



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

TO: Planning Board
FROM: OSPCD Staff
SUBJECT: 32-40 White Street, ZP25-000118, ZP25-000119, & ZP26-000041
POSTED: July 8, 2026

RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions (Site Plan Approval)
Approve with Conditions (Special Permit)
Approve with Conditions (Special Permit)

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 Site Plan Approval and Special Permit applications submitted for 32-40 White Street, 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 June 29, 2026 and is scheduled for a public hearing on July 16, 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

ZP25-000118

32-40 White St LLC/Kinvarra Capital proposes to develop an Apartment Building in the Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) zoning district, which requires Site Plan Approval.

ZP25-000119

32-40 White St LLC/Kinvarra Capital proposes to establish residential housing in the Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) zoning district, which requires a Special Permit.

ZP26-000041

32-40 White St LLC/Kinvarra Capital seeks to construct a mechanical penthouse that exceeds the maximum height in the Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) zoning district, which requires a Special Permit.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Kinvarra Capital is proposing to construct a 4-story LEED Platinum apartment building. The proposed development will produce twenty-nine (29) dwelling units of which five (5) are affordable units, twenty-nine (29) long-term bicycle parking spaces, four (4) short-

term bicycle parking spaces, and the proposed landscape will earn a GreenScore of 0.34.

BACKGROUND

32-40 White Street is located in the 0.25mi Transit Area in the Mid-Rise 4 (MR4) zoning district in the Porter Square neighborhood represented by Ward 5 Councilor Sait. Establishing an Apartment Building in the MR4 district requires Site Plan Approval. Site Plan Approval is the administrative review and approval of conforming development to address any potential impacts as necessary. The Planning Board is the decision-making authority for all (non-variance) discretionary or administrative permits required for the MR4 zoning district. Establishing a residential use and constructing a mechanical penthouse that exceeds the maximum height allowed in the MR4 zoning district each require a Special Permit.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

The first neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward 5 Councilor Naima Sait and the applicant on September 22, 2025, via the Google Meet meeting platform. The participants had questions regarding traffic concerns, drop off zones, construction zones, and parking.

The second neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward 5 Councilor Naima Sait and the applicant on November 19, 2025 via the Google Meet platform. The applicant presented updates from the Urban Design Review Commission and the prior neighborhood meeting. Neighbors had questions regarding lighting, tree removal, trash, and construction timelines.

DESIGN REVIEW

The proposal was reviewed by the Somerville Urban Design Commission (UDC) via the Zoom meeting platform on October 28, 2025. The UDC requested that the applicant add fenestration into the bicycle room and basement amenity space, consider a greater species diversity on the rooftop green space, add separation between the first and second floor materials, extend the water table/dark brick base so the wood material does not come to the ground, and consider additional design options for the blank wall at the corner of the building.

ANALYSIS

Building/Land Use

The proposed Apartment Building is a four (4) story residential building. A total of twenty-nine (29) units are proposed, with a mix of studio, 1- and 2-bedroom units. All units have access to an elevator. There is common space proposed on the roof of the building. The applicant has signed an Affordable Housing Acknowledgement (AHA) and

will provide 5 affordable units and a 0.8 fractional payment. The applicant has identified three (3) accessible units on the Plan Set.

Mobility

No motor vehicle parking is proposed as part of this application. As this property is in the .25 mile walkshed to an MBTA Rapid Transit Station (Porter Square), tenants in this building are not eligible for on-street parking passes.

Mobility Staff comment have left the following comment regarding the municipal boundary on White Street: The boundary between the Cities of Cambridge and Somerville falls along White Street. Any proposed changes to the roadway operations or regulations of White Street must be coordinated by the City of Cambridge.

Public Space and Urban Forestry

The GreenScore proposed by the applicant is 0.34, where the minimum is 0.25, and the ideal is 0.30. This design incorporates a green roof and common roof deck for tenants.

Sustainability

The applicant completed the Sustainable Building Questionnaire required by the Office of Sustainability and the Environmental and was issued a Certificate of Required Materials. This building is proposed to be Passive House Certified and Certified LEED Platinum. This proposal was designed using the Net-Zero Density Bonus.

CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

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.

Site Plan Approval 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. Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.

Special Permit Considerations (general)

4. The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.
5. The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.

Special Permit Considerations (Penthouse Heigh Specific)

6. Visual impact and aesthetic quality of the proposed screening of penthouse.
7. Efforts to reduce any net shadows cast upon neighboring lots and structures.
8. Ventilation and air handling techniques to reduce the emission of odor or exhaust toward neighboring lots and structures.
9. Sound attenuation measures or operational procedures to mitigate potential noise impacts to neighboring lots and structures.

Information relative to the required considerations is provided below:

Site Plan Approval and 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:

- Focusing on our largest GHG contributor (buildings).
- Increase the housing supply.
- Prioritize walking, biking, and transit options and minimize space dedicated to personal vehicles.

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

The intent of the MR4 zoning district is, in part: "To create, maintain, and enhance areas appropriate for smaller scale, multi-use and mixed-use buildings and neighborhood serving commercial uses."

Staff believes this project also meets the broader intent of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, including the following:

- To develop and maintain complete, mixed-use, walkable, transit-oriented, and environmentally sustainable neighborhoods that foster a strong sense of community throughout the day.
- To provide a range of housing types, unit sizes, and price points to accommodate the diverse household sizes and life stages of Somerville residents at all income levels.
- To preserve and enhance the design of Somerville's public realm.
- To encourage the use of public transportation, bicycling, and walking in lieu of motor vehicle use when a choice of travel mode exists.

Site Plan Approval Specific

3. *Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.*

Staff believes the proposed conditions mitigate any significant impacts attributable to the proposed development.

Mechanical Penthouse Height Special Permit Specific

4. Visual impact and aesthetic quality of the proposed screening or penthouse.

Staff believe that the current design reduces the visual impact of the roof mounted mechanical equipment.

5. Efforts to reduce any net shadows cast upon neighboring lots and structures.

Staff believe that as located and designed, the mechanical penthouse will have a minimal impact on neighboring lots and structures.

6. Ventilation and air handling techniques to reduce the emission of odor or exhaust toward neighboring lots and structures.

Staff believe that the ventilation and air handling techniques will reduce the impact on neighboring lots and structures and allow the outdoor amenity space to be useable for the residents of the building.

7. Sound attenuation measures or operational procedures to mitigate potential noise impacts to neighboring lots and structures.

Staff believe that the mechanical equipment will mitigate noise for the residents using the outdoor space and have minimal impact on the neighboring lots and structures.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

Should the Board approve the required Plan Approval for the apartment building Planning, Preservation & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions:

General

1. Utility and mechanical equipment is not permitted on any façade or within the frontage area of the lot.
2. Electrical transformers and other mechanical equipment are not permitted above ground within the frontage area of any lot.
3. This decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
4. If the Board requires any changes to the submitted plans, digital copies or all applicable application materials reflecting those changes must be submitted to the Planning Division for the public record. Materials must be submitted in accordance with the document format standards of the Submittal Requirements.

5. A digital copy of the recorded Decisions stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deed must be submitted to the Planning Division for the public record.
6. A written narrative or descriptive checklist identifying the completion or compliance with permit conditions must be submitted to the Inspectional Services Department at least ten (10) working days in advance of a request for a final inspection.
7. A Digital Massing Model of only the building's massing, in SketchUp format (.skp), that is to scale and properly geo-located and oriented for use in placing and viewing the project within the City's digital model of existing buildings in the city must be submitted to the Planning Division prior to the issuance of a Building Permit. The model should be main mass only and should not include any detailed architectural features of the proposed building, including building components or materiality.
8. Construction documents must be substantially equivalent to the approved plans and other materials submitted for Site Plan Approval.
9. Alterations to the design or location of the transformer is a major amendment to the approved plans, and requires board review.

Construction/Engineering

10. Final sidewalk design must provide sufficient width to guarantee at least 5' clear width of cement concrete surface for ADA/MAAB access on White Street. The 5' width may be combined by land in public right of way and private land dedicated via a public access easement. Establish easement line parallel to White Street side line. Submit easement plans for City Review providing the City and general public 24/7/365 access to sidewalk on private property adjacent to White Street, as necessary. Executed easement is required prior to Certificate of Occupancy.
11. Sheet Z-0.13 calls out permeable concrete paving in the White Street frontage. This area is subject to material requirements in previous comment for future public sidewalk easement. Engineering will require construction details for this design as part of future Building Permits. Permeable poured concrete paving may be acceptable if it performs similarly to standard cementitious concrete paving with respect to ADA/MAAB requirements. It is unlikely that permeable unit pavers will be approved for the area adjacent to White Street public way.
12. A public right-of-way or pedestrian access easement must be provided in perpetuity by a covenant or other deed restriction for the full area of the sidewalk provided within the frontage area of the lot. Final easement language must be approved by the City Solicitor. The easement must be recorded at the Middlesex Registry of Deeds prior to application for a Certificate of Occupancy.
13. Material Specifications from suppliers must be submitted to confirm fenestration glazing is compliant with the VLT and VLR ratios required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.
14. An outdoor lighting plan and supplier cut sheet specifications of chosen lighting fixtures must be submitted to confirm compliance with Section 10.6 Outdoor Lighting of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The site photometric plan must include a keyed site plan identifying the location of all luminaires; total site lumen limit table (calculations from the SZO); lighting fixture schedule indicating the

fixture type, description, lamp type, lumens, color temperature, color rendering index, BUG rating, mounting height, and wattage of all luminaires; and notation of any timing devices used to control the hours set for illumination.

Housing

15. A deed restriction limiting the sale or rental of all affordable dwelling units to eligible households in perpetuity must be executed and recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
16. An affordable housing implementation plan (AHIP) must be submitted to the Director of Housing for review and approval prior to applying for a Building Permit.
17. The Applicant or their successor in interest shall make a fractional buyout for 0.8 ADUs not provided.

Mobility

18. The property owner(s) and applicable future tenants must comply with the Mobility Management Plan dated December 11, 2026, as approved and conditioned by the Director of Mobility's Final Approval dated April 21, 2026.
19. Dwelling units must be advertised as ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission.
20. All buyers, grantees, lessees, renters, and tenants must be notified in writing prior to sale or lease of any dwelling unit that the residents are ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission.
21. Formal acknowledgement that residents are ineligible for on-street Residential Parking Permits, and that dwelling units will be advertised as such, subject to the regulations of the Somerville Traffic Commission, must be filed and recorded with this Decision and forwarded to the Somerville Traffic Commission and Inspectional Services Division.

Sustainability

22. The Applicant or their successor in interest must submit all Stage 2 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements.
23. The Applicant or their successor in interest must submit all Stage 3 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements.