



City of Somerville

# PLANNING BOARD

City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**TO:** Planning Board  
**FROM:** Public Space & Urban Forestry and Planning & Zoning Staff  
**SUBJECT:** 111 South Street, P&Z 21-077  
**POSTED:** September 8, 2021

## **RECOMMENDATION: Approve with Conditions (SPA)**

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

This memo summarizes the development review application submitted for 111 South St, 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 August 10, 2021 and is scheduled for a public hearing on September 23, 2021. 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**

Boynton Yards LandCo LLC proposes to develop a Neighborhood Park in the High Rise district, which requires Site Plan Approval.

## **SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL**

Boynton Yards LandCo LLC is proposing to develop a Neighborhood Park. The proposed civic space will produce 22,360 square feet of open space, including 11,889 of landscaped area, and will provide 28 large canopy trees and 9,223 square feet of pervious area. The proposed program includes a large central lawn that can support many types of events and gathering, a large shade structure with movable and fixed furnishings including fire features, a water feature, a civic platform for performances, the reinstallation of the Arrow Paper Fire Memorial, and lighting throughout the park.

## **ADDITIONAL REVIEW NECESSARY**

111 South Street is located in a Transit Area in the High Rise (HR) zoning district in the Boynton Yards Master Planned Development overlap district in the Boynton yards neighborhood represented by Ward 2 Councilor JT Scott. The proposed civic space requires Site Plan Approval. Site Plan Approval is the administrative review and approval of confirming development to address any potential impacts as necessary. The Planning Board is the decision-making authority for all discretionary or administrative permits required for the HR zoning district.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS**

An initial neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward Councilor J.T. Scott and the development team on March 18, 2021 via a web meeting platform. A second neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward Councilor J.T. Scott and the development team on May 26, 2021 via a web meeting platform.

## **DESIGN REVIEW**

The proposal was reviewed by the Somerville Urban Design Commission via GoToWebinar meeting platform on April 27, 2021. The Commission provided its official recommendation on June 8, 2021.

## **ANALYSIS**

The 111 South Street site proposed as Civic Space 1 is an approximate 0.51-acre site currently used for construction staging for 101 South Street / Building 1. The site will also be used for the construction staging for 121 South Street / Building 2 and a temporary park adjacent to Building 1 as a previously approved interim public space during construction.

The types of programs proposed for the civic space 1 neighborhood park were derived during the Master Plan Special Permit filed on 18 August 2020. The applicant produced a Civic Space Study which highlighted the need in the Boynton Yards neighborhood for a large, 18-hour vegetated public space that includes a significant amount of vegetation and trees, as well as a programmable green space to support informal play, fitness, and communal gatherings. Through the Design Review process, the applicant worked with the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division to ensure the programming and types of spaces will serve the public, future tenants and residents, and community from surrounding neighborhoods.

The subterranean earth below the proposed neighborhood park will be the location for the infiltration chambers and water harvesting systems for 121 South Street (Building 2). Following Site Plan approval, Boynton Yards LandCo LLC, will convey 111 South St to the City of Somerville with an agreement to provide programming, operations, and maintain the neighborhood park in perpetuity.

The proposed design has been developed in concert with local and City stakeholders and has received support from the neighborhood, the Urban Design Commission and the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division. Following successful approval of the required civic space permits, the Applicant will proceed to execute an agreement transferring the ownership of the lot to the City of Somerville with a maintenance agreement per the Development Covenant.

## **CONSIDERATIONS & FINDINGS**

The Planning Board is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to deliberate each of the following considerations at the public hearing. ***The Board must discuss and draw conclusions for each consideration but may make additional findings beyond this minimum statutory requirement.***

Site Plan Approval Considerations

1. The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.
2. The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.
3. Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.

Information relative to the required considerations is provided below:

Site Plan Approval

1. *The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City.*

The proposal will assist significantly in achieving goals laid out in the SomerVision 2030 Comprehensive Plan concerning public space, the Union Square Neighborhood Plan, the Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework, the Somerville Open Space and Recreation Plan, and the Somerville Urban Forest Management Plan including, but not limited to the following:

- To contribute publicly accessible open space towards the goal of developing 125 acres of open space by 2030.
- To create and program a network of vibrant public open spaces and shared use paths throughout the city that are multi-purpose, promote healthy living, and reflect changing recreational interests and cultural opportunities.
- To contribute to the goal of at least 2.5 acres of public space in the Boynton Yards neighborhood.
- To create new civic spaces, including a centralized, multi-purpose public space.
- To ensure essential ecosystem services are restored in the sub-area including a tree planting strategy with a goal to bring tree canopy cover to at least 15% following 10 years of growth.
- To plant a diversity of tree species to ensure Somerville's urban forest is sustainable and resilient to climate change and invasive pest infestations.

The proposed civic space lot ownership will be turned over to the City of Somerville with an operation and maintenance agreement for the Applicant to maintain the space in perpetuity. In order for the civic space to contribute to the City's open space inventory, the space must be clearly identified and readable as open meaningfully and successfully to the public. Civic space signage with the management company's contact information, a statement that the space is open to the public, as well as naming the civic space all contribute to ensuring the space is understood by the community as a public amenity.

2. *The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.*

The proposal is consistent with the intent of the HR zoning district which is, in part, “To accommodate [] neighborhood-, community-, and regional-serving uses, []”. The proposal is also consistent with the intent of the Boynton Yards overlay district which, is in, part, to permit the development of multiple lots including buildings, civic spaces, and thoroughfares as identified in the master plan.

The proposal will provide the development of the first civic space, a neighborhood park, in conjunction with the 101 and 121 South Street buildings.

Site Plan Approval

3. *Mitigation proposed to alleviate any impacts attributable to the proposed development.*

Public Space and Urban Forestry Staff believe this civic space proposal includes a number of amenities in response to community feedback and will contribute to transforming the Boynton Yards neighborhood into a destination and anchor for a newly developing area of Somerville. No other mitigation is proposed due to a perceived lack of remaining negative impacts directly attributable to the proposed civic space.

**PERMIT CONDITIONS**

Should the Board approve the required Site Plan Approval for the Neighborhood Park Civic Space, Public Space and Urban Forestry Staff and Planning & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions:

Permit Validity

- This Decision must be recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
- This Decision is not valid unless a land plat is approved to establish the 111 South Street lot and recorded with the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds.
- This Decision does not authorize the removal of any public shade trees or private trees, which is subject to the Tree Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 12, Article VI) of the Somerville Code of Ordinances.

Public Record

- Physical copies of all development review submittal materials, as permitted by the Planning Board, must be submitted to the Planning & Zoning Division for the public record.
- A copy of the recorded Decision stamped by the Middlesex South Registry of Deeds must submitted to the Planning & Zoning Division for the public record.

Construction Documents

- Construction documents submitted as part of the Civic Space Permit application must be substantially equivalent to the approved plans and other materials submitted for development review.

#### Legal Agreements

- The neighborhood park (Civic Space 1) must be dedicated to the public by a covenant or other deed restriction.

#### Maintenance

- The property owner is responsible for the construction and all regular and long-term operations, maintenance, replacement, insurance, and other applicable costs associated with the neighborhood park including, but not limited to, utilities and utility service, stormwater management infrastructure, landscaping, paving, furnishings, and other associated features.

#### Public Space

- The property owner shall provide a right of first refusal to the Somerville Memorialization Committee to name the neighborhood park.
- The property owner shall name the neighborhood park as specified by the Somerville Memorialization Committee.
- The neighborhood park must be provided with signage conforming to the standards in the Division of Public Space & Urban Forestry Park Specifications Handbook and including, at minimum, the name of the park, the management company's contact information, and a statement that the space is open to the public, along with the rules and hours of operation.

#### Conditions

- Development must comply with the approved Master Plan Special Permit dated February 4, 2021, as applicable.
- All Phase 2 conditions of the Master Plan Special Permit dated February 4, 2021 must be completed prior to applying for a Certificate of Occupancy.
- A written narrative or descriptive checklist identifying the completion or compliance with permit conditions must be to the Inspectional Services Department at least ten (10) working days in advance of a request for a final inspection.