

CITY OF SOMERVILLE

Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development



Joseph A. Curtatone
Mayor

George J. Proakis
OSPCD Executive Director

TO: Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA)
FROM: Planning & Zoning Staff
DATE: November 10, 2020
RE: 54 Elm Street (DRA 2020-0325)

This memo summarizes the development review application submitted for 54 Elm Street, identifies any additional discretionary or administrative development review that is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO), and provides related analysis or feedback as necessary. The application was deemed complete on September 28, 2020 and is scheduled for a public hearing on November 18, 2020.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Kon La Yum, LLC proposes to establish a restaurant use in a Neighborhood Residence (NR) District with a Small Business Overlay. The proposed development will activate an existing storefront that has been vacant for the last few years since it was redeveloped.

LEGAL NOTICE

Kon La Yum, LLC seeks a Special Permit to establish a use Special Permit for a restaurant in a Neighborhood Residence district with a Small Business Overlay.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

In its discretion to approve or deny a Special Permit required by this Ordinance in §15.2.1.e, the review board shall make findings considering, at least, each of the following:

a.) The comprehensive plan and existing policy plans and standards established by the City

The SomerVision 2030 Plan is applicable to this application. SomcerVision offers the following goals in the Neighborhood and Commercial Corridors District sections:

- Strengthen and support neighborhood commercial centers that integrate residential uses, offer lively destinations and contribute to Somerville's unique Identity.
- Protect and promote a diverse, interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville's neighborhoods.
- Facilitate thoughtfully-designed, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development and reuse opportunities in commercial corridors, squares, and around transit stations that are sensitive to neighborhood context, and serve existing and future residents and businesses.

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with SomerVision. The proposal would activate a storefront that has been vacant since its redevelopment was approved in 2015. The proposed use will provide additional options for the surrounding neighborhood, including the employees of the Kennedy School, when in session. The property is located between Union and Porter Squares with Davis Square slightly further down Elm Street. The property is sited close to transit hubs (Porter and Davis and the future Union Square T Station). Moreover, the location is easily walkable and bike-able from surrounding neighborhoods and is served by multiple bus lines.

b.) The intent of the zoning district where the property is located.

The Small Business Overlay district expands on the intent of the Neighborhood Residence (NR) district in areas where neighborhood planning has supported the intent to "*create, maintain, and enhance locations appropriate for neighborhood- and community-serving businesses.*"

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the purpose and intent of the Small Business Overlay for the NR district. The proposal provides neighborhood residents, surrounding businesses and institutions with additional food service options in a walkable, bike-able, and public transit-accessible location.

Staff summarizes their findings below:

Use Special Permit for a restaurant use:

Allow.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

A neighborhood meeting was hosted by Ward 5 City Councilor Mark Niedergang on September 8, 2020 at 7:00pm.