

1

Project Summary

In accordance with Article 15 of the City of Somerville Zoning Code (the “Ordinance”), 74M Property Owner, LLC (the “Proponent”), respectfully submits this development review application (DRA) to initiate the Site Plan review and approval process.

The Proponent proposes to redevelop approximately 1.15 acres of land at 74 Middlesex Avenue in the Assembly Square Mixed Use District (ASMD) of Somerville, Massachusetts (the “Project Site,”), with construction of one building containing up to approximately 494,000 SF of office, research and development (R&D), lab, and retail uses, and construction of a new civic space, (collectively the “Project”, or the “74 Middlesex Project”).

This DRA is specifically to review and approve a new 13,055 SF civic space that is most consistent with the Neighborhood Park typology (the “Kensington Neighborhood Park”). The Kensington Neighborhood Park will be constructed on a lot just south of the 74 Middlesex building Lot (“Lot 1”), which includes a portion of the abutting Kensington Avenue as well as on a portion of the parcel owned by the City of Somerville situated at 0 Middlesex Avenue (collectively the “City Parcels”, or “Lot 2”). The construction of the Civic Space will deliver an accessible, sustainable and multi-generational public space that will serve as a gateway into the ASMD and the Project Site, and will provide generous pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure that connects Foley Street to the Kensington Underpass, and the Stop and Shop and Garfield Avenue neighborhood to the west. Refer to Figure 1.1 for a neighborhood context diagram.

A concurrent DRA has been submitted for the construction of the building immediately north of the proposed Kensington Neighborhood Park, referred to herein as the “Building.”

This chapter describes the existing site conditions, Project review history, proposed Civic Space improvements, conformance to key requirements of the Zoning Ordinance, and the Project schedule.

1.1 Existing Conditions

The 74 Middlesex Project is proposed on a 1.15-acre Project Site that is bounded by McGrath Highway to the north, Middlesex Avenue to the east, Marginal Road and the I-93 off-ramp to the west and Kensington Avenue and the existing Public Storage building to the south. Kensington Avenue cuts through the middle of the Project Site and creates a vehicular and pedestrian connection between Middlesex Avenue and McGrath Highway.

The Kensington Neighborhood Park will be constructed on the approximately 13,055 SF Lot 2, which is bounded by the Building to the north, Marginal Road to the west, the existing Middlesex Avenue Open Space to the south, and Middlesex Avenue to the east.

Figure 1.2 includes an existing conditions plan showing the proposed lots, and Figure 1.3 presents photographs of the existing Project Site conditions. Refer to Appendix A for the plot plan.

1.2 Project Review History

On February 19, 2020, the Proponent filed a Master Plan Special Permit (MPSP) application with the City of Somerville. On June 11, 2020 the Somerville Planning Board issued a decision approving the Master Plan Special Permit (the "Approved Master Plan"). The Proponent plans to submit simultaneously DRAs to initiate the Site Plan review and approval process for both the Building and the Civic Space.

The Approved Master Plan comprised up to:

- › 498,000 SF of office/lab/R&D;
- › 27,000 SF of retail use;
- › Publicly accessible and sustainably designed civic and open space;
- › Substantial public realm improvements; and
- › Project-related parking (up to 350 below-grade spaces).

On August 18, 2021 the Proponent submitted a Request for Plan Revision and De Minimis Change (the "De Minimis Change Request") to the City. The intent of the De Minimis Change Request was to clarify the Development Site to include the City Parcels, comprised of the Middlesex Avenue Open Space and the area of Kensington Avenue situated between the Property and the Middlesex Avenue Open Space, to create a new revitalized Civic Space (collectively, "Lot 2" or the "Kensington Neighborhood Park"). The Owner's Authorization executed by the City for Lot 2 allows the Proponent to file the Site Plan Approval for the Civic Space. The De Minimis change request adds the full area of the proposed Civic Space to the Development Site, which is consistent with the purpose and intent of the SZO. Refer to Appendix C for a copy of the Request for Plan Revision and De Minimis Change.

1.3 Civic Space Design Summary

Consistent with the Approved Master Plan, the Project will construct an approximately 13,055 SF Neighborhood Park Civic Space. Through a public-private partnership with the City, the Project will revitalize the existing Middlesex Avenue Open Space and will combine this with the area of Kensington Avenue situated between the Building and the Middlesex Avenue Open Space to create a new Neighborhood Park civic space. The construction of the Kensington Neighborhood

Park will satisfy the 25 percent Civic space requirement in the ASMD pursuant to Section 7.4.6 of the Zoning Ordinance.

The overall intent of the civic space design, which is described in detail in the subsequent sections, is to create a welcoming and vibrant gathering space and Neighborhood Park for the community, while also serving the Building occupants and improving the area's environmental and air quality measures.

Refer to Figure 1.4 for an illustrative site plan, Figure 1.5 for a scaled layout plan, and zoning compliance plan. Refer to Table 1-1 for a summary of compliance with the Zoning Ordinance.

1.3.1 Neighborhood Park

The proposed Kensington Neighborhood Park will provide a variety of seating and programming opportunities while also introducing high value landscape areas. The design of the Neighborhood Park aims to provide a valuable public amenity for local residents while also serving Building occupants on a day-to-day basis. The Neighborhood Park will become a gathering space for the community and will promote neighborhood involvement and inclusion.

Along the north edge of the Neighborhood Park fronting the Building and Lot 1, the Proponent proposes improvements to a portion of Kensington Avenue that features a series of angular raised planters referred to as the "tree grove" that are oriented towards the Building entrances along the south side of the Building and will incorporate integrated bench seating as well as movable café table and chair furnishings. The design proposes a decorative paving pattern that will correspond to the Building interior, helping to strengthen the interior/exterior connection between the Building lobby and the adjacent civic space. This paving pattern will be carried in between the tree grove to create a visual connection between the Building interior and the Neighborhood Park. The Building features a primarily glass southern façade at ground level which will further blur the line between the interior and exterior, creating a cohesive design.

Tree plantings within the proposed tree grove will utilize native low VOC emitting species that provide seasonal interest and make for a dynamic space year-round. Understory plant material will consist of over 90 percent native species and will include a diverse mix of perennials and shrubs. Pollinator-friendly plant species are proposed to provide a food source and habitat for pollinating insects and other wildlife. Recognizing that maintenance is a vital aspect to long term success of an outdoor space, low-maintenance plant materials are a priority in plant selection and implementation.

While primarily designated for pedestrian use, a 20' wide access drive is maintained through the Kensington Avenue portion of the Neighborhood Park to maintain access for emergency vehicle. An angled curb along Middlesex Ave to the east and removable bollards at the entry to the west will be utilized to control vehicular access, and further prioritize pedestrians and to define this area as a continuation of

the Neighborhood Park. A decorative paving pattern will provide visual interest and will integrate with the remainder of the Project Site. The existing Kensington Avenue is envisioned and designed to accommodate small events such as farmers markets, festivals, and other community gatherings.

South of the access drive, the Project proposes that will include unique amenities that will draw residents both young and old to the site, and will serve Building occupants. The proposed improvements include a water feature referred to as the “urban beach”, an open lawn, and a custom trellis feature; in addition to a variety of seating and landscape elements that will buffer and define the space.

The defining feature of the proposed improvements is the urban beach, which is located at the center of the existing open space. The urban beach’s shallow water element and sculptural seating will invite visitors to sit, relax, and enjoy its cooling effects. Linear seating elements on both sides of the urban beach allow for parents to sit and observe their children, and Building employees to enjoy a lunch outdoors. The water feature will include a decorative rippling effect, giving the feature a living quality.

The open lawn will feature a variety of seating opportunities and will provide a flexible space for picnics and small gatherings. Areas of sun and shade will allow users to enjoy the open lawn throughout the year. The trellis feature will provide shade and will create a physical and visual connection between the lawn and the plaza that will help unify the space as a Neighborhood Park. The unique trellis design will have a sculptural feel and could incorporate the use of color into the structure that will visually draw people into the Neighborhood Park.

Planting design within the civic space will feature a unique and engaging palette consisting of intricate patterns and texture. Given the Neighborhood Park’s proximity to the Interstate 93 off-ramp and Middlesex Avenue, the landscape design aims to alleviate air and sound pollution concerns through the introduction of vegetated buffers along the east and west sides of the Project Site, adjacent to Middlesex Ave and I-93. The planting design will incorporate high-value, low-maintenance native species that provide year-round interest.

The Project proposes a shared bicycle/pedestrian path along the south side of the Project Site abutting the Self-Storage building. This shared bicycle/pedestrian path will accommodate the expected bicycle and pedestrian traffic along the future improved Kensington Underpass that connects the Foss Park/Route 28 area south of I-93 to Foley Street and the proposed separated bicycle infrastructure proposed along Middlesex Avenue. Through paving treatment, lighting elements and signage, the design will continue to explore opportunities to both celebrate the connection and to create safe, designated space for bicycle and pedestrian circulation.

The summary in Table 1-1 below outlines the Neighborhood Park conformance to key provisions of Section 13 of the Zoning Ordinance.

Refer to Figure 1.4 for an illustrative plan depicting the Neighborhood Park. Refer to Figure 1.6 for landscape section plans, Figure 1.7 for perspective images and Figure

1.8 for an illustrative site furnishing plan. Refer also to Figure 1.9 for a tree plan, Figure 1.10 for a planting plan, Figure 1.11 for a signage plan, Figure 1.12 for a lighting plan, and Figure 1.13 for a grading plan.

Table 1-1 Neighborhood Park Zoning Compliance Summary Table

	Permitted	Proposed
Approved Master Plan Conformance		
Proposed Civic Space Type	Neighborhood Park	Neighborhood Park
Lot Dimensions/Coverage		
Lot Size (min/max)	8,000 SF / 2 Acres	13,055 SF (0.30 Acres)
Lot Development		
Landscaped Area (min)	50% (6,528 SF)	66.7% (8,709 SF)
Pervious Area (min)	85% (11,097 SF)	88.0% (11,489 SF)
Vegetation		
Large Trees (min)	1/1,225 SF (11 Trees)	1/ 421 SF (31 Trees)
Furnishings		
Seating (min)	N/A	(158 LF)
Tables (min)	N/A	N/A

1.4 Project Schedule and Phasing

The Neighborhood Park will be developed and installed concurrently over three years. The following summarizes associated activities during each phase of construction.

- › Construction commencement of Neighborhood Park – Q3 2021; and
- › Substantial completion of Neighborhood Park 1 – Q1 2024.

1.5 Public Process Overview

A pre-submittal meeting was held with the City on March 23, 2021. Prior to and during production of the DRA Application, the Project Team met with City staff from multiple departments to solicit feedback and advance the Project. During production of the DRA Application, neighborhood meetings were held on April 8, 2021 and June 28, 2021. Refer to Appendix B for a summary of the key topics discussed during the neighborhood meeting.