



Joseph A. Curtatone
Mayor

George J. Proakis
OSPCD Executive Director

CITY OF SOMERVILLE

Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Planning & Zoning Division
DATE: June 5, 2020 - corrected
RE: 133 Middlesex Avenue (PB#07.10-R1-06.20)

This memo summarizes the development review application submitted for 133 Middlesex Avenue, 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 April 14, 2020 and is scheduled for a public hearing on June 11, 2020.

NOTE: As a revision to an existing approval, ~~this project is subject to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance in effect at the time of the original approval.~~ Section 7.4.3.c. of the current Somerville Zoning Ordinance specifies "Real property subject to a previously approved Planned Unit Development (PUD) Preliminary Master Plan may be developed in accordance with the provisions of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance effective as of August 1, 2019."

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Federal Realty Assembly Square, LLC is seeking a Revision to the SPSR-A Phase 1-AAA Assembly Square Marketplace, (PB#07.10, approved March 16, 2007), under the Planned Unit Development - Preliminary Master Plan (PUD-PMP) originally approved on December 14, 2006 (PB#2006-59 as amended) in the Assembly Square Mixed-Use District (ASMD) represented by Ward 1 Councilor Matt McLaughlin. The alterations are intended to accommodate new office use and/or a mix of office, retail, and restaurant uses, in the existing building but there will be no change to the square footage from the prior permit approvals. The proposed number of employees and hours of operation of the project will be determined by the tenants, which are unknown at this time.

ADDITIONAL REVIEW NECESSARY

The proposed project which requires a revision to a Special Permit with Site Plan Review for any single commercial space over 10,000 square feet in leasable floor area by any permitted use in accordance with Section 7.4.7.e. 7.11.

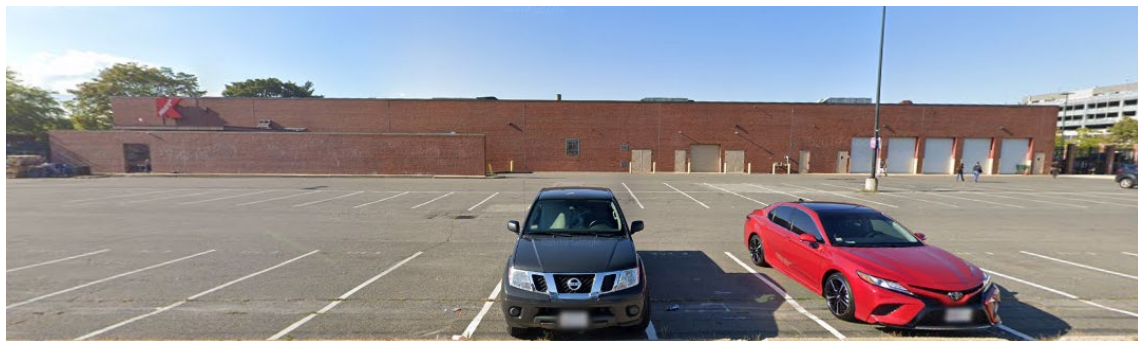
URBAN DESIGN ANALYSIS

93 Highland Avenue
Somerville, MA 02143
(617-625-6600 ext.2500
TTY: (617) 666-0001
www.somervillema.gov
www.somervillezoning.com

The existing Assembly Square marketplace building is comprised of seven tenants occupying a total of 328,806 sf gross retail space, including the recently vacated 96,423 sf K-Mart area. The proposal is to make alterations to the former K-Mart tenant space at 133 Middlesex Avenue only. It is approximately a 10-minute walk from the MBTA Assembly Orange Line Station, providing an important transit connection to downtown Boston and the suburbs to the north. The site is a short walk from the restaurants, amenities, and other employment opportunities associated with Assembly Row and close to the on-going planned development along Middlesex Avenue.

As proposed, the existing space could be occupied by new office tenants, or as a combination of office and retail/restaurant uses and will have limited construction or demolition outside the building envelope under either alternative. However, a new entrance is proposed for the office component of the project on the south side of the building. In order to improve pedestrian access to this new entrance, a series of new crosswalks is being proposed to define routes. These improvements to pedestrian access will eliminate two parking spaces, but there will be no changes to the vehicular circulation and the proposed change in use is anticipated to result in an overall reduction in trip generation.

The exterior will be minimally impacted. On the south elevation, facing Foley Street, a 6' wide opening in an existing screen will be expanded to 13' wide and open to the sky. The existing opening can be seen on the left end of the existing conditions photograph below.



The new pedestrian entrance will be added in an existing opening at approximately the mid-point of the elevation as shown below. It is also anticipated that the existing brick will be painted.



The “art opportunity” and any signage will require separate submissions detailing design and material for review and approval by the Planning Director, which is the normal process for Assembly Square.

REQUIRED FINDINGS

All SPSR-A applications under the PUD-PMP shall include information required to ensure compliance with the decision. This section of the report addresses the findings per the SZO Section 6.4.11.F. Modifications to Approved Site Plans requires “a revised site plan to the SPGA for review and approval, and the same standards and procedures applicable to the review of the original site plan shall apply”. As such, all requirements are met under Section 6.4.9.C. Special Permit with Site Plan Review-A (SPSR-A) - Criteria for Review. However, a few changes are noted to specific line items;

“1) Whether traffic impact and proposed mitigation, if any, is consistent with any applicable Transportation Study, Traffic Access and Impact Study and/or Transportation Demand Management Plan, and the goals and objectives of the ASD Plan;”

There will be no changes to the vehicular circulation and the proposed change in use is anticipated to result in an overall reduction in trip generation from anywhere between 1500-2000 new weekly daily trips from the existing retail.

“4) Additional Findings and Determinations: Prior to granting a Special Permit with Site Plan Review-A, the SPGA shall make findings and determinations that the Development:

c) Will not create materially adverse impacts on the public services and facilities serving the Development, such as the sanitary sewer system, the storm drainage system, the public water supply, the recreational system, and the sidewalks and footpaths for pedestrian traffic;”

In order to improve pedestrian access to the new entrance, a series of crosswalks is being proposed to define routes. These pedestrian improvements will eliminate two parking spaces, leaving 1,129 parking spaces provided for the entire Mall.

The change in use will result in increased sewer flow generation from the former K-Mart space. However, the sewer flow generation will not exceed the total approved as part of the Full Build condition of the Assembly Row PUD-PMP [PB 2006-59-R2(05/2014)], as remaining development will be adjusted in order to comply with previously approved PUD-PMP sewer flow generation.

“g) The size, location, design, color texture, lighting and materials of all permanent signs and outdoor advertising structures or features shall reflect the scale and character of the proposed Buildings;”

Signage will be reviewed under separate application in accordance with the SZO and PUD-PMP procedures. The proposed “art opportunity” outlined on the south elevation will also require review and approval by Planning Staff prior to installation.

“h) Exposed transformers and other machinery, storage, service and truck loading areas, dumpsters, utility buildings, and other similar structures shall be effectively screened by plantings and other screening methods so that they are not directly visible from either the proposed Development or surrounding properties;”

The loading area will continue to be hidden by the existing screen wall on the south side of the building. Any additional machinery, mechanical equipment, or utility infrastructure (such as transformers) will be screened as required by the SZO.

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Should the Planning Board approve this Master Plan Special Permit and any associated Special Permit(s), the Planning & Zoning Staff recommends the following conditions:

1. The Applicant shall verify in writing to Planning Staff that there are no unmet or outstanding conditions of the existing approval prior to any application for Building Permit.
2. As required by the PUD-PMP, prior to occupancy of office uses within any development block, the Applicant shall submit for review and comment by the Planning staff, a Transportation Demand Management Plan designed to minimize the amount of parking demand associated with the development, reduce single-occupant vehicle trips in and around Somerville, and encourage a transportation mode split where 50% of trips are made by walking, bicycling, or public transportation.
3. The Applicant shall provide short term bicycle parking spots in a quantities and locations consistent with the requirements of the SZO and approved by the Director of Mobility.
4. Exterior materials and colors must be submitted to the Director of Planning & Zoning for review and approval prior to the application for any Building Permit.
5. Details (dimensions, materials, colors, etc.) of any and all signage and/or art installations must be submitted to the Director of Planning & Zoning for review and approval prior to the application for any Building Permit.
6. If any additional machinery, mechanical equipment, or utility infrastructure (such as transformers) are necessary due to the change in use or subdivision of the internal space from those items currently in place as of the date of this decision, the Applicant will provide details of materials, dimensions, and colors of the necessary screening so that they are not directly visible from either the existing development or surrounding properties to the Director of Planning & Zoning for review and approval prior to the application for any Building Permit.