



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB2018-07
Date: May 15th, 2018 June 7th, 2018
Recommendation: None at this time
Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 5 Middlesex Avenue

Applicant Name: CDNV Assembly LLC
Applicant Address: 120 Water Street, Boston, MA 02109
Property Owner Name: CDNV Assembly LLC & RD Management LLC
Property Owner Address: 120 Water Street, Boston, MA 02109
Agent Name: Reimer Braunstein LLP
Agent Address: 700 District Avenue, Burlington, MA 01803
Alderman: Matt McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant, CDNV Assembly LLC, and Owner, CDNV Assembly LLC & RD Management LLC, is seeking a Planned Unit Development-A Preliminary Master Plan (PUD-PMP) under Article 16 and Section 6.4 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) for 9.38 acres (lots 88-A-1 & 99-A-15) in the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District (ASMD) to develop a transit-oriented mixed-use development to include commercial (office/R&D/lab), residential, and retail.

The following waivers are requested:

1. for relief under §6.4.12.A and §16.5.4 for additional building height as follows;
 - a. "Block 21" commercial uses is composed of a 5-story podium and two towers - one building will be 200' to the top of roof, and the other 250' high – with a total of 646,000sf;
 - b. "Block 25" will be a residential tower 220' high containing 167 units; and,
 - c. "Block 26" will be a commercial building 135' high containing approximately 140,000sf.
2. for relief under §16.5.5 to allow 8 loading docks to be shared between uses
3. for relief under §13.3.5 to waive the Planning Board's right of first refusal or option to purchase the inclusionary units.



ASMD zone. PUD-A Overlay District. Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: May 15th, 2018, June 7th, 2018

This staff report has been updated to include information about recent collaboration efforts. Updated portions of this staff report have been highlighted in yellow. Portions which no longer apply have been struck.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property:

The Project Site is a 9.38-acre lot bounded by Foley Street, Middlesex Avenue, Revolution Drive and Grand Union Boulevard in the heart of Assembly Row. The adjacent parcels to the north (across Foley Street) and south (across Revolution Drive) support existing retail uses and surface parking. The adjacent parcels to the north and east (across Grand Union Boulevard) are part of the Assembly Row mixed-use development. The Site is located within walking distance from the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) Orange Line Assembly rail station and multiple bus stops for the MBTA's number 90 and 92 bus lines. The existing site contains an existing four-level 162,000 square foot ("SF") office building, approximately 800 parking spaces within an asphalt paved surface parking lot, and a gravel lot covering land where a demolished building once stood.

On July 25, 2016 Somerville Office Associates applied for a minor subdivision to reconfigure the parcels at 5-7 Middlesex Avenue and Grand Union Boulevard to create two parcels called Block 9 and New Parcel 2 (Case#: PB 2016-12). The subdivision did not create zoning violations and enabled Block 9 of the Assembly Row Master Plan to be developed with a more functional parcel shape. The applicants at Assembly Row will be returning to the Board at a future date to adjust the plan for Block 9 to match the new parcel shape. The subdivision also allowed for future development of the New Parcel 2. This parcel is part of this application that requires approval of a Preliminary Master Plan under the Planned Unit Development-A zoning.

Surrounding Neighborhood:

The Assembly Square Mixed-use District (ASMD) encompasses the area bounded by the Mystic River, the Boston City Line (excluding the property east of the Rockport/Newburyport commuter rail line), the I-93/Route 38 corridor and Route 28.

The Planned Unit Development Preliminary Master Plan (PUD-PMP) for Assembly Row, approved in 2006 and amended in 2010 and 2014, is to redevelop approximately 56.2 acres of land in the Assembly Square area of Somerville, Massachusetts with a new transit-oriented mixed-use development consisting of approximately 1,843 residential units, 2.8 million square feet of commercial uses permitted under the SZO including, but not limited to office, research & development, laboratory, medical office, manufacturing, etc., 585,000 SF of retail space (including restaurants and cinema), a health club, and an up to 170-room hotel. The Project also includes the continued use and occupancy of the retail uses at the existing building known as the Assembly Square Marketplace. Construction of the Project is planned in multiple phases to be constructed over ten to fifteen years.

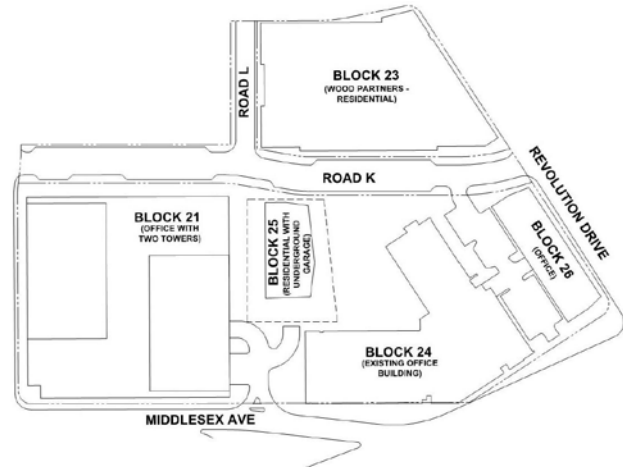
The self-storage/café building further down Middlesex Avenue was also approved through a PUD-PMP process. These are the two master plan projects that have been proposed and are underway or

complete in Assembly Square. The “Assembly’s Edge” project (845 McGrath Highway and 74 Middlesex Avenue) was recently approved for a PUD-PMP and has submitted a Site Plan application.

2. Proposal:

The Project will consist of approximately 1.5 million square feet (MSF) of residential and commercial uses within five (5) mixed-use buildings, each on its own block, surrounding a central open space:

- Block 21 includes office/lab uses, retail/active use space, and a fire station of 646,000 SF proposed as two towers sitting above a 5-level podium (the lower tower at approximately 190’ and the taller tower at approximately 250’);
- Block 23 includes 6 levels of 329 residential units above a two-story podium of retail/active use space and parking;
- Block 24 is the existing four-level office building;
- Block 25 is proposed to be 220-0” and located in the center of the site with 187,000 SF for 167 residential units; and
- Block 26 is intended to provide 140,000 SF of commercial (office/R&D uses) over 10 levels.



The Project proposes to provide approximately 145,630 square feet of open space and 90,840 square feet of publicly accessible usable open space with a 48,000sf central lawn bounded by Block 21, Block 24 and Road K.

Design and Compatibility:

The project proposes an extension of the overall public realm strategies established at Assembly Row; adapted and evolved to create a series of spaces that are identifiably unique yet intimately connected to the neighborhood at large. To achieve this, special focus has been given to creating a positive pedestrian experience as an extension of the network established at Assembly Row.

The open space design provides approximately 145,630 square feet of open space in a series of landscape experiences. This is achieved through the provision of flexible spaces that can support a broad range of programming; development of landscape spaces at multiple scales to support different levels of social interaction; seamless integration of stormwater best management practices, and climate change planning measures; and includes strategies for addressing adjacent highway impacts. Part of Road K adjacent to the Central Lawn will be a Festival Street. A flush street/sidewalk condition, a woonerf similar to the condition at Point Park in Assembly Square, that allows the vehicular street area to be closed-off and allows the street to be used in conjunction with the streetscape for neighborhood celebrations.

While the design of the buildings located in the northern portion of the Assembly Row vernacular which pays homage to the Site’s rich industrial past, the proposed office developments to the southern portion of Assembly Row as well as the Partner’s Healthcare Headquarters facility have transitioned to a more

modern architectural aesthetic. A critical point of emphasis is for each building (for all use types) to express a distinct base, middle, and top, as well as offering a varied expression at the roof line to contribute to the Somerville skyline in this district. While common themes will be emphasized (such as the expression of the structural column grid, scale-appropriate rhythm for openings, and a mix of opaque and transparent materials) flexibility is given within the design guidelines for the buildings to have a distinct architectural expression, while also encouraging a cohesive relationship with the surrounding neighborhood.

In accordance with the design guidelines created for this development, the proposed buildings are intended to offer a diverse range of architectural expression. These buildings are intended to be designed with a focus on the pedestrian experience, and careful consideration will be given to elements at the ground level (such as canopies, storefronts, and building entrances) to define a comfortable pedestrian scale at the street edge. A high level of transparency will be offered at the ground level to encourage activation and to provide opportunities for a “porous” edge condition.

Access and Circulation:

The proposed street layout to continue the street grid and extend the urban fabric which has been established at Assembly Row (to the east) and to provide future connectivity to the adjacent retail parcels (to the north and south). The pedestrian pathways and sidewalk connections will be designed to be seamless with the existing network street sections and amenities/furnishings in the vicinity. Vehicular connections have been well considered but the priority of the public realm design focuses on the pedestrian.

The existing roadways at Assembly Row are shared-use, promoting the use of bicycle transportation. Road K will continue that emphasis and a shared bike station will be provided within the development area. The site also has convenient public transit access including one (1) MBTA Orange Line station at Assembly Square approximately 1,200 feet to the east, and three (3) bus routes with stops near the Project Site along Middlesex Avenue, Mystic Avenue, and Grand Union Boulevard. These connections provide opportunities to minimize vehicle trips and encourage alternative modes of travel.

Impact on Affordable Housing:

The Applicant is proposing that 20% of the residential units to be constructed as part of the Project will be set aside as affordable units consistent with the Provisions of SZO Article 13 – Inclusionary Housing. Block 23, the 8-story residential building at the intersection of Grand Union Boulevard and Revolution Drive will house 329 dwelling unit and the Block 25 tower will have 160 units for a total of 489. The 98 affordable units will be finalized with the City under the required Affordable Housing Implementation Plan during the subsequent SPSR-A applications.

SomerVision Plan:

The Project is consistent with the goals of SomerVision, as it is located within an identified opportunity area of Somerville. As proposed, the project will enhance connections to the Assembly Row development from residential areas located in East Somerville on the southern edge of the ASMD.

<i><u>SomerVision Summary</u></i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	0	496
<i>Affordable Units:</i>	0	98
<i>Commercial Sq. Ft.:</i>	162,000	948,000
<i>Estimated Employment:</i>	unknown	unknown

<i>Parking Spaces:</i>	800	1,662
<i>Publicly Accessible Open Space:</i>	0	90,840

Dimensional Requirements:

16.5.1.	Uses within a PUD-A or SPSR-A uses	Provided	Comments
a. Minimum lot size (s.f.)	20,000	408,643	conforming
b. Maximum FAR	10.0	3.65	conforming
c. Minimum lot area/dwelling unit.			
10 or more units (s.f.)	No minimum	824	
d. Total open space ⁽¹⁾	25%	33% (145,630sf)	conforming
e. Useable open space ⁽¹⁾	12.5%	21% (90,840sf)	conforming
f. Maximum height ⁽²⁾			
All other locations	125 feet	135', 200', & 250' office and 220' residential	waiver requested
g. Setbacks (front, side, and rear perimeter)	No minimum	0'	conforming

3. Green Building Practices:

The Applicant is committed to an integrated, sustainable design approach. The project is currently targeting a goal of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design® ("LEED") Version 4 Certified rating. The Proponent will provide a LEEDv4 checklist as part of the Special Permit application for each subsequent building.

In recognition of the City's goal to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, the design team has raised finished floor elevations and the location of the proposed buildings' critical infrastructure for occupiable spaces above the projected flood elevations. Energy modeling will also be employed for each building to examine building performance and to examine opportunities to provide innovative sustainable design solutions focused on reducing GHG emissions.

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: None at this time.

Traffic & Parking: None at this time.

Sustainability & Environment: None at this time.

Historic Preservation: Not applicable.

Ward Alderman: None at this time. Alderman McLaughlin is in support of the project and encourages the Applicant to provide as many three-bedroom affordable units as possible. He also noted that he would like part of the Community Benefits funds to be put towards pollution mitigation on both sides of Interstate 93.

A neighborhood meeting has been scheduled for was held on May 21st, 23rd, 2018.

At the public meeting that was held in the Community Room of the Public Storage building abutting the site, Wig Zamore requested a larger green space by proposing to move the Block 25 residential density to a tower above the Block 23 podium.

Because all residential uses are to be located beyond the 300' particulate matter buffer, many member of the Mystic View Task Force were generally supportive of the project from an air quality perspective. There was discussion of the use of infrastructure funds, with a preference that funds be used towards the Kensington Underpass and pollution mitigation.

Public comment: Verbal testimony was opened and heard at the initial hearing on May 15th, 2018. A number of citizens spoke in support of the project but a few made the suggestion that the residential tower should be combined with the Block 23 podium building so the open space can be larger. While it was noted that the residential uses are outside the critical 300' distance from the highway for air pollution, filtration systems should still be evaluated for the health of future residents. The Board noted that the air quality issue should be addressed by the team at the next hearing and expressed a desire for the commercial buildings to be developed before the residential use.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW:

In order to grant a Special Permit with Site Plan Review for a Planned Unit Development Preliminary Master Plan, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.2.5, §6.4, and Article 16 of the SZO. The Appendices will go through these sections in detail and be provided with the final Staff Report after public comments are received. The attached Appendices go through these sections in detail.

Appendix A: Application Requirements

- A.1: Procedures for PUD Applications - Supportive Information (SZO 16.8)
- A.2: General Information Required for SPSR Applications (SZO 5.2)
- A.3: Denial Letter Requirement (SZO 16.12)

Appendix B: Required Findings of Fact

- B.1: General Findings under Section 16 (SZO 16.9 and 16.1)
- B.2: Consistency Findings (SZO Section 6.4)

- B.3: General Requirements of a PUD (SZO Section 16.4)
- B.4: PUD Design Guidelines (SZO Section 16.7)
- B.5: ASMD Development Standards (SZO Section 6.4.7.A)
- B.6: ASMD Design Guidelines (SZO Section 6.4.7.B)
- B.7: ASMD Large Project Development Standards (SZO Section 6.4.8.D)
- B.8: ASMD Large Project Design Guidelines (SZO Section 6.4.8.E)

Appendix C: Future Requirements for SPSR-A

Appendix D: Standards for Waivers

III. RECOMMENDATION

SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW for a PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT – PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN (PUD-PMP) under Article 16

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings Planning Staff ~~has no recommendation at this time~~ recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** for the requested **PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT – PRELIMINARY MASTER PLAN**.

The recommended **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** incorporates the conditions in Appendix E (attached).

This recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. As noted above, this report has been revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff through the infrastructure review, neighborhood meeting and during the public hearing process.