micael LaRosa is proposing to construct a Btone Fitness Pilates studio in a commercial unit located at 152-158 Broadway. The boutique Pilates studio is being proposed in an approximately 2,100 square feet space of a vacant newly constructed ground floor commercial development along a Pedestrian Street.

BACKGROUND

152-158 Broadway is located on a Pedestrian Street and in the Mid-Rise 5 (MR5) zoning district in the East Somerville neighborhood represented by Ward 1 Councilor Matthew McLaughlin. Establishing a Fitness Services use in a ground-story commercial space fronting a Pedestrian Street in the MR5 District requires a Special Permit. The Planning Board is the decision-making authority for all (non-variance) discretionary or administrative permits required for the MR5 zoning district.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING

A neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward 1 Councilor Matthew McLaughlin and the applicant on October 6th, 2025, via the Zoom meeting platform. The applicant, Michael LaRosa on behalf of Btone Fitness, gave an overview of the project and introduced the business owners Kara and Williams Bates. Kara and William Bates narrated a presentation explaining the franchise and gave an overview of the fitness classes given at the businesses. There were no comments during the meeting from the public, but there was a written comment from a community member stating they were looking forward to the proposed business.

ANALYSIS

The applicant is proposing the establishment of a Fitness Services use in a ground-story commercial space fronting on a Pedestrian Street in East Somerville and intends to lease the unit for the operation of a Btone Fitness Studio. The proposal requires a Special Permit, as per SZO 4.3.13.b.i and Table 4.3.13. Findings should be made by the board in accordance with 4.3.13.b.i.b. The Applicant provides an overview of the project in their Narrative.

Upon analysis of the material submitted by the Applicant, PPZ Staff do not believe that the granting of the requested Special Permit for a Fitness Services use in a ground-story commercial space fronting a Pedestrian Street would cause a substantial detriment to the public good or nullify or substantially derogate from the intent and purpose of the MR5 District, copied here:

Intent:

- a. To implement the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Somerville.
- b. To create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for moderate scale, multi-use and mixed-use buildings and neighborhood- and community-serving uses.

Purpose:

- a. To permit the development of multi-unit and mixed-use buildings that do not exceed five (5) stories in height.
- b. To provide quality commercial spaces and permit small and medium scale, neighborhood- and community- serving commercial uses.

Staff do not propose any conditions to address impacts related to the business' formulaic aspects, but do recommend a condition that, if approved, the Special Permit be attached to the Applicant and not the property.

CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

Special Permit Considerations

The Planning Board is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to deliberate each of the following considerations at the public hearing. The Board must discuss and draw

conclusions for each consideration but may make additional findings beyond this minimum statutory requirement.

Special Permit Considerations

1. The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.
2. The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.
3. The maintenance of a diverse blend of commercial uses within the neighborhood.
4. The existing concentration of uses from the same use category within the neighborhood and availability of the same services within the neighborhood.

Information relative to the required considerations is provided below:

Special Permit

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

Staff believes that this project supports the goals laid out in SomerVision 2040, the City's Comprehensive Master Plan, including the following:

- "Invest in the growth of a resilient economic base that is centered around transit, generates a wide variety of job opportunities, creates an active daytime population, supports independent local businesses, and secures fiscal self-sufficiency."

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

The intent of the MR5 zoning district is, in part: "To create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for moderate scale, multi-use and mixed-use buildings and neighborhood- and community-serving uses."

3. *The maintenance of a diverse blend of commercial uses within the neighborhood.*

152-158 Broadway is an existing commercial general building and the applicant does not intend to change the façade of the building except for signage. There 3 or less businesses similar in the neighborhood.

4. *The existing concentration of uses from the same use category within the neighborhood and availability of the same services within the neighborhood.*

Staff believe the proposed use maintains a diverse blend of uses within the neighborhood. The proposed Fitness Use is a Btone Pilates Studio, which is a specific form of Pilates done on a reformer. The only similar business in the neighborhood is a Pilates Rx, which does not utilize the same equipment or class type.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

Should the Board approve the required Special Permit for a Fitness Services use in a ground-story commercial space fronting on a Pedestrian Street as per SZO 4.3.13.b.i and Table 4.3.13., PPZ Staff recommends 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 (1) working days in advance of a request for final inspection.
3. Approval is limited to Michael LaRosa on behalf of Btone Fitness and is not transferable to any successor in interest.

Public Record

4. Digital copies of all required application material 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.
5. 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.