

DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE

Property: 1 McGrath Highway
Applicant/Owner: Somerbridge Hotel LLC
Agent: Adam Dash, Esq.
Zoning Designations: High-Rise (“HR”) District/Half Mile Transit Area/Not in PSD

Summary

The property is currently a 32,806 sf lot, of which 17,316 sf are in Somerville and known as 1 McGrath Highway, and 15,490 sf are in Cambridge and known as 263 McGrath Highway/Monsignor O’Brien Highway.

The hotel project contemplated by Somerbridge Hotel LLC will be developed by XSS Hotels LLC and operated by Colwen Management Inc. as a MOXY brand hotel.

This proposed 145 key hotel crosses the municipal boundary of Somerville and Cambridge. 95 of the proposed keys are located within Somerville bounds.

Applicant first permitted a hotel at the property in 2017 as a 120-room extended-stay hotel. During permitting hearings, the developers discovered the site was uniquely located to provide a portion of the link necessary to accomplish a connection between the Community Path Extension and the Grand Junction Path. Due to unforeseen environmental complications, the original project did not proceed forward with the permits in a timely manner. As the environmental solution required a redesign of the project, 8’ of land along the Cambridge property line was reserved for a future ramp connection to the proposed Community Path.

Applicant then received a special permit with site plan review and variances from the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals (“ZBA”) for the construction of a 135- room, six-story hotel at the property in case #ZBA 2018-138 on March 12, 2019. That approval was extended by the ZBA on March 25, 2020, in case # ZBA 2018-138-E1.

In 2023, Applicant obtained special permits and site plan approval from the Somerville Planning Board, and a variance from the ZBA, for the construction of a 199 room, six-story hotel at the property in cases P&Z 21-028 and P&Z 23-032, respectively. The ZBA extended said variance in 2024 in case ZP24-000011.

As part of said 2023 Planning Board and ZBA approvals, Applicant worked with the abutting lab building developer at 15 McGrath Highway to create a shared driveway for both projects and for Applicant to use parking in the lab building’s parking garage. The lab building at 15 McGrath Highway was permitted, a large pit was dug when the developer of said lab building stopped the project and is not currently looking to re-start it for, at least, several years.

As a result of the pit next-door, and there being no lab project going forward, Applicant is forced to move its proposed hotel building away from the pit for structural reasons, move the previous

shared driveway to the Cambridge side of the property, and to make other changes to the previously approved hotel project described herein.

The Applicant has demolished the commercial car wash structures in Somerville, and the commercial structure in Cambridge, and intends to begin environmental remediation at the property. The proposed six-story hotel is proposed to be a MOXY hotel brand, which is a stylish, casual brand with a playful atmosphere that focuses on younger guests.

The property is located in the HR zoning district and is in the Half Mile Transit Area. It is not located in a Pedestrian Street District. The proposed project is in the Half Mile Transit Area.

The building would be a total of 62,200 sf, with 44,462 sf in Somerville and 18,138 sf in Cambridge. The Building Type would be “General Building”.

The project has 20 motor vehicle parking spaces provided on the Somerville portion of the property, plus 13 motor vehicle parking spaces provided on the Cambridge portion of the property.

There will be bicycle parking on site for 5 short-term bicycles and 10 long-term bicycles on the Somerville side of the property, which will meet the Somerville requirements, and for 1 short-term bicycles and 3 long-term bicycles on the Cambridge side of the property.

As with the version of the project approved in 2023, Applicant will continue to provide space for a 14 foot clear ramp to be built across the Cambridge portion of the property to connect the McGrath/O’Brien Highway with the Community Path Extension via a spur to be constructed on MBTA property at the rear of the site.

Relief Requested

Applicant now seeks the following relief:

- Revision of the previous Site Plan Approval under Somerville Zoning Ordinance Section 5.1.6.b, 15.2.4 and 15.3.2 for the new “General Building” type structure.
- Special Permit under Somerville Zoning Ordinance Section 5.1.14 and 9.9.1 to establish a hotel use.
- Special Permit under Somerville Zoning Ordinance Section 9.1.7.d for a formula business use.

As opposed to the 2023 hotel approvals, Applicant no longer requires a special permit for parking relief, and no longer requires any variances.

A. Revision of Previous Site Plan Approval

Applicant seeks a revision of the Site Plan Approval for a hotel at the property which was granted by the Planning Board on May 18, 2023 in case P&Z 21-028.

Per Section 15.2.4.e of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

- i. *The Director of Planning & Zoning may determine the proposed revision is de minimis upon finding that the revised application:*
 - a. *Does not contravene the previously published public notice, any finding, or attached condition made by the review board for the original development review application;*
 - b. *Does not detrimentally impact matters of substance identified in the meeting minutes of the original public meetings or public hearings;*
 - c. *Features changes that are insignificant to the degree that persons familiar with the original application would not notice a substantial change in operational or built outcome.*
- ii. *When considering a revision to a previously approved development review application, the review boards shall limit their review to only the changes to the previously approved application.*

Applicant proposed revisions to the hotel project as a result of the 15 McGrath Highway developer digging a large pit and then stopping work on its proposed lab building. With that situation, the Applicant is unable to build the hotel as it was approved by the Planning Board and ZBA in 2023.

A more detailed side by side comparison of changes in this request is provided in the attached preliminary plans and elevations.

Elements of the project that were necessary to modify include:

- Moving the building away from the property line of the abutter
- Relocating the driveway to Cambridge side of the property
- Removing of the roof top bar
- Reducing square footage
- Reducing room count
- Adjusting parking layout

- Reducing to a single product hotel versus dual, MOXY was chosen as more suitable for the site

Elements of our project that will remain unchanged include:

- Remaining a hotel
- Remaining the same height
- Keeping the aesthetic the same
- Keeping food & beverage service amenities open to the public as well as guests.
- Committing to the inclusion of the Community Path -Grand Junction Path connection remains the same

It is Applicant's contention that the project is essentially the same, being a hotel with a similar design, even though certain aspects had to be altered due to no fault of Applicant, but rather, due to the inaction of the developer at 15 McGrath Highway next door.

The revised project no longer needs the parking relief or a variance that the 2023 approved hotel project did, such that it is more compliant with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

Should the proposed revision not be considered de minimis, then Applicant requests that a Major Revision to the previous Site Plan Approval be granted, as the revised hotel project still meets the requirements, and furthers the goals, of the hotel Site Plan Approval granted in 2023.

What was true in 2023 regarding the Site Plan Approval is still true, albeit with some involuntary revisions.

As a result of the lab building at 15 McGrath Highway being paused, some of the conditions of the previous Planning Board decision in case P&Z 21-028 dated May 23, 2023 need to be eliminated, revised or changed in the timeline in order to separate the lab and hotel projects from each other and to reflect the changes in the hotel project itself.

Those conditions which need to be eliminated, revised or altered in the timeline are as follows:

2. Development must comply with the Development Covenant by and between the City of Somerville and Somerbridge Hotel, LLC, dated May 18, 2023, as amended.
9. The property owner(s) and applicable future tenants must comply with the Mobility Management Plan dated August 2022 (most recent revision date September 1, 2022), as approved and conditioned by the Director of Mobility's Final Approval dated November 29, 2022.
16. The Applicant or their successor in interest must submit all Stage 2 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements.
17. The Applicant or their successor shall submit a Construction Management Plan (CMP) for Engineering and Mobility Division review and comment at least twenty-one (21) days prior to submission of a Building Permit application. The CMP must be coordinated with MassDOT and the abutting project at 15 McGrath Highway to minimize construction impacts to the state highway.

18. The Applicant or their successor must submit final designs for all project elements on the McGrath Highway Right-Of-Way for review and approval by relevant City of Somerville departments (including, but not limited to, Engineering, Mobility, and PPZ) prior to application for any Building Permit and prior to application for a MassDOT Access Permit.
19. The Applicant or their successor shall modify the curb cut on McGrath Highway to include a continuous sidewalk-level crossing to be separated from the 15 McGrath Highway curb cut. Final design must be approved by relevant City of Somerville departments (including, but not limited to, Engineering, Mobility, and PPZ) prior to application for any Building Permit and prior to application for a MassDOT Access Permit.
20. To mitigate transportation impacts, the Applicant or their successor shall install a two-way bicycle facility along the frontage of the project to connect the pedestrian/cyclist crossing on the east side of the McGrath Highway/Rufo Road intersection to the Community Path Connector Ramp along the east side of the project. Final design must be approved by relevant City of Somerville departments (including, but not limited to, Engineering, Mobility, and PPZ) prior to applying for any Building Permit and prior to applying for a MassDOT Access permit.
21. To mitigate transportation impacts, the Applicant or their successor shall install a new crosswalk across McGrath Highway on the east side of the Rufo Road/McGrath Highway intersection. Final design must be approved by relevant City of Somerville departments (including, but not limited to, Engineering, Mobility, and PPZ) prior to applying for any Building Permit and prior to applying for a MassDOT Access permit.
22. The Applicant or their successor shall continue to coordinate with the City, MassDOT, and the proposed developments at 15 McGrath Highway and 35 McGrath Highway to ensure cohesive design and implementation of changes to the adjacent sections of McGrath Highway and the McGrath Highway/Rufo Road intersection. Final designs must be approved by relevant City of Somerville departments (including, but not limited to, Engineering, Mobility, and PPZ) prior to applying for any Building Permit and prior to applying for a MassDOT Access permit.
24. The Applicant or their successor in interest must submit all Stage 3 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements.
32. The Applicant or their successor must apply for and obtain a Valet Parking Permit and comply with all related regulations, as established by the Traffic Commission, to operate the proposed valet parking service.

The above conditions numbered 19, 21 and 22 should be deleted in their entirety, because the 15 McGrath project is not currently moving forward, there will not be a shared curb cut between 15 McGrath and the Property, and the McGrath Highway/Rufo Road connection where the proposed crosswalk would go does not front the Property now that the hotel and 15 McGrath projects are being separated.

The above condition numbered 2 should be deleted in its entirety because the terms of the covenant described in said condition cannot be met by Applicant with the 15 McGrath project not currently moving forward. It was intended that both projects would be built and that the hotel would be larger than the one being currently proposed.

The above condition numbered 9 should be deleted in its entirety because the proposed hotel building is now less than 50,000 square feet and, as such, no longer meets the requirements to submit a Mobility Management Plan.

The above condition numbered 32 should be deleted in its entirety because valet parking is no longer being proposed due to the changes in the hotel project.

The above conditions numbered 16 and 24 should be revised to clarify that, as the proposed hotel building is now less than 50,000 square feet, it will be LEED Gold certifiable. Therefore, said conditions should now read:

16. The Applicant or their successor in interest must submit all Stage 2 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements for LEED Gold certifiability.

24. The Applicant or their successor in interest must submit all Stage 3 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements for LEED Gold certifiability.

The above condition numbered 17 should be moved in the timeline and should be revised to state that Applicant will submit a Construction Management Plan, however, the language about coordinating with the 15 McGrath project should be altered, since it is not currently moving forward. Therefore, said condition should now read:

17. The Applicant or their successor shall submit a Construction Management Plan (CMP) for Engineering and Mobility Division review and comment at least twenty-one (21) days after the 15 McGrath Highway permitted lab building project proceeds with construction and the owner of 15 McGrath Highway consents to allow a combined driveway on the 15 McGrath Highway property for use by the Applicant's hotel project. The CMP must be coordinated with MassDOT to minimize construction impacts to the state highway. Applicant may obtain a building permit, DOT Access Permit and a certificate of occupancy prior to the CMP being submitted.

The above condition numbered 20 should be revised to state that Applicant will install a cycle track in front of the Property after the City provides the final design for same. Applicant should not have its permits held up waiting for the City's final design, over which Applicant has no control. Therefore, said condition should now read:

20. To mitigate transportation impacts, the Applicant or their successor shall install a two-way bicycle facility, a/k/a a cycle track, from the planned Community Path Connector Ramp along the east side of the project. along the frontage of the project to the west side end of the property line. Final design must be approved by relevant City of Somerville departments (including, but not limited to, Engineering,

Mobility, and PPZ). Applicant shall have one (1) year from the City providing Applicant with the final cycle track design to install said cycle track. Applicant may obtain a building permit, DOT Access Permit and a certificate of occupancy prior to the cycle track installation.

The above condition numbered 18 should be moved in the timeline, and should be revised, due to the complexity of the proposed cycle track along McGrath Highway, the crossing associated with it, the 15 McGrath project not currently moving forward, and the involvement of many stakeholders. Therefore, said condition should now read:

18. The Applicant or their successor must submit final designs for all project elements on the McGrath Highway Right-Of-Way for review and approval by relevant City of Somerville departments (including, but not limited to, Engineering, Mobility, and PPZ) at least twenty-one (21) days after the 15 McGrath Highway permitted lab building project proceeds with construction and the owner of 15 McGrath Highway consents to allow a combined driveway on the 15 McGrath Highway property for use by the Applicant's hotel project. Applicant may obtain a building permit, DOT Access Permit and a certificate of occupancy prior to said final designs being submitted.

Per Section 15.3.2.e of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

The review board shall approve a development review application requiring Site Plan Approval upon verifying that the submitted plan conforms with the provisions of this Ordinance and demonstrates consistency to 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). Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.*
 - d). Considerations indicated elsewhere in this Ordinance for the required Site Plan Approval.*
- a. Applicant seeks to retain the commercial use of this site, but with a cleaner and more aesthetically pleasing use and building than the old car wash which was on the Somerville portion of the site. This hotel project will be a vast improvement over the car

wash, which was an eyesore, and will enhance the neighborhood while fitting into and complimenting the future of this part of McGrath Highway.

A hotel brings not just real estate taxes into the City, but also personal property, lodging, and meals taxes, which benefit the Somerville municipal budget.

The proposed hotel is uniquely located to create a gateway arrival to Somerville. The location is also unique as it is the only site that can feasibly provide a pedestrian/cyclist ramp link between the McGrath/O'Brien Highway corridor and the Community Path, ultimately linking the Community Path and the Grand Junction Path and reinforcing the connectivity between Cambridge Crossing and Somerville's newly created HR zoning district and beyond to Boynton Yards. This project is particularly in line with the City's strategic goals by reducing the need for people to drive, promoting physical fitness, and allowing access for bicyclists and pedestrians to all of the commercial uses in the surrounding neighborhood.

The Applicant will also provide landscaping on a property which has essentially none at the present, which will improve the look and feel along the McGrath/O'Brien Highway corridor, as well as improve the environment in general.

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".

- b. Per Section 5.1.2.b of the SZO, the purpose of the HR district is "to accommodate the development of areas appropriate for an intense mix of multi-story multi-unit, mixed-use, and commercial buildings; neighborhood-, community-, and region-serving uses; and a wide variety of employment opportunities." The HR zoning district allows hotel uses by special permit. This shows that the policy plans and standards as established by the City favor the creation of hotel uses, in general and in this particular area, and that Applicant has met such policy plans and standards.

The building will be entirely commercial and entirely occupied by the owner, as is intended in the HR zoning district, and will be a "General Building" type, which is permitted in the HR zoning district.

The hotel use will serve the neighborhoods nearby including Cambridge Crossing, Twin City Plaza, Brickbottom and beyond to Boynton Yards, as well as the community and the region.

The proposed building meets all of the dimensional requirements for a General Building type in the HR zoning district.

- c. This hotel will not be a negative impact on transportation capacity along the McGrath/O'Brien Highway corridor, and will actually be an improvement, for a number of reasons.

First, it will reduce the existing number of curb cuts at the property by two, thereby improving pedestrian safety and reducing vehicular conflicts.

Second, it is planned that the hotel will have a single right-turn only entrance, and right-turn only exit onto the McGrath Highway, which will also improve pedestrian safety, and reduce vehicular conflicts.

Third, the intent is that Mass. DOT will remove one cycle from the traffic light at the intersection of the McGrath/O'Brien Highway and Rufo Road, thereby reducing delays on the McGrath/O'Brien Highway for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Fourth, by allowing a ramp across the property to connect the McGrath/O'Brien Highway with the to be built Community Path spur behind the property, this hotel project provides ways for the public to reach the area without having to drive a motor vehicle. It also provides easier and safer access to the new Green Line stations constructed nearby.

Fifth, the proposed hotel will allow for a wider, compliant sidewalk on the Somerville portion of the property for better pedestrian access and circulation.

The bicycle parking meets the bicycle parking requirement in both Somerville and Cambridge. There are only 20 motor vehicle parking spaces provided on the Somerville portion of the property, and 13 motor vehicle parking spaces provided on the Cambridge portion of the property, which would reduce the amount of traffic at the property.

In short, this hotel project does not negatively impact the capacity of the local road network, and actually improves the situation in a number of ways, thereby mitigating any impact of the improvements being proposed.

- d. Applicant's proposal meets the requirements for a hotel as set forth in Section 9.2.9.b of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. This increase in commercial space in a key commercial corridor such as this location is a better use of the Property, and is better for the area, than the prior motor vehicle-oriented car wash structure.

The building component being proposed for this new "General Building" type structure, being a lobby entrance, enhances the public's engagement with the building and is needed for the function of a hotel use. The pedestrian entrance on the hotel's façade on the McGrath/O'Brien Highway will be a full height glass storefront door and window system to encourage the public to come inside.

B. Special Permit to Establish a Hotel Use

A hotel use in the HR zoning district requires a special permit, per Somerville Zoning Ordinance (“SZO”) Section 5.1.14 and 9.9.1.

Per Section 15.2.1.e of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

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.*

- a. Applicant’s proposal meets the requirements for a hotel as set forth in Section 9.2.9.b of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

Applicant seeks to retain the commercial use of this site, but with a cleaner and more aesthetically pleasing use and building than the old car wash which is on the site. This hotel project will be a vast improvement over the former car wash, which was an eyesore, and will enhance the neighborhood while fitting into and complimenting the future of this part of McGrath Highway.

A hotel brings not only real estate taxes into the City, but also personal property, lodging, and meals taxes, which benefit the Somerville municipal budget.

The proposed hotel is uniquely located to create a gateway arrival to Somerville. The location is also unique as it is the only site that can feasibly provide a pedestrian/cyclist ramp link between the McGrath/O’Brien Highway corridor and the Community Path, ultimately linking the Community Path and the Grand Junction Path and reinforcing the connectivity between Cambridge Crossing and Somerville’s newly created HR zoning district and beyond to Boynton Yards. This project is particularly in line with the City’s strategic goals by reducing the need for people to drive, promoting physical fitness, and allowing access for bicyclists and pedestrians to all of the commercial uses in the surrounding neighborhood.

The Applicant will also provide landscaping on a property which has essentially none at the present, which will improve the look and feel along the McGrath/O’Brien Highway corridor, as well as improve the environment in general.

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”.

- b. Per Section 5.1.2.b of the SZO, the purpose of the HR district is “to accommodate the development of areas appropriate for an intense mix of multi-story multi-unit, mixed-use, and commercial buildings; neighborhood-, community-, and region-serving uses; and a wide variety of employment opportunities.” The HR zoning district allows hotel uses by special permit. This shows that the policy plans and standards as established by the City favor the creation of hotel uses, in general and in this particular area, and that Applicant has met such policy plans and standards.

The building will be entirely commercial and entirely occupied by the owner, as is intended in the HR zoning district, and will be a “General Building” type, which is permitted in the HR zoning district.

The hotel use will serve the neighborhood nearby such as; the Twin City Plaza, Cambridge Crossing, Brickbottom and beyond to Boynton Yards, as well as the community and the region.

The proposed building meets all of the dimensional requirements for a General Building type in the HR zoning district.

- c. Per Section 9.2.9.b.iii of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

In addition to the review criteria for all Special Permits specified in §15.2.1.e. Review Criteria, the review board shall make findings considering the following in its discretion to approve or deny a special permit authorizing a hotel or hostel principal use:

a). Compatibility with the level of activity associated with the surrounding properties.

b). Capacity of the local thoroughfare network providing access to the site and impact on pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular traffic and circulation patterns in the neighborhood.

c). Location and visibility of the principal entrance, guest drop-off area, taxi queuing station,

*outdoor amenity space for guests or employees,
and pedestrian circulation from all exit points.*

- a. There are several existing hotels on the McGrath/O'Brien Highway corridor, and this proposed hotel is certainly compatible with those surrounding properties. However, the proposed hotel will be geared toward the younger guest in comparison to other lodging options nearby, speaking to the changed demographics of the area.

By allowing public access to the Community Path extension being built behind the property, and easy access to the new Green Line stations being constructed, the hotel will keep this stretch of the McGrath/O'Brien Highway active in a positive way, unlike the prior car wash use.

- b. This hotel will not be a negative impact on transportation capacity along the McGrath/O'Brien Highway corridor, and will actually be an improvement, for a number of reasons.

First, it will reduce the existing number of curb cuts at the property by two, thereby improving pedestrian safety and reducing vehicular conflicts.

Second, it is planned that the hotel will have a single right-turn entrance, and a single right-turn only exit onto the McGrath Highway, which will also improve pedestrian safety, and reduce vehicular conflicts.

Third, the intent is that Mass. DOT will remove one cycle from the traffic light at the intersection of the McGrath/O'Brien Highway and Rufo Road, thereby reducing delays on the McGrath/O'Brien Highway for vehicles, bicyclists and pedestrians.

Fourth, by allowing a ramp across the property to connect the McGrath/O'Brien Highway with the to be built Community Path spur behind the property, this hotel project provides ways for the public to reach the area without having to drive a motor vehicle. It also provides easier and safer access to the new Green Line stations nearby.

Fifth, the proposed hotel will allow for a wider, compliant sidewalk on the Somerville portion of the property for better pedestrian access and circulation.

The bicycle parking meets the bicycle parking requirement in Somerville. There are only 20 motor vehicle parking spaces provided on the Somerville portion of the property, and 13 motor vehicle parking spaces provided on the Cambridge portion of the property, which would reduce the amount of traffic at the property.

In short, this hotel project does not negatively impact the capacity of the local road network, and actually improves the situation in a number of ways, thereby mitigating any impact of the improvements being proposed.

- c. There is a pedestrian entrance, on the hotel's façade on the McGrath Highway, featuring a full height glass storefront door and window system encouraging the public to come inside. There is also a vehicular drop off and pick up entrance on the left side of the building in Cambridge. This allows for vehicles entering the property to pull onto the site and not queue up on the McGrath/O'Brien Highway. It also allows hotel guests to enter and exit the building under an extended canopy. The planned exit removed some of the existing curb cuts at the property which will improve pedestrian safety and reduce vehicular conflicts.

By allowing a ramp across the property to connect the McGrath/O'Brien Highway with the to-be-built Community Path behind the property, this hotel project provides ways for the public to reach the area without having to drive a motor vehicle. It also provides easy and safe access to the new Green Line stations being constructed.

The project will improve the public realm, by not only provide space for the proposed ramp connection, but also contribute to an elevated pedestrian and bicyclist experience along the hotel street frontage.

Other changes were made to the façade of the proposed building at the recommendation of the UDC, such as:

-creating more visual interest on the façade by maximizing the façade shadows and potentially deepening the windows to make it feel less flat.

-reducing the size of the cornice on the Sixth Floor to be more in scale aesthetically with the other building cornices on the floors below; and

C. Special Permit for a Formula Business Use

Per Section 15.2.1.e of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

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.

a. The SomerVision 2040 strategic plan has as some of its goals to “[i]nvest 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.” The Plan has goals to “add jobs” and to “encourage more commercial development”. The SZO came out of the SomerVision 2040 Plan and permitted formula businesses in the HR zoning district by special permit, which shows an intent for such uses to exist in such districts. Applicant will add jobs and create an active environment that welcomes the neighborhood. While the MOXY hotel brand is a formula business, there is only one other such hotel in Massachusetts. It is a brand designed to cater to the younger guest and is meant to not be conformist like a chain business would normally be.

b. The intent of the HR zoning district is, per SZO Section 5.1.2:

a. To implement the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Somerville.

b. To accommodate the development of areas appropriate for an intense mix of multi-story multi-unit, mixed-use, and commercial buildings; neighborhood-, community-, and region-serving uses; and a wide variety of employment opportunities.

As stated elsewhere in this narrative, the proposed formula business use maintains the existing situation of formula business food and retail establishments in the area, and to serve the neighborhood, community and region with a unique hotel experience. As such, the proposal meets the intent of the HR zoning district.

c. For formula businesses, additional considerations are required. Per Section 9.1.7.d of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance:

In addition to the review criteria for all Special Permits specified in §15.2.1.e. Review Criteria, the review board shall make findings considering the following in its discretion to approve or deny a special permit authorizing a formula retail principal use:

a. The existing concentrations of formula businesses within the neighborhood;

b. The availability of other similar uses and the maintenance of a diverse blend of uses within the neighborhood;

- c. *The compatibility of the proposed formula business with the existing architectural and aesthetic character of the neighborhood;*
 - d. *The proposed uses contribution to the nationwide trend of standardized offerings that detracts from the uniqueness of Somerville's neighborhoods; and*
 - e. *The existing non-residential vacancy rates within the neighborhood.*
- a. The neighborhood currently has a large number of formula businesses. In fact, Twin City Plaza, and the section of McGrath Highway of which the property is a part, is mostly populated by formula businesses. Examples include:

- Dollar Tree- assorted discounted merchandise
- Dunkin' - coffee shop
- Extra Space Storage -storage facilities
- Fairfield Inn & Suites - mid-scale limited-service hotel
- Hampton Inn -mid-scale limited-service hotel
- Holiday Inn Express - mid-scale limited-service hotel
- Marshall's - clothing and household goods
- McDonald's - fast food with drive thru
- Pearle Vision - eye care
- Shell - gasoline
- Star Market - groceries
- Starbucks - coffee cafe
- T-Mobile – communications
- Tropical Smoothie Cafe – restaurant (recently approved)

The hotel is replacing a defunct car wash business, and is a vast improvement over that use.

- b. There are 3 formula business hotels representing the 3 major franchise lodging companies, Marriott, Hilton and Intercontinental Hotel Group (IHG) that do not have affiliated hotels at lower than midscale branding. All 3 of those existing hotels are branding of the 20th century focusing on hotel guests as their customer base, rather the neighborhood residents being customers as well. They maintain a standard front desk reception staff and require free guest breakfast with a standardized menu, standardized signage, and visibly trademarked items.

By contrast, the proposed MOXY Hotel is a significant departure from the existing neighborhood lodging inventory. It is a stylish, playful and affordable brand with an easy going and friendly atmosphere. A MOXY Hotel features a central lobby bar, that also serves as the front desk, where people are offered a welcome cocktail (or mocktail) during check in. A brand and staff that are serious

about showing people a good time with a lively atmosphere, small, but smart rooms and stylish communal spaces.

The MOXY Hotel is not standardized. There are no employee uniforms and there is no branding signage inside the building. This is a youth-oriented place to gather, hang out, and mingle.

There are not any similar hotels in the surrounding area, and there is only one other MOXY Hotel in Massachusetts.

- c. The immediate area is transitional with an industrial heritage. The abutters to this project are a Shell gas station, Superior Nut Company manufacturing facility, MBTA Green Line Rail and an abandoned planned lab building foundation hole.

The proposed MOXY Hotel embraces the industrial style with a modernist intent for serving as an anchor for the evolving future of the neighborhood. The basic architectural design of the proposed building is the same as the previously approved hotel, but for the revisions required by the pit next door.

The proposed hotel is not a cookie-cutter, brand-specific building. It will be unique and will fit Somerville.

- d. Formula businesses are the character of Twin City Plaza, and this section of McGrath Highway, however, the proposed MOXY Hotel will not look like a formula business, either inside or out. The 21st century lodging industry is trending to unique facilities focused the individual location featuring neighborhood food trends and regional specialties. The proposed MOXY Hotel, unlike other hotels noted in the neighborhood, welcomes the neighborhood in to share in the fun.
- e. The immediate existing non-residential vacancies appear to be 1,680 sf vacancy at Twin City Plaza and 262,000 sf of unconstructed, unleaseable proposed lab space at 15 McGrath Highway. The property at 1 McGrath Highway has been vacant for a long time, and this proposal will activate that site in a way which will benefit the neighborhood and interplay with the existing area residents and businesses.

Conclusion

Applicant/Owner respectfully asks for approval of the requested relief on the grounds that its proposal meets all of the grounds set forth in the SZO, while providing additional benefits to the communities of both Somerville and Cambridge, much as the previously approved hotel did.

DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE SUPPLEMENT

Property: 1 McGrath Highway
Applicant/Owner: Somerbridge Hotel LLC
Agent: Adam Dash, Esq.
Zoning Designations: High-Rise (“HR”) District/Half Mile Transit Area/Not in PSD

Applicant hereby supplements page 2 of the Development Narrative filed in this matter as follows:

A. To correct the size of the proposed building. The relevant paragraph on Page 2 should read:

“The building would be a total of 62,646 sf, with 44,508 sf in Somerville and 18,138 sf in Cambridge. The Building Type would be “General Building”.”

B. To correct the number of proposed bicycle parking spaces located in the Cambridge portion of the property. The relevant paragraph on Page 2 should read:

“There will be bicycle parking on site for 5 short-term bicycles and 10 long-term bicycles on the Somerville side of the property, which will meet the Somerville requirements, and for 3 short-term bicycles and 3 long-term bicycles on the Cambridge side of the property.”

There are no other changes to the previously filed Development Narrative.