



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2014-34-R4 (9/2017)

Date: December 14, 2017

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: Assembly Row Block 5 – 400-498 Assembly Row

Applicant Name: SRI Assembly Row B5, LLC

Applicant Address: 1626 East Jefferson Street, Rockville, MD 20852

Property Owner Name: SRI Assembly Row B5, LLC

Property Owner Address: 1626 East Jefferson Street, Rockville, MD 20852

Agent/Attorney: Robert A. Fishman, Esq.

Agent Address: 155 Seaport Boulevard, Boston, MA

Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice:

Applicant and Owner, SRI Assembly Row B5, LLC, seek a revision to Special Permit with Site Plan Review–A #PB2014-34 under SZO §5.3.8 in order to reduce the number of residential units to 122 and the number of hotel rooms to 158 from the previously approved and amended SPSR-A (PB 2014-34-R2-0216 on March 24, 2016) of 132 residential units within an approx. 226,637 sf building (including 160 hotel rooms, approx. 21,000 sf retail space, 103 underground parking spaces, & 86 surface spaces). The original permit was for final level approval of “Block 5” (identified as MBL 85-A-12) of the Planned Unit Development Preliminary Master Plan (PUD-PMP) approved by the Planning Board on December 14, 2006 and as revised on August 5, 2010 and June 19, 2014.

Assembly Square Mixed Use District (ASMD); Planned Unit Development Overlay District - A (PUD-A) / Ward 1

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board: December 14, 2017

I. BACKGROUND & PERMITTING PROCESS

On February 5, 2015, a decision by the Planning Board approved the overall plan for Block 5 and the first phase - approximately a third of the depth of the lot with a 218,700 net square foot building. Uses



included 20,000 square feet of retail and restaurants, 104 residential units and 155 hotel rooms with 95 underground parking spaces and 86 surface spaces.

Since the original approval, there have been a few revisions to the Special Permit. On July 16, 2015, a revision was approved to increase the number of residential units to 134, retail space to approximately 22,000 sf, parking spaces to approximately 216, as well as increasing the height of tower and rear massing.

An additional revision was approved on March 24, 2016 modifying the overall building size to 226,637 sf with façade changes and 132 residential units, 160 hotel rooms, approximately 21,000 sf retail space, 103 underground parking spaces, and 86 surface spaces.

A. Review Requirements under the Somerville Zoning Ordinance

This application is for an amendment to a Special Permit with Site Plan Review–A (SPSR-A) for the development of parcel 85-A-12.

B. Organization of Report

The present report includes the following sections:

- Description of the Property;
- Description of the Proposal;
- Staff Findings for Special Permit with Site Plan Review–A; and
- Staff Recommendation for Board vote, including recommended conditions of SPSR-A approval.

II. DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTY

A. Site

The total land area of the Master Plan is 2.67 million square feet or 61.3 acres and the area of Block 5 is 115,382 square feet or approximately 2.65 acres. Block 5 is bounded by Assembly Row, Foley Street, Grand Union and Canal Street. The first phase of construction (the hotel on Block 5A) is substantially complete.

B. Surrounding Area

The area surrounding the proposed site contains Draw 7 Park on the opposite side of the MBTA Orange Line tracks and the developments of the Assembly Row Blocks 1, 2, 3, 4, and 11 are at or near full occupancy. Block 6 is under construction. Blocks 7 and 9 will continue to be temporary parking lots and Block 8 is currently vacant and used for construction staging.

III. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

A. Overall

This application is a numerical change only. The last approval for the building included 21,000 square feet of restaurants and retail, 132 residential units and 160 hotel rooms. The approval also included 103 underground parking spaces, 28 of which are compact, and 86 surface spaces.

The final numbers are 122 residential units, 158 hotel rooms, and 20,500 square feet of restaurants and retail. The change is requested to respond to market pressures for units to be combined to form larger units and the requirements of a hotel operator.

B. Site Design and Access

The building is substantially complete and this application does not include any changes to the massing, siting, or access. The entrance to the below grade parking is located on Canal Street. There are entrances to the at grade parking on Canal Street and Foley Street. Pedestrian access will be around the site on the sidewalks. There is an entrance to the residential units on Canal Street and an entrance to the hotel on Foley Street.

C. Building Shape and Placement

The design guideline for Block 5 was approved in the 2014 Master Plan amendment which was submitted at the same time as the first SPSR-A application, and therefore, the building space and placement matches the design guideline. The proposal is for a thirteen story building along Assembly Row that wraps the corner onto Canal Street. The building steps down to five-stories and then two-stories at the corner of Assembly Row and Foley Street.

D. Uses

The use of the building does not change from the original application and revisions. The uses approved include retail, hotel, residential. Appendix G provides information on the square footage of each use that was permitted through the Master Plan approval and how many square feet of each use has been constructed to date.

E. Linkage

Per the original and amended approval, the threshold from the 2006 development covenant has been reached and linkage will be required for the square footage of this building as outlined in the conditions attached to those approvals.

F. Inclusionary Housing

The Affordable Housing Implementation Plan (AHIP) was signed on November 17, 2017 and does not change. There will be 6 1-bedroom units (3 at 80% AMI and 3 at 110% AMI), 2 1-bedroom plus den units (1 at 80% and 1 at 110% AMI), 4 2-bedroom units (2 at 80% and 2 at 110% AMI), and 3 2-bedroom plus den units (2 at 80% and 1 at 110% AMI).

G. Landscaping and Open Space

Block 5 will be built out as an urban block and will not contain landscaping beyond planter boxes on the sidewalk. Landscaping across the Assembly Row site is concentrated in publically accessible well programmed spaces.

H. Parking, Loading and On-site Circulation

The parking and loading from previous approvals and amendments/revisions remain unchanged.

I. Form and Design of the Building

The form and the design from previous approvals and amendments/revisions remain unchanged.

J. Signage

The signage for the building was approved under PB2014-34-R3 (9/2017) and storefront signage for each retail space will be reviewed under future applications.

K. Waivers & Other Relief Requests

There are no waivers or other relief requested as part of this application.

IV. STAFF FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT WITH SITE PLAN REVIEW–A & SPECIAL PERMIT

A. General Application Requirements

Application requirements are identified in Section 16.8 of the SZO. Staff finds the SPSR-A meets the application submittal requirements in the above listed sections. Detailed findings in Appendix A of the original and amended approval do not change with this application.

B. Required Findings of Fact for PUD

The Planning Board determined that the PMP met the required findings for a PUD PMP, but indicated that some issues would require further review at the SPSR-A submittal. The Staff has reviewed these required findings as they relate to the SPSR-A application and find that these findings have now all been met. Detailed findings in Appendix B of the original and amended approval do not change with this application.

C. Requirements for SPSR (SZO §5.2.5 and 5.1.4), & Revisions (§5.3.8)

Revisions to Special Permits with Site Plan Review under SZO section 5.3.8 may be sought before the Certificate of Occupancy is issued for a project. The proposed revision is not deemed de minimis because the changes would be noticeable to persons generally familiar with the plans. Revisions that are not de minimis are subject to the full notice and hearing provisions of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. The Staff find that Appendix C of the original and amended approval does not change with this application.

D. Waiver Standards

There are no waivers or other relief requested as part of this application. Waivers shown in Appendix D of the original and amended approval do not change with this application.

VII. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant and the attached findings, the Planning Staff finds that the application for the revision to the Special Permit with Site Plan Review–A for final level approval of a planned unit development under the Preliminary Master Plan approved by the Planning Board on December 14, 2006 and as amended on August 5, 2010, June 19, 2014 and February 18, 2016 meets the goals of the City for this site, the purposes of the district, and the provisions and purposes of the Ordinance. Therefore, the Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the requested revision to the Special Permit with Site Plan Review-A with the conditions from the previous approval remaining applicable.

The recommendation is also 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.