City of Somerville
STRATEGY & DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

MAYOR JAKE WILSON

To: Zoning Board of Appeals
From: Planning Division
Date: October 28, 2026
Subject: 34R Clyde Street Variance Applications

Planning Division staff have reviewed the Variance applications for 35R Clyde St: ZP26-00086, ZP26-000087, ZP26-000088, and ZP26-000089. This memo provides analysis and supporting information for weighing the benefits versus detriments of issuing the requested variance subject to the statutory requirements of M.G.L. 40A.

Zoning Analysis

The proposal is to add an 8.5-foot long by 17-foot wide driveway and two side-by-side parking spaces to the frontage of the property, as well as a 17-foot curb cut. The location of the driveway and width of the curb cut are not compliant, along with the resulting lot width and sum of side setbacks for properties with a front driveway.

Variance Requirement	Required	Proposed	Variance
ZP26-000086 Frontage area parking (SZO 3.1.18.c.iii)	Parking not permitted in the frontage area	2 side-by-side spaces; entire lot functions as frontage area (building at rear)	Relief to allow 2 spaces in the frontage area
ZP26-000087 Maximum driveway width (SZO 3.1.18.c.iv)	12 ft (max)	17 ft proposed	+5 ft (41.7% over the maximum)
ZP26-000088 Minimum sum of side setbacks (SZO 3.1.7.b)	12 ft (minimum with front driveway access)	5.7 ft	Existing nonconforming condition increased by driveway addition
ZP26-000089 Minimum lot width (SZO 3.1.7.a)	34 ft (minimum with front driveway access)	25 ft	Existing nonconforming condition increased by driveway addition

Strict enforcement of the zoning ordinance for 34R Clyde Street would prohibit the Applicant from having parking on their property. The principal structure sits at the rear of a 25-foot-wide 125-foot-deep lot, therefore the majority of the lot is frontage area. Since parking is not permitted in the frontage area or alongside the house due to spatial limitations, strict enforcement of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance would not allow any parking or driveway of any width on this parcel.

In reviewing whether the benefit sought by the applicant can be achieved by another feasible method, the Mobility Division has provided feedback that the desired relief can be accomplished using a standard 12-foot curb cut and locating the side-by-side parking further into their lot. This

alternative method provides the least amount of relief while still accomplishing the goal of a two side by side parking spots in the frontage of the lot.



Rendering from Mobility, for reference only

Benefits to the Applicant

The Planning Division identified the following benefits to the Applicant:

- Creation of off-street parking where none currently exists.
- Improvement of accessibility to the property for those with mobility limitations.
- Increased desirability and value of the property due to addition of off-street parking.
- Reduced need to move vehicles to comply with on-street parking rules related to street maintenance.

Benefits to the Public Interest

Massachusetts case law has treated the public interest as relating to the general public extending beyond the boundaries of a municipality. Zoning defines the public interest by the purpose that zoning ordinances are adopted and the statutory limits of what zoning can regulate.

The Planning Division identified the following benefits to the public interest:

- Fewer cars using on-street parking increases the supply of on-street parking spaces for neighbors.
- Off-street parking increases the property's value and taxbase.

Detriments to the Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Neighborhood

Massachusetts case law treats the word "neighborhood" as an elastic geographic area that may alter in size according to the nature of the impact of a proposed variance. For the context of the requested variance, staff analysis identifies public health, safety, and welfare consequences of the proposal that are experienced in the geographically relevant area.

The Planning Division identified the following detriments to the Health, Safety, and Welfare of the Neighborhood:

- A 17-foot driveway and curb cut would change the streetscape and introduce a new vehicle point of conflict with the sidewalk and pedestrians.
- Loss of green space and permeable surface across most of the lot's width and associated stormwater and heat effects
- Noise, headlight glare, and car exhaust affecting the direct abutters since frontage parking would sit close to the side lot lines.
- An increase in off-street parking supply also increases auto-oriented demand, in conflict with SomerVision's goals for properties within the 1/4 mile transit area.