City of Somerville

ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS

City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

TO: Zoning Board of Appeals
FROM: Planning Division Staff
SUBJECT: 64 Hooker Ave, ZP26-000095
POSTED: November 25, 2026
RECOMMENDATION: None

Staff memos are used to communicate background information, analysis, responses to public comments, review of statutory requirements and other information from Planning, Staff to the Review Board members.

This memo summarizes the M.G.L. 40A Sec. 6 Finding request submitted for 64 Hooker Ave, 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 November 16, 2026, and is scheduled for a public hearing on December 2, 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

Jared Gardiner proposes to convert an existing nonconforming rear projecting porch into habitable space in the Neighborhood Residence (NR) zoning district, which requires a section 6 finding.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

The proposed modification will convert an existing nonconforming rear projecting porch into habitable space.

BACKGROUND

64 Hooker Ave is in the Neighborhood Residence (NR) zoning district in the West Somerville/ Teele Square neighborhood represented by Ward 7 Councilor Emily Hardt. Following the Board's decision regarding the Special Permit Finding, the proposal will be by-right. The Zoning Board of Appeals is the decision-making authority for all discretionary or administrative permits required for the NR zoning district.

ANALYSIS

The property at 64 Hooker Ave is a two-unit house in the West Somerville/ Teele Square neighborhood. The structure is an existing non-conforming building. Proposed conversion

of an existing nonconforming rear projecting porch into habitable space does not comply with SZO 3.1.8. Since this building is an existing two-unit dwelling, the property owner is entitled to pursue a Special Permit under Massachusetts General Law (M.G.L) Chapter 40A Section 6 (Special Permit Finding or Section 6 Finding). A Section 6 finding allows for existing nonconforming structures to be altered by Special Permit if the SPGA (Special Permit Granting Authority), in this case the Zoning Board of Appeals, makes a finding that the proposed alteration is not substantially more detrimental than the existing nonconformity to the neighborhood.

Upon analysis of the submitted materials, Planning Staff do not believe that the granting of the Special Permit Finding would cause a substantial detriment to the public good, or would nullify or substantially derogate from the intent and purpose of the Neighborhood Residence (NR) district, copied here:

Intent:

- *To implement the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Somerville*
- *To consider already established areas of detached and semi-detached residential buildings*

Purpose:

- *To permit the development of one-, two-, and three-unit detached and semi-detached residential buildings on individual lots*
- *To permit contextual modifications to existing detached and semi-detached residential buildings*
- *To permit the adaptive reuse of certain existing non conforming buildings for arts and creative enterprise and retail uses compatible with residential areas*
- *To create dwelling unit types, sizes, and bedroom counts ideal for larger households in houses, Semi-Attached Houses, Duplexes, and Triple Deckers*
- *To create dwelling unit types, sizes, and bedroom counts ideal for smaller households in Cottages and Backyard Cottages*

CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS

The Zoning Board of Appeals is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance and M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 6 to deliberate each of the following considerations at the public hearing:

Special Permit Finding Consideration:

- Pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 40A, Section 6, "Pre-existing nonconforming structures or uses may be extended or altered, provided, that no such extension or alteration shall be permitted unless there is a finding by the permit granting authority or by the special permit granting authority designated by ordinance or by-law that such change, extension or alteration *shall not be substantially more detrimental than the existing nonconforming use to the neighborhood."*

Planning Staff do not believe the conversion of the existing nonconforming rear projecting porch into habitable space is substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming structure.