



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB2018-13
Date: September 6, 2018
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 9 & 39 Medford Street

Applicant Name: Somerville Millbrook Associates, LLC
Applicant Address: 280 Congress Street, Suite 1350, MA 02110
Property Owner Name: Somerville Millbrook Associates, LLC
Property Owner Address: 280 Congress Street, Suite 1350, MA 02110
Agent Name: Adam Dash
Agent Address: 48 Grove Street, Suite 304 Somerville, MA 02144
Alderman: J. T. Scott

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner, Somerville Millbrook Associates, LLC, seek a Special Permit under SZO §6.5.D.5 to expand an existing roof deck by 392 square feet, add a pergola for shade, install electric grills, and relocate the green roof.
TOD 100. Ward 2.

Dates of Public Hearing: September 6, 2018

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is located behind Twin City Plaza on Medford Street. There are two parcels, 9 and 39 Medford Street (MBL 114-A-1 and 113-B-3 respectively), that are separated by the Grand Junction railroad line. The railroad line connects the Fitchburg line to the rail yards in Alston/Brighton, mostly through Cambridge. Combined the parcels total 55,357 square feet.



The building on the 9 Medford Street parcel started as part of the John P. Squire Company, a meat packing facility that provided refrigerated and freezer storage to the Boston for nearly a century and took advantage of the site's close proximity to many railroad lines. Due to increased operating costs, Millbrook Cold Storage ceased operation in the Spring of 2013.

The original proposal was permitted under PB2013-17 (Special Permit with Site Plan Review on Nov. 21, 2013) and ZBA 2013-89 (Variance on Jan. 8, 2014) to renovate the existing concrete building into 100 residential units including 5 artist live-work spaces, a gallery, fitness center, roof deck, green roof, and one level of garage parking. The roof deck is accessible to the entire building. There were *de minimis* changes approved in March 13, 2014 for interior and elevation edits due to a new survey and May 27, 2014 for adjustment of parking and fire department access. The conditions sign-off for a Temporary Certificate of Occupancy was completed on April 7, 2016.

2. Proposal: This proposal is to expand the existing roof deck by 392 square feet. The expansion includes a pergola to give the deck much needed shade, as well as to install electric grills. The displaced portions of the green roof will be located to other areas of the roof, namely the roof of the stair/elevator penthouse, and increase the planted area by approximately 8 sf.

3. Green Building Practices: The project was designed to LEED Gold standards at the time of renovation.

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Electric grills on the roof deck are not a problem as long as the outlets are rated for outdoor use with ground fault interrupt.

Traffic & Parking: Not applicable to this application.

Wiring Inspection: No comment at this time.

Lights and Lines: No comment at this time.

Engineering: No comment at this time.

Historic Preservation: Not applicable.

Ward Alderman: No comment at this time.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.1):

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."*

Nature of Application: alteration to a lawfully existing non-conforming structure in TOD-100.

There is no change to the originally approved dimensional requirements.

In considering a special permit under §4.4 or 4.5 of the SZO, Staff do not find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The roof deck expansion and pergola will not be readily visible from any public right-of-way. As this is an alteration rather than new development, the standards of 6.5.G *Development Standards for New Developments in TODs* applied to the original approval but do not apply to this proposal.

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 "promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to preserve the historical and architectural resources of 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 at all income levels, paying particular attention to providing housing affordable to individuals and families with low and moderate incomes; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality."

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, which is, "to encourage mixed-use transit-oriented development with well-designed pedestrian access near transit connections and commercial squares. In response to different neighborhood contexts, TODs have been created featuring various heights, densities, and compatible use mixes. In order to be aesthetically, economically, environmentally and socially beneficial, projects in the Districts shall promote a mix of uses both within buildings and across the districts. Moderate to high-density developments will include commercial, residential, and institutional cores complemented by pedestrian-oriented retail and business services, and in some districts, compatible industrial uses. Parking, where provided, will be housed within structured parking facilities. In a dynamic commercial center, changes in tenancy and use are expected. Therefore, the TODs are designed to be responsive to changing market conditions while maintaining high standards for building design and construction."

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 property is located in the southernmost part of Somerville and 50 feet from the Cambridge line. The property is southeast of Boynton Yards and southwest of the Inner Belt and Brickbottom neighborhoods. The area has little neighborhood definition. The largest neighborhood destination is Twin City Plaza, just south of the site, which is partially in Cambridge. There is a small residential pocket of multi-family homes northwest of the site.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility): The original project was the adaptive re-use of an existing building which terminated a storage use that did not contribute to the vibrancy of the area or provide a significant job center. This proposal to expand the roof deck and add a pergola is compatible with the existing roof deck and is not visible from Medford Street.

The proposal must be reviewed in accordance with 6.5.H. Design Guidelines for the TODs. However, as they provide general standards for building massing, siting, and articulation, the limited scope of this proposal may not be able to comply with all of the following Guidelines. There are only two of the required guidelines that are applicable to this proposal;

12. All rooftop-building systems, including wireless communications facilities, should be incorporated into the building form in a manner integral to the building architecture, including screening with materials that harmonize with buildings' exterior finishes.

All roof-top materials are setback from the building edge including the roof deck and the expansion.

17. Usable Open Space should be located to support public gathering. To the extent possible, usable open space should be designed to appear as an extension of existing public space, through consistency in design and materials. The provision of an interconnected series of open space to support pedestrian movement is encouraged.

The roof deck not a public usable open space but is a building amenity which allows residents to gather and relax.

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): There were no environmental impacts generated by the residential building and will be no additional caused by this proposal.

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 change.

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

No change.

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>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	100	0
<i>Affordable Units:</i>	15	0
<i>Commercial Sq. Ft.:</i>	0 (7000sf Arts-Related Uses)	0
<i>Estimated Employment:</i>	unknown	0
<i>Parking Spaces:</i>	100	0
<i>Publicly Accessible Open Space:</i>	approx. 3000sf	0

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 change.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §5.1

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 expansion of the roof deck and the addition of a pergola and electric grills. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant: <table border="1" data-bbox="246 1575 885 1711"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>July 18, 2018</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> Any changes to the approved plan that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	July 18, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.	
Date (Stamp Date)	Submission							
July 18, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office							
Construction Impacts								

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	Png.	
3	Approval is subject to the Applicant's and/or successor's right, title and interest in the property.	Cont.	Png.	Deed submitted & application form signed
4	The Applicant shall develop a demolition plan in consultation with the City of Somerville Inspectional Services Division. Full compliance with proper demolition procedures shall be required, including timely advance notification to abutters of demolition date and timing, good rodent control measures (i.e. rodent baiting), minimization of dust, noise, odor, and debris outfall, and sensitivity to existing landscaping on adjacent sites.	Demolition Permitting	ISD	
Design				
5	Applicant shall provide final material samples and equipment specification sheets to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	Png.	
6	Electrical outlets and/or connections for the electric grills must have ground fault interrupts.	BP	Wiring Inspector	
Miscellaneous				
7	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD	
Public Safety				
8	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
9	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, gas grills, charcoal barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches.	Perpetual	FP/ISD	
10	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Png.	