



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
SARAH LEWIS, *SENIOR PLANNER*
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER/HISTORIC PRESERVATION*
ALEX MELLO, *PLANNER*
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: PB 2017-23
Date: December 14th, 2017
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: NorthPoint – Parcel EF Design & Site Plan Review

Applicant Name: DW NP Property, LLC
Applicant Address: One Kendall Square, Suite B3201, Cambridge, MA 02139
Owner Name: DW NP Property, LLC
Owner Address: One Kendall Square, Suite B3201, Cambridge, MA 02139
Agent: Thomas N. O'Brien
Agent Address: One Congress Street, 10th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: NorthPoint Parcel EF: (Case # PB 2017-23) Applicant/Owner DW NP Property LLC requests Design & Site Plan under §6.6 and §5.4 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance for a Commercial Office or R&D/Laboratory building of approximately 483,000sf with underground parking for approximately 379 spaces on Parcel EF within the overall NorthPoint Neighborhood Development Plan. North Point Special District (NPSD). Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: December 14th, 2017

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property:

“NorthPoint” refers to an area of land along the north bank of the Charles River, over sixty acres in total, inclusive of the area north of Msgr. O'Brien Highway from the MBTA's Fitchburg line right-of-way to the Charles River, on both sides of the Charlestown Avenue (Gilmore) Bridge.

The Site is currently undeveloped vacant former railroad land. It is one of twenty (20) building parcels in the NorthPoint mixed-use development. To date, condominium buildings on Lot S and Lot T, a rental residential building on Lot N, Northpoint Common, Child Street Park and related

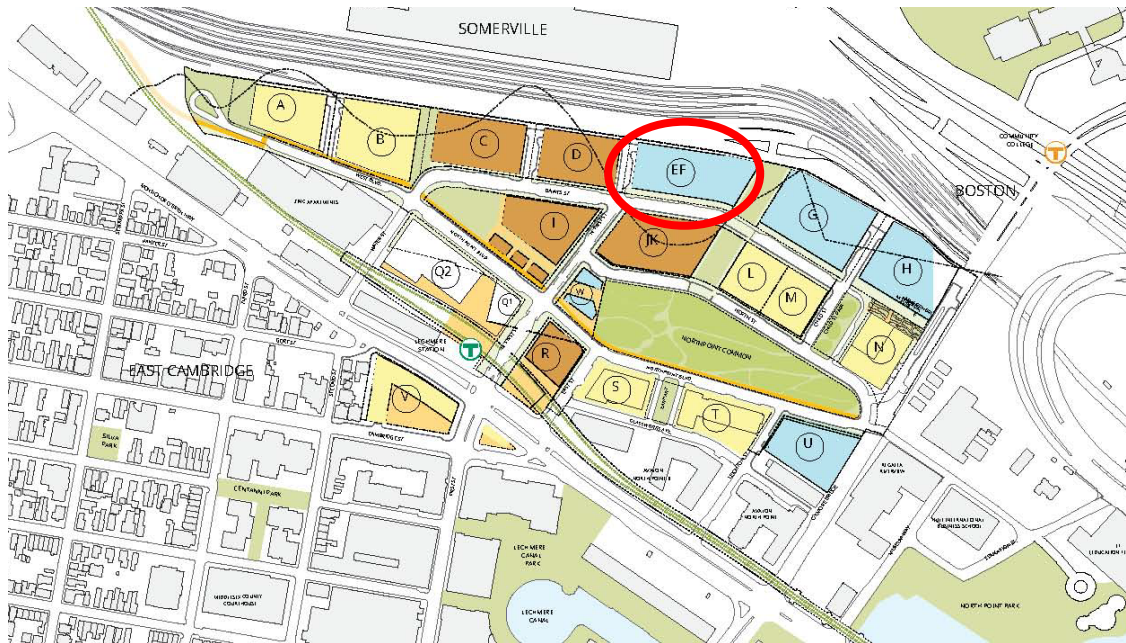


infrastructure and other public amenities (including the Brian P. Murphy Memorial Staircase) have been constructed in NorthPoint. The proposed building on Lot JK will be the first commercial building to be constructed in NorthPoint. The surrounding roadway network is currently undergoing preliminary construction preparation.

2. **Proposal:**

The new Parcel EF building is an approximately 483,000 gross square foot Commercial Building to be used for a combination of Commercial Office, R&D and/or Laboratory, and Retail and Consumer Services uses. The proposed building will be approximately 150 feet high (as calculated pursuant to the SZO), plus three levels of underground parking containing approximately 379 parking spaces. The Ground Floor includes approximately 2,580 square feet of Retail and Consumer Services, accessed from the street or public area of the building lobby (6,695sf), along with other active uses. The Site is located in the middle of NorthPoint and will eventually be surrounded on three sides with other commercial and residential uses in the larger mixed-use development. Because of the master planned nature of NorthPoint, the Applicant has a vested interest in ensuring high quality development on all sides of the Site and can control the overall condition in NorthPoint over multiple parcels to create the desired urban streetscape.

Parcel EF is approximately 72,282 square feet, proposed to be located on the north side of Dawes Street with a ground coverage ratio of 67.6%.



3. **Green Building Practices:**

The Applicant has provided detailed information to show that the building design is on track to receive a Silver level certification under LEED v4 for Core & Shell Development.

4. **Comments:**

As the majority of the required utility and infrastructure is under the purview of the City of Cambridge, the package was shared with the technical departments but no comments were received at the time of this report.

The Design Review Committee discussed the proposal at the September 28th, 2017 meeting. A quorum was present and the committee recommended the following:

- the terracotta should come down to the ground and return on the sides
- there should be a visual connection from the lobby out to the civic space.

As with the JK Building, the committee requested that the project's elevations, and/or renderings, be presented to the committee at the time of Building Permit application for initial review of material specifications. The project will be reviewed one final time for color and texture palette, via an on-site mock-up panel or sample materials board, prior to final material selection/acquisition. These conditions will be added to this Design and Site Plan approval.

II. FINDINGS FOR DESIGN & SITE PLAN REVIEW (SZO §6.6.3.B):

Based on review of the submitted Design & Site Plan Review Application, Staff finds that the proposal meets all of the requirements outlined in §6.6.3 of the SZO.

Design and Site Plans.

1. Submittal and Review.

The submittal package includes all the required information. This review of the Design & Site Plan meets the procedural requirements of Section 5.4 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

2. Scope.

The application included the entire site and building design information as required. The entire site is within the City of Somerville but accessed and serviced by the City of Cambridge.

3. Findings and Compliance.

This section of the report goes through the findings required by §6.6.9-11 in detail.

6.6.9. Building Types.

A. General.

1. Facades shall be built parallel to a front lot line or to the tangent of a curved front lot line.

The Dawes street façade is built parallel to the front lot line. Portions of the façade are recessed 20' as part of the architectural design and create planted sitting areas.

2. Height limits do not apply to mechanical penthouses; cellular, radio, and internet transmission equipment; or vents or exhausts.

The proposed building is 150' high, measured from the mean grade, which is the 150' height limit for a Commercial Building Type. The penthouse is additional to service the lab functions creating an overall height of approximately 180'.

3. The floor plate of any story shall not be larger in area than the story below.

No floorplate is larger than the story below it.

D. Commercial Building.

Form

a. Minimum of 80% of the façade must be within the façade build out area.

100% of the Dawes Street façade is within the Façade Build-Out area.

b. Floor plates may be a maximum of 50,000 SF.

The largest floor plate is the ground floor which is a total of 48,983 SF.

c. Minimum Height = 4 Stories. Maximum height = 150 feet.

The building is 9 stories and 150' to the penthouse measured from the mean grade.

d. Continuous façade.

No particular length of the Dawes Street façade is greater than 100' in horizontal width.

Fenestration

Ground Floor; Secondary 50% min.

Upper Floors 30% min. - 50% max.

Blank Wall 20 feet max.

The Dawes Street façade complies with the listed requirements - Ground Floor at 69% glazing and Typical Floors at 42%. A large part of the façade is a glass curtainwall system with spandrel panels providing the solid areas but having a planar appearance.

The façade facing the park (east elevation) has no windows on part of the ground floor as that portion of the building contains back-of-house uses. However, so this wall has more visual interest, than a blank wall at the park, it is textured. The wall will have two doors and terracotta panels projecting to create shadow patterns, and the wall will be mostly screened by plantings. Staff considers the wall limited in visibility and this design solution appropriate.

The rear elevation, at the MBTA rail yard, is completely blank at the ground floor. Given the adjacency, Staff considers the wall appropriate and will be extremely limited in visibility.

*Development Standards.**a. A minimum of 60% of the ground floor frontage shall be occupied by active uses.*

The Dawes Street façade includes retail space and a lobby for the office users that will function as a “living room” gathering space throughout the day.

b. Ground floor uses shall be limited to 200' of frontage for each use.

Each of the ground floor uses is less than 200' of frontage.

c. Ground floor uses shall have individual entrances with access directly onto a sidewalk for each use.

The ground floor uses that are located on the Dawes Street façade have individual entrances onto the sidewalk as practical.

d. Upper story uses shall be accessed by a prominent common lobby entrance.

The common lobby to access upper story uses is located on the south side of the building facing Dawes Street.

e. Fenestration shall be calculated for the wall area of each floor.

The Dawes Street façade complies with the listed requirements. See above.

E. Design Standards for All Building Types.*1. Facade Articulation.**a. Building facades shall be articulated vertically with a rhythm of bays to create an equal, central, and/or ends focused composition.*

The Dawes Street façade has been designed with a central composition. The west end of the building is articulated with a tower form to create a focal point for First Street.

b. Facades greater than 100' in horizontal width shall have a change in vertical plane that divides the building form into distinct massing elements that break up its apparent mass.

The Dawes Street façade has been designed with 5 projecting bays approximately 20' wide with 4' reveals between the bays to break up the apparent mass.

c. Building facades shall be articulated with clearly defined base, middle, and top.

The Dawes Street façade has been designed with a base defined by the podium level, a middle defined by the tenant floors, and a top defined by the two story penthouse.

*2. Fenestration.**a. All openings shall be square or vertical in proportion, excluding windows for first floor Retail and Consumer Service or Commercial Office uses.*

The Dawes street façade features vertically proportioned fenestration.

b. Each horizontal element of a building (base, middle, and top) shall have a fenestration pattern that is aligned vertically and horizontally.

The Dawes street façade features vertically & horizontally aligned fenestration.

3. Towers

Not applicable. (This section refers to residential podium towers.)

6.6.10. Parking and Loading.

A. Motor Vehicle Parking.

1. Development proposals will not be required to provide off-street motor vehicle parking, but may elect to provide off-street motor vehicle parking according to Table 6.6.10.

This project includes a total of 2,580 GSF of retail space and 417,086 GSF of Office/Lab space, requiring between 0 to 516 spaces per Table 6.6.10, and will provide a total of 379 spaces.

B. Bicycle Parking.

1. Short term outdoor bicycle racks shall be provided near the main entrances of any Retail & Consumer Service uses.

Per Table 6.6.10, no Short-Term Spaces are required for the small retail space.

2. Sheltered, long-term bicycle parking shall be provided internal to a building for all other use categories.

Per Table 6.6.10, 83 spaces minimum are required. The project will provide 100 Long-Term Spaces.

C. Parking Location.

1. All off-street parking spaces shall be located in underground parking structures, except lots abutting rail rights-of-way.

All off-street parking spaces are located underground.

D. Parking Management.

Not applicable. All parking management will be reviewed and administered by the City of Cambridge.

E. Parking Access.

1. A minimum of one pedestrian exit from any parking lot/structure shall lead directly to a public sidewalk except underground levels which may be exited directly into a building.

The underground garage has exit stair discharging directly to the sidewalk at either side of the building. One stair exits to the driveway at the west end and another to the east end of the building adjacent to the open space.

2. Vehicular entrances to parking lots or parking structures shall not be permitted along any primary front lot line.

The entrance to the below grade parking has been located on the west side of the building from a driveway accessed from Dawes Street. The west elevation is not the building's primary front lot line.

3. Vehicular entrances to parking lots, parking structures, loading docks, and service areas shall be no wider than twenty-four (24) feet along any front lot line.

All entrances to the 3 individual loading docks are 12' wide and access to the below grade parking is approximately 24' wide.

G. Loading Docks and Service Areas.

1. Loading docks and service areas shall not be permitted along front lot lines except by special permit.

The entrance to the loading docks has been located on the west side of the building accessed from a driveway accessed off Dawes Street. The west elevation is not the building's primary front lot line.

6.6.11. Environmental Performance.

The Applicant has provided detailed information about the anticipated environmental performance of the building. The submitted package includes a Wind Tunnel Study, Solar Glare Analysis, a report detailing the air intake and exhausts for the specialty lab uses, a narrative regarding noise mitigation, and Shadow Studies (Net and Cumulative). Staff finds the information provided meets the intent and requirements of this section.

12.4. Signs in Nonresidential Districts.

The Applicant has provided building elevations showing locations and sizes (page 74 of the submittal) of potential building signs that exceed the maximum allowable area. The ground floor signage shown on the primary frontage (south elevation) includes a monument sign, the building address on the canopy at the building's main entrance, and a storefront sign for the retail space. There is also an area shown on the park side (east elevation) of the building for an address sign. All of these total 160 sf and are within the standards of the SZO (640sf maximum).

The Applicant has also shown areas labeled "subject to confirmation" on the elevation diagrams of page 74. Staff recommends including the 300 sf sign at the top of the entry volume facing First Street as part of this project for visibility to visitors as they enter the neighborhood - bringing the total area to 460 sf.

The other "subject to confirmation" areas are shown on the rear of the building facing the MBTA railyard and maintenance facility and beyond to Interstate 93. As this face of the building is so removed from view by adjacent properties, it is conceivable that more leeway be given to the signage. However, the amount of signage on that elevation is potentially excessive as shown so Staff recommends adding conditions to limit the amount of signage and require review and approval by the Planning Director, rather than another Special Permit process. Staff recommends adding a condition to this project that requires further detailed design information be provided for the 1000 sf building address signage on the north side of the penthouse. Staff further recommends that the rear curtainwall façade supergraphics should be limited in size to one third of the 9600 sf shown (3200 sf maximum) but maybe mounted anywhere within that area.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Design & Site Plan Review under §5.4 & §6.6

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the submitted **DESIGN & SITE PLAN**.

The 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. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for the NorthPoint Parcel EF Design & Site Plan Review application for a 483,000 gross square foot Commercial Building wholly in the City of Somerville but accessed and serviced by the City of Cambridge. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	DSP/BP/CO	Planning/ISD							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>October 5, 2017</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices</td></tr><tr><td>December 5, 2017</td><td>Updated application delivered to Planning Staff</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	October 5, 2017	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices	December 5, 2017	Updated application delivered to Planning Staff
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	October 5, 2017				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices					
December 5, 2017	Updated application delivered to Planning Staff									
Any changes to the approved special permit that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive approval from the Planning Board.										
Design										
2	The project’s elevations, and/or renderings, shall be presented to the DRC for review and approval at the time of Building Permit application for initial review of material specifications.	BP	Planning							
3	The project shall be presented to the DRC via an on-site mock-up panel or sample materials board and reviewed for color and texture palette during construction but prior to final material selection/acquisition.	Construction	Planning/ISD							
4	Detailed design information is required to be provided to Planning Director for review and approval for the rear elevation signage. This requirement applies to: 1. The 1000 sf maximum building address signage on the north side of the penthouse. 2. The curtainwall supergraphics shall be limited in size to 3200 sf maximum but maybe mounted anywhere within the 9600 sf curtainwall area. 3. No signage shall be permitted at the “Railyard Tower”.	BP	Planning							
5	When completed and signed, the agreement between the City of Cambridge and the Applicant regarding the access, services provided, and other supporting infrastructure shall be provided to the Somerville Planning Director for this project file.	Upon ratification	Planning							
6	While Parking Management will be determined solely between the City of Cambridge and the Applicant. However, a copy of the plan and agreements should be provided to the Somerville Planning Director for reference and for this project file.	Upon ratification prior to CO	Planning							