**DEVELOPMENT NARRATIVE**
**FOR VARIANCES**

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| Property: | 199 Elm Street |
| Applicant: | Mapu Development LLC |
| Owner: | 181 Pearl St LLC |
| Agent: | Adam Dash, Esq. |
| Zoning District: | MR4 |
| | ½ Mile Transit Area |
| | In a Pedestrian Street District |

The Applicant, being Mapu Development LLC, hereby submits this Development Narrative regarding the property located at 199 Elm Street (the "Property") for the following Variances pursuant to Somerville Zoning Ordinance ("SZO") Section 15.2.3 regarding a General Building in the Mid-Rise 4 ("MR4") zoning district:

**Applicant seeks the following Variances:**

**-Number of stories, per SZO Section 4.2.8.c**
**-Building height, per SZO Section 4.2.8.c**
**-Density Factor for Number of Residential Units, per SZO Section 4.2.8.d**

Relief was granted for a new four-story. mixed-use General Building at the Property in 2025 in cases ZP25-000031 (Site Plan Approval to develop a General Building), ZP25-000054 (Special Permit for residential housing use), and ZP25-000066 (Special Permit for mechanical equipment height). The previously approved structure would have ground floor commercial space facing Elm Street (which is a Pedestrian Street) and 10 residential units on the upper floors (with 2 of those units being affordable).

Applicant now seeks to increase the height of the rear portion of the proposed General Building to six stories, which adds two additional residential floors. This will increase the number of residential units to a total of 16, with 3 of those units being affordable. The ground floor facing Elm Street would remain commercial.

All of the variances sought relate to this increased height which increases the number of residential units and, therefore, its density. The proposal is to have 6 stories instead of the allowed 4 stories, 67 feet of building height instead of the allowed 52 feet in height, and a residential density factor with 16 units instead of the allowed 13 units.

The arguments below have been combined for all of the variances being sought to avoid repetition, since the arguments for each variance are similar and are due to the increased height of the proposed structure.

1. **What does strict enforcement of the zoning ordinance require on this lot?**
2. **What practical difficulty (consequence) results from strict enforcement? (physical, financial, environmental, etc.)**
3. **What are the benefits to the applicant of granting the variance?**
4. **What are the benefits to the public interest, including housing production, of granting the variance?**
5. **What are the detriments to the public health, safety, and welfare of the neighborhood, of granting the variance?**

Under the new state law changes to Mass. Gen. Laws Ch. 40A, variances are to be determined using the standard of whether strict enforcement of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance ("SZO") would result in a "practical difficulty". This is done by weighing the benefits to Applicant and to the public interest against the detriment to the public health, safety and welfare of the neighborhood.

**What does strict enforcement of the zoning ordinance require on this lot?**

Strict enforcement of the SZO would require a much smaller, four-story structure and not provide the additional 6 residential units, which includes 1 additional affordable unit.

As Applicant has developed the plans for the previously approved structure, it has become apparent that the previously approved four stories and 46 feet in height will not provide enough units to make the development viable. Applicant needs to have the density and income to pay for developing this Property due to the increase in cost of materials, the current inflationary environment, the site being very tight with zero lot line construction, and the need to protect the abutting structure.

In short, the SZO does not provide for enough building to be built to make the proposal viable.

A viable structure is required to address the restrictive nature of the lot and the actual cost of construction.

**What practical difficulty (consequence) results from strict enforcement? (physical, financial, environmental, etc.)**

Applicant has a practical difficulty in developing the Property without variances.

As stated above, Applicant needs to have the density and income to pay for developing this Property due to the increase in cost of materials, the current inflationary environment, the site being very tight with zero lot line construction, and the need to protect the abutting structure.

The need for the variances at the Property was not self-created. It is a product of the lot and the finances of the proposed development.

It is a practical difficulty to comply with the strict requirements of the SZO, considering that such compliance would render the proposal not viable.

**What are the benefits to the applicant of granting the variance?**

The benefit of the requested variances provides six additional residential units in Davis Square, of which one of those new units will be affordable. This means there would now be a total of 16 residential units, of which 3 would be affordable.

The benefit to the Applicant would also be to have a viable development which can actually be built on this tight site.

**What are the benefits to the public interest, including housing production, of granting the variance?**

While it benefits Applicant, it also benefits the public to have the six additional residential units in Davis Square, of which one of those new units will be affordable. This means there would now be a total of 16 residential units, of which 3 would be affordable. Housing is badly needed in the City, especially near transit like this Property.

Applicant met with the Davis Square Neighborhood Council which expressed support for the increased height.

The abutters also expressed support for the increased height.

More height and more residential units is in keeping with the spirit of the ongoing Davis Square neighborhood planning process.

The increased height is only on the rear portion of the proposed structure, such that it will not impact Elm Street much.

The commercial space fronting onto Elm Street, which is a Pedestrian Street, will be retained.

Other than the three variances sought, the proposed development will meet all of the dimensional requirements of the SZO.

**What are the detriments to the public health, safety, and welfare of the neighborhood, of granting the variance?**

As stated above, the proposed structure will be taller. While three variances are being sought, they are all related to the height and are really of a kind.

There will be increased shadows, the height is only on the rear part of the building to avoid impacting Elm Street and the neighbors more than necessary.

A four-story mixed-use was previously approved for the Property, which shows that the use is desirable. Applicant is only seeking for two more floors for the rear portion of the structure over what was previously approved.

**Conclusion**

Therefore, Applicant requests that the requested variances be granted.