



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Case #:** ZBA 2015-116  
**Date:** February 3, 2016  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 893 Broadway

**Applicant Name:** Kwesi Acquah  
**Applicant Address:** 7 Mansell Pkwy. Salem, MA 01970  
**Owner Name:** 893 Broadway LLC  
**Owner Address:** 7 Mansell Pkwy. Salem, MA 01970  
**Agent Name:** Zeke Brown  
**Agent Address:** Brown Fenollosa Architects, Inc. 197 Broadway, Arlington, MA 02474  
**Alderman:** Lance Davis

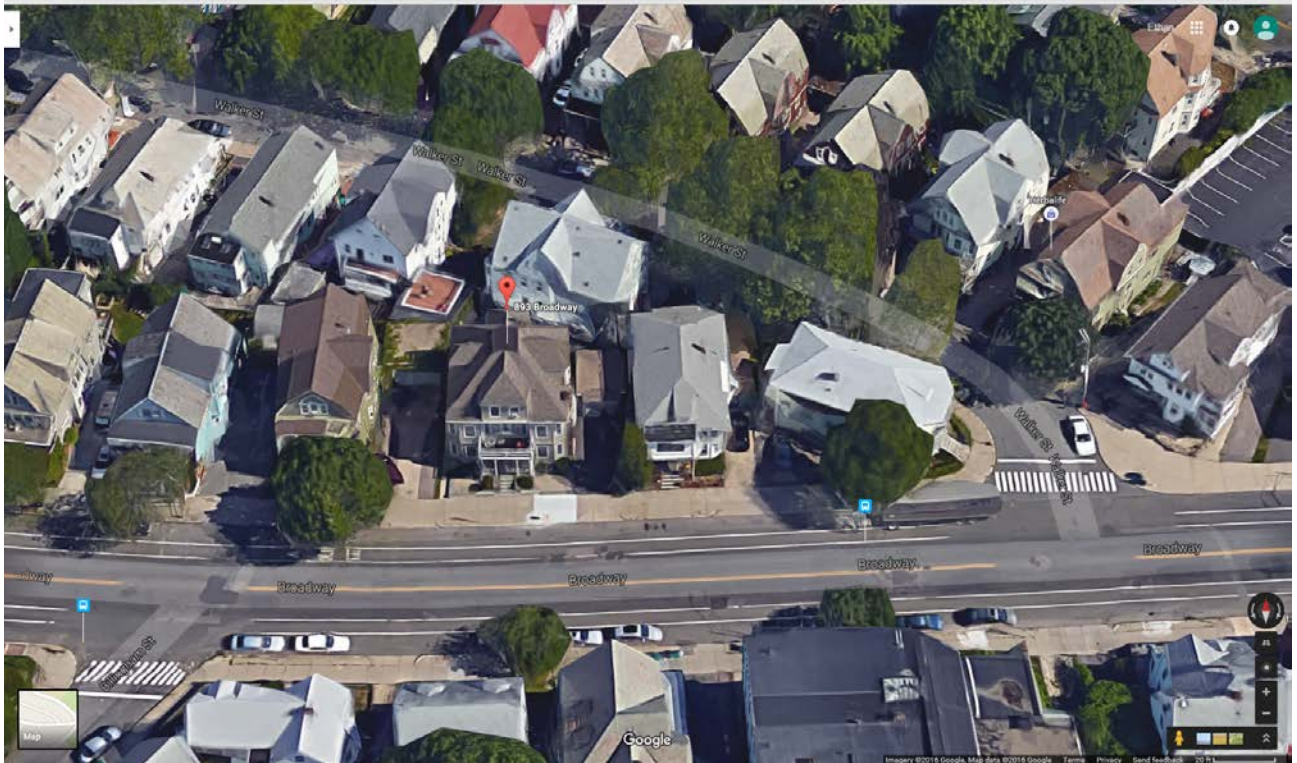
Legal Notice: Owner 893 Broadway LLC, and Applicant Kwesi Acquah, are seeking a Special Permit to modify a nonconforming structure by adding livable area in the basement. Zone RA, Ward 6.

Dates of Public Hearing: February 3, 2016

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 2 unit residential structure of 3,662 sf located on a 3,558sf lot. Unit 1 is located on the first and second floors and contains 3 bedrooms. Unit 2 is located on the second and third floors and has 5 bedrooms.



Aerial view of existing structure in context



Street view of existing structure in context

2. Proposal: The Applicant is remodeling the interior of the structure, reconfiguring and modernizing both units, and adding finished recreation space in the basement. Unit 1 will have three bedrooms, and unit 2 will have 4 bedrooms. The proposal also replaces roofing shingles, replaces decking on existing decks and adds a door to the basement at the rear of the property. It is also adding window wells to the front of the property for basement egress.

3. Green Building Practices: None listed in application.

4. Comments:

*Ward Alderman*: Alderman has been contacted, no comments at this time.

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4):**

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied:

The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

2. Compliance with Standards: *The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: Floor Area Ratio (FAR) as well as various setback requirements as well as pervious area and landscaped area. The proposal will only impact the FAR, increasing it from 1.03 to 1.28 as a result of finishing the basement. This alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that "lawfully existing one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5."

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure.

3. Consistency with Purposes: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."*

The proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to: The purposes of the Ordinance are to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City;

to protect and promote a housing stock that can accommodate the diverse household sizes and life stages of Somerville residents and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, which is RA: To establish and preserve quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."*

*Surrounding Neighborhood:* The surrounding neighborhood consists of a variety of multi-family homes of various architectural styles. The proposed work isn't anticipated to have any appreciable impact on the surrounding neighborhood, and the structure will remain compatible with its surroundings.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):* The impacts of the proposal are primarily limited to the interior of the structure, but they will improve the layout and functionality of the structure for future residents.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: *The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.*

*Impacts of Proposal (Environmental):* No adverse environmental impacts are anticipated relative to points 1-4 above.

6. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: *The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.*

*Impacts of Proposal (Circulation):* No adverse impacts on vehicular or pedestrian circulation are anticipated as a result of the proposal.

7. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

8. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*

<u>SomerVision Summary</u>	Existing	Proposed
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<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	2	2
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9. Impact on Affordable Housing: *In conjunction with its decision to grant or deny a special permit for a structure of four or more units of housing, the SPGA shall make a finding and determination as to how implementation of the project would increase, decrease, or leave unchanged the number of units of rental and home ownership housing that are affordable to households with low or moderate incomes, as defined by HUD, for different sized households and units.*

No impact on affordable housing is anticipated.

**III. RECOMMENDATION**

**Special Permit under §4.4**

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 requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

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 Special Permit to modify a nonconforming structure. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>December 23, 2015</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>December 23, 2015</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (1-7)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	December 23, 2015	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	December 23, 2015	Plans submitted to OSPCD (1-7)
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Any changes to the approved plans that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
<b>Construction Impacts</b>										
2	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.							
3	Approval is subject to the Applicant's and/or successor's right, title and interest in the property.	Cont.	Plng.	Deed submitted & application formed signed						

4	The Applicant shall at their expense replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	CO	DPW	
5	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P	
<b>Public Safety</b>				
6	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
7	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.	

