



City of Somerville

PLANNING BOARD

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Planning & Zoning Staff
RE: 121 South Street (P&Z 21-038)
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 121 South Street, 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 11-story LEED Platinum lab building in the High Rise (HR) zoning district which requires Site Plan Approval.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Boynton Yards LandCo LLC is proposing to construct a 11-story, approximately 240 feet wide, LEED Platinum lab building that will be approximately 330,000 gross square feet. The building will have 242 below-grade parking spaces, 102 interior long-term secured bicycle parking spaces, and approximately 42 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The proposed landscape design will earn a compliant Green Score of 0.214 above the district minimum of 0.20.

ADDITIONAL REVIEW NECESSARY

121 South Street is located in the High Rise (HR) zoning district in the Boynton Yards Subarea Master Planned Development overlay district and the Boynton Yards neighborhood represented by Ward 2 Councilor J.T. Scott. A lab building is permitted by site plan approval. Site Plan Approval is the administrative review and approval of conforming development to address and potential development impacts, if necessary. The Planning Board is the decision-making authority for all (non-Variance) discretionary or administrative permits required by 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 and May 11, 2021. The Commission provided its official recommendation on June 8, 2021.

ANALYSIS

From the start of the site plan approval process, Boynton Yards LandCo LLC worked very closely with the surrounding community to thoughtfully design the proposed lab building with respect to concerns raised at neighborhood meetings. Some of the primary points that were directly incorporated into the building proposal include, but are not limited to, public access to the building's public realm, ADA access, accommodating traffic during rush hour, glass treatment, vertical landscaping, wildlife habitat inclusion, and incorporation of native species as part of the building landscaping.

The proposal is on track to be LEED Platinum certifiable and is targeting 84 points of the 80 required to reach Platinum. As currently designed, the proposed lab building will use ASHPs as part of their heating plan, along with heat recovery chiller and high efficiency condensing boilers to provide some level of electrification. The heat recovery chiller will allow for energy to be reused when simultaneous heating and cooling loads occur. This will reduce natural gas usage by approximately 80 percent.

As reported in the LEED documentation of the application materials, the building is supportive of the City of Somerville's net-zero goals and the project's path to LEED platinum. The project intends to purchase Green-e Energy certified renewable energy credits and Green-e Climate certified carbon offsets to offset 100 percent of the building's total annual energy use and greenhouse gas emissions. As stated in the applicants Sustainability and Energy Questionnaire, the project proposes a high albedo rating for the building roof to limit the heat island effect and contribute to a more comfortable outdoor space. The applicant is working to develop strategies to reduce heat island associated with paving, including shade trees lining sidewalks surrounding the site and high solar reflectance materials.

As identified in LEED checklist and narrative, the proposed building is LEED certifiable with LEED Platinum, however, to have a full understanding of credits earned by building design, the Office of Sustainability and Environment has proposed three conditions to ensure transparency in understanding the proposed building systems' sustainability and

the feasibility of alternatives as the LEED certifiability process unfolds through the remaining permitting process (Building Permit and Certificate of Occupancy).

The principal entrances to the upper stories of the building and a majority of the ground floor commercial spaces are oriented toward Thoroughfare 1, also known as Archibald Query Way (AQW). To ensure compliance with the frontage and principal entrance requirements of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, two conditions are recommended to require the permitting process for Thoroughfare 1 to be completed in a timely manner that closely aligns with the permitting of Building 2.

As conditioned in the Boynton Yards Master Plan dated February 4, 2021, a permanent cycle track will be built on the northern side of South St. In order to accommodate a bike route in the south-eastbound direction, a condition has been recommended to necessitate the construction of a temporary bike lane or equivalent on the southern side of South St to accommodate bicyclists. Final design approval rests multiple City Departments.

A condition has been recommended to ensure that construction and all regular and long-term maintenance, replacement, insurance, and other applicable costs associated with all necessary water and sewer utilities that service Building 2 and stormwater management facilities proposed underneath abutting Civic Space 1 are maintained by the property owner.

No other mitigation is proposed due to a perceived lack of remaining negative impacts directly attributable to the proposal.

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 detailed below 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 above considerations is provided below:

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

The proposal will help to achieve the following from SomerVision, the comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Somerville:

- Make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.
- Support a business-friendly environment to attract and retain a diverse mix of businesses that can start here, grow here and stay here.
- Invest in the talents, skills, and education of people to support growth and provide opportunities to residents of all social and economic levels.
- Link our corridors, squares, and growth districts to support future development and economic activity.
- Transform key opportunity areas [], Boynton Yards and [] portion of Union Square into dynamic, mixed-use, and transit-oriented districts that serve as economic engines to compliment the neighborhoods of Somerville.
- Design and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm that fosters community connection, including streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces.
- Increase the recognition of Somerville as a center of arts and creativity.
- Expand bike and pedestrian use by transforming existing infrastructure with accommodations for all bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible, and well-connected networks.

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 the development of areas appropriate for an intense mix of multi-story multi-unit, mixed-use, and commercial buildings; neighborhood-, community-, and regional-serving uses; and a wide variety of employment opportunities.

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 dated February 4, 2021.

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

The proposal includes several design features in response to community feedback received at neighborhood meetings. As conditioned, the proposal is not anticipated to have any negative impacts. Conditions are used to mitigate any outstanding development impacts.

PERMIT CONDITIONS

Should the Board approve the *required Site Plan Approval for the 11-story LEED Platinum lab building*, 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 121 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.
- This Decision does not authorize further permitting or construction of Thoroughfare 1 identified in the approved Master Plan Special Permit dated February 4, 2021.
- The site plan approval application for Thoroughfare 1 (AQW), as permitted by the Master Plan Special Permit dated February 4, 2021, must be submitted prior to applying for a Building Permit.
- The thoroughfare permit application for Thoroughfare 1 (AQW) must be submitted prior to applying for a Certificate of Occupancy.

Public Record

- Physical copies of all development review submittal materials, as permitted by the Zoning Board of Appeals, 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 be submitted to the Planning & Zoning Division for the public record.

Construction Documents

- Construction documents must be substantially equivalent to the approved plans and other materials submitted for development review.
- Material specifications from suppliers must be submitted to confirm fenestration glazing is compliant with the VLT and VLR ratings required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.
- An outdoor lighting plan and supplier cut sheet specifications of chosen lighting fixtures must be submitted to confirm compliance with Section 10.7 Outdoor Lighting of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The site photometric plan must include a keyed site plan identifying the location of all luminaires; total site lumen limit table (calculations from the SZO); lighting fixture schedule indicating the fixture type, description, lamp type, lumens, color temperature, color rendering index, BUG rating, mounting height, and wattage of all luminaires; and notation of any timing devices used to control the hours set for illumination.

Transportation Mitigation

- To mitigate transportation impacts, the southern side of South St must be improved with an interim roadway level protected bikeway along its full extent. Final design must be approved by relevant City departments.

Site & Building Design

- Utility meters are not permitted on any facade or within the frontage area of the lot.

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 all necessary water and sewer utilities to service 121 South St / Building 2, including the stormwater management facilities that are proposed underneath the abutting neighborhood park (Civic Space 1).

- A pedestrian access easement must be provided in perpetuity for the full area of all the sidewalks and any portion of the Civic platform and ADA access ramp abutting the neighborhood park (Civic Space 1) as identified on the approved plans. Final easement language must be approved by the City Solicitor.

Sustainability

- A feasibility assessment for providing at least twenty five percent (25%) of the motor vehicle parking spaces with electric vehicle charging equipment must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.
- The OSE Low Load Calculator must be completed and submitted to the Office of Sustainability and Environment.
- All Stage 2 documentation required by the LEED Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment and must include the following:
 - The number of targeted points for each credit identified in the narrative
 - Identification of the land trusts or organizations under consideration for credits
 - Additional detail concerning the construction and demolition waste management credits
 - A detailed analysis on how daylight and quality view credits will be achieved.
- All Stage 3 documentation required by the Office of Sustainability & Environment's LEED Certifiability Requirements must be submitted to the Office of Sustainability & Environment.

Use

- The underground structured parking must be operated as a Commercial Parking facility principal use.
- The underground structured parking must have a parking access and revenue control system to manage vehicular access and collect parking revenues from patrons.

Parking

- The initial operations plan for the Commercial Parking facility identifying, at least, the type and pricing of various passes, rates, and fees must be submitted to the Director of Mobility.
- A pedestrian warning system must be provided for the vehicular entrance to the underground structured parking and loading docks to address potential conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists, and motor vehicles. Final design must be approved by the Director of Mobility and the City Engineer.
- A sign must be provided near the vehicular entrance to the underground parking structured parking that identifies, at minimum, the number of spaces available in real time.

- An annual report, including documentation of any changes to the layout plan or operations plan of the parking facility, must be submitted to the Mobility Division to validate continued compliance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, this Decision, and the Director of Mobility's standards for monitoring and annual reporting.

Mobility

- The property owner and applicable future tenants shall comply with the Mobility Management Plan submitted May 21, 2021, as approved and conditioned by the Director of Mobility.

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.