

DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE SPECIAL PERMIT

Property: 6 Wheatland Street
Applicant: Nelson Group Construction Corp.
Owner: NPO Properties LLC
Agent: Adam Dash, Esq.
Zoning Designation: Mid-Rise 3 (“MR3”)
Not in a Transit Area
Not in a Pedestrian Street District

The Applicant and Owner of the Property at 6 Wheatland Street, being NPO Properties LLC, hereby seeks (i) Site Plan Approval for the development of an Apartment Building, (ii) a Special Permit to establish a Residential Housing use, (iii) a Hardship Variance for the primary front façade build out, (iv) a Hardship Variance for the landscape buffer, and (v) a Hardship Variance for the rear setback.

This Development Narrative only addresses the Special Permit relief. The other relief is the subject of other applications.

Summary.

The Property is currently an approximately 4,250 sf lot with a two-and-one-half story, two-family structure on it. It is one property removed from Broadway and is one block away from the redevelopment of the old Star Market site. The Property has long been vacant and is in disrepair.

The lot at the Property is fairly narrow for the MR3 zoning district at 42.5 feet in width.

The abutter to the Property on the Southwesterly (left) side is a commercial structure at 273 Broadway in the MR3 zoning district. That abutting property has a blank, brick wall facing the Property.

The abutter to the Property on the Northeasterly (right) side is a residential condominium building in the Neighborhood Residence (“NR”) zoning district. The existing structure at the Property is only 2.3’ from that right side abutter’s property line.

The main abutter to the Northwest is the Elizabeth Peabody House facility at 275 Broadway in the MR3 zoning district, but there is also a small bit on that side which abuts the property at 9 Grant Street in the NR zoning district. The lot line of the Property facing the 275 Broadway lot is a side lot line because the Property abuts the side lot line of the abutter even though this lot line is parallel to the front lot line of the Property, per Somerville Zoning Ordinance (“SZO”) Section 2.1.1 (definition of “Lot Line, Rear”). The portion of that lot line which abuts 9 Grant Street is a rear lot line.

Applicant proposes to demolish the existing structure and to build a new three-story, five-unit Apartment Building with five motor vehicle parking spaces, and five long-term bicycle parking spaces, in the rear (the “Project”), and two short-term bicycle parking spaces in the front. The new structure would be closer to the blank, brick, back wall of the left side abutting commercial building and would be further away from the residential condominium building on the right side.

The Property is located in the MR3 zoning district. It is not located in a Transit Area or in a Pedestrian Street District.

The Historic Preservation Commission found the existing structure not to be Significant, such that no demolition delay period was imposed.

The Urban Design Commission approved the façade option being presented in this Application and made certain recommendations which have been incorporated into the Project.

Relief Sought.

Applicant seeks the following relief for the Project:

- Site Plan Approval for an Apartment Building pursuant to SZO Section 4.1.6.b.i.
- Special Permit for a Residential Housing use pursuant to SZO Sections 4.1.13 and 9.1.1.
- Hardship Variance for primary front façade build out pursuant to SZO Section 4.1.7.c.
- Hardship Variance for landscape buffer pursuant to SZO Sections 10.3.6.a.i. and 10.3.6.b.
- Hardship Variance for minimum rear setback abutting an NR zone pursuant to SZO Section 4.1.7.b.d.

This Development Narrative addresses only the Special Permit relief. The other relief is the subject of separate applications.

Argument.

Applicant seeks a Special Permit for a Residential Housing use pursuant to SZO Sections 4.1.13 and 9.1.1.

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 additional residential units, including one affordable unit.

Abutting two commercial properties, being one property in from Broadway, being on a stretch of Wheatland Street which is in the MR3 zoning district and which is made up of structures of varying sizes and shapes, and being one block from the multi-use redevelopment of the old Star Market site, the Property is in the right location for an increase in size and number of residential units, and will not disrupt the evolving neighborhood context.

The existing structure is very close to the lot line of the residential condominium structure on its right, and is far from the commercial blank wall on its left. The Project reverses that situation, to the benefit of said residential condominium, because the proposed structure is being located closer to the commercial blank wall on its left and further away from the residential condominium structure on its right.

The proposed structure is only 33.5' in height, which is below the allowed 38' in height in the MR3 zoning district, which is 13.43% shorter than it could be. The proposed structure is seeking to carry out the goals of locating three-story structures at this location, 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 what the MR3 asks for. It is a multi-unit, three-story Apartment Building structure providing quality residential space to serve the neighborhood, including one affordable unit.

The residential units will vary in size from 1,018 sf to 1,245 sf. There will be four 2-bedroom units and one 3-bedroom unit to accommodate larger households. The four 2-bedroom units will have two bathrooms, and the 3 bedroom unit will have 3 bathrooms, which families need.

Sustainability will be addressed in a number of ways, and the project will comply with the current specialized stretch energy code.

The Project will comply with the Green Score requirements.

The Project is not in a Transit Area and will have five motor vehicle parking spaces, and five long-term bicycle parking spaces, in the rear.

The project promotes the goals of the Somerville Pollinator Action Plan, as requested by the Urban Design Commission.

The Project provides usable green space at the Property and adds two new trees, as well as other new plantings.

The Project will have the required bicycle parking to incentivize non-motor vehicle travel. The redevelopment of the old Star Market site into a multi-use, multi-building project with a new public plaza, public park and community center will provide amenities only one block away so that motor vehicle travel will not always be necessary.

- 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 establish a Residential Housing use in the MR3 zoning district.

NARRATIVE SUPPLEMENT

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Agent: Adam Dash, Esq.
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No Campaign Contribution Form is required according to the Submission Guidelines.