



CITY OF SOMERVILLE

MASSACHUSETTS

Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor

Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD)

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA 02143

George J. Proakis, AICP, Executive Director

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF

SARAH LEWIS, DIRECTOR OF PLANNING

DANIEL BARTMAN, SENIOR PLANNER

SARAH WHITE, PLANNER/PRESERVATION PLANNER

ALEX MELLO, PLANNER

Site: Morgan Avenue

Case #: PB 2019-23

Date: November 21, 2019

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

STAFF REPORT

Applicant Name: DW NP Property, LLC c/o DivcoWest Real Estate Services

Owner Name: DW NP Property, LLC c/o DivcoWest Real Estate Services

Agent Name: Beals and Thomas, Inc.

City Councilor: Matt McLaughlin, Ward 1

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, DW NP Property, LLC, seeks design & site plan review (DSPR) under SZO §6.6.3 for an approximately 75-foot section of a new thoroughfare known as Morgan Avenue, which is part of the larger Cambridge Crossing development site and partially located within the City of Somerville. NPSD Zone. Ward 1.



First Public Hearing: November 21, 2019

Zoning	Use	Surrounding Land Use	Property Metrics
NPSD	Thoroughfare	All abutting properties are in the North Point Special District and undergoing redevelopment into a high-rise, mixed-use, transit-oriented neighborhood primarily in Cambridge, Ma.	N/A

Quick Summary: The proposal is to construct Morgan Avenue, a dead-end thoroughfare with a cul-du-sac extending into the western extent of the Cambridge Crossing neighborhood.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property:

The subject property is located in the Cambridge Crossing neighborhood (formerly called “NorthPoint”) located north of Msgr. O’Brien Highway from the MBTA’s Fitchburg line right-of-way to the Charles River, on both sides of the Charlestown Avenue (Gilmore) Bridge. The site straddles the municipal boundaries between Cambridge, Boston, and Somerville and is subject to Section 6.6 - North Point Special District of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO). The area is currently under redevelopment to create a total of 5,245,854 square feet of new construction (3,060,792 sf residential; 2,185,062 sf commercial) on approximately 45 acres. An estimated 4.68 acres of the site is located within Somerville.

On October 16, 2014 the Somerville Planning Board approved the Neighborhood Development Plan for Cambridge Crossing that established a planned new thoroughfare network for the neighborhood. On November 17, 2016, the Somerville Planning Board approved a revision to that same Neighborhood Development Plan, which included revisions to the alignment of the proposed thoroughfare network. **SZO §6.6.5.A. Thoroughfare Network** of the North Point Special District requires that all thoroughfares intersect with other thoroughfares so that a network is formed, that thoroughfares align where possible with those on adjacent sites, and prohibits cul-du-sacs and other dead-end thoroughfares unless a waiver is granted on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Board. A Waiver was granted by the Planning Board as part of the original 2014 Neighborhood Development Plan approval for a dead-end thoroughfare with a cul-du-sac named “West Street” (now “Morgan Avenue”).

2. Proposal:

The proposal is to construct Morgan Avenue, a dead-end thoroughfare with a cul-du-sac extending into the western extent of the Cambridge Crossing neighborhood. **SZO §6.6.3.1.B** prohibits the construction or reconstruction of thoroughfares in the North Point Special District until a design and site plan has been approved by the Planning Board.

3. Comments:

Mobility Division: The City of Cambridge and the City of Somerville have an intra municipal agreement for the City of Cambridge to service and maintain the entire thoroughfare network established in the Cambridge Crossing neighborhood.

City Councilor: none at this time.

II. FINDINGS FOR DESIGN & SITE PLAN REVIEW (SZO §6.6.3.B & 5.4):

In order to approve the submitted Design & Site Plan for the proposed Morgan Avenue as required by §6.6.3.B.1, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.4.6 for all Design & Site Plan Reviews.

The Planning Staff proposes that the Planning Board make the following findings:

1. Compliance with Standards: *The application must conform with the provisions of the SZO, including Section 6.6.5 Thoroughfares of the North Point Special District.*

6.6.5.A. & B. Thoroughfares shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the City of Somerville's adopted thoroughfare design standards and coordinated with the thoroughfare section at the Cambridge portions at either end. The alignment, connectivity, and/or lane geometry of the thoroughfares are consistent with the previously approved Amendment to the Neighborhood Development Plan (NDP).

6.6.5.C. Vehicular lanes and sidewalks

1. Motor Vehicle Travel Lanes.

A waiver is requested "Motor vehicle travel lanes may have a width between ten (10) feet minimum and twelve (12) feet maximum." As this end of Morgan Avenue is a one-way loop, Staff supports the Applicant's request that the travel lane be 20' in width to accommodate trucks and emergency vehicles.

2. Motor Vehicle Parking Lanes.

Motor vehicle parallel parking lanes are shown at 8' wide including the gutter pan which meets the requirement of eight (8) feet wide or narrower. Gutter seams, drainage inlets, and utility covers shall be flush with the pavement surface and catch basins will have cascade grates to prevent conflicts with bicycle tires.

3. Bike Lanes.

There are no bike lanes shown on the Pavement Marking and Signage Plan as this thoroughfare is not anticipated to have a significant amount of traffic.

4. Sidewalks.

All new sidewalks are shown in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rules and Regulations of the Massachusetts Access Board (521 CMR). The sidewalks vary along this length of thoroughfare as it is designed as a one-way turn-around loop providing access to the pump station for Cambridge's Gore Street Sewer Project. Sidewalks do meet the minimum dimension of 6'.

Street trees are planted within a 6' wide grass strip between the curb and the sidewalk in a regularly-spaced pattern no greater than thirty (30) feet on center and will be a minimum height of ten (10) feet and/or two (2) inches in caliper when planted.

5. Sidewalk Extensions.

Somerville requires that sidewalk extensions occupy the full width of the parking lane they extend into. Staff recommends that the alignment and markings be held to the Cambridge street standards for consistency along the length of the thoroughfare.

6. Pedestrian Crosswalks.

The crosswalk design should be consistent throughout the intersections for streetscape consistency. The application shows the pedestrian crosswalks on Morgan Avenue as meeting the Somerville pavement marking standards. However, the details of the crosswalks in Somerville should be changed to match the other crosswalks throughout the neighborhood and meet the standards specified by the City of Cambridge. Staff recommends including a condition for matching crosswalks to any approval.

7. Driveway and Alley Crossings.

There are no driveway or alley crossings on this portion of Morgan Avenue.

6.6.5.D. This length of Morgan Avenue is designed as a close and a waiver is requested as permitted under section 6.6.4.A.3. See below.

6.6.5.E. All water and sewer utilities, storm water management infrastructure, public lighting, and public furniture will be consistent in design and constructed according to criteria established by the City of Cambridge for Morgan Avenue.

2. Consistency with Purpose: *The application must demonstrate consistency to the adopted comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Somerville, existing policy plans and standards established by the City, and to other plans deemed to be appropriate by the Planning Board; the purpose of this Ordinance in general; and the purpose of the district where the property is located.*

Staff finds that the proposal is;

- In conformance to the adopted master plan of the City of Somerville, existing policy plans and standards established by the City, or to other plans deemed to be appropriate by the Planning Board;
- Exhibits consistency with the purpose of the NPSD and of this Ordinance in general;
- Meets the alignment, connectivity, and lane geometry of thoroughfares approved as part of a neighborhood development plan for the development site; and
- Is in compliance with the provisions set forth in Section 6.6.5 Thoroughfares as shown above.

3. Consistency with Other Considerations: *The Application must demonstrate consistency with other sections of the North Point Special District.*

6.6.4. Urban Design.

A. Thoroughfare Network. A waiver is requested from Section 6.6.4.A.3 “Cul-de-sacs and other dead-end thoroughfares are prohibited unless granted a waiver from the intersection requirement of Section 6.6.4.A.1 on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Board to accommodate specific site conditions.” Staff recommends approval of this waiver as the thoroughfare is designed as a one-way turn-around loop providing access to the pump station for Cambridge’s Gore Street Sewer Project.

B. Block Structure. This length of Morgan Avenue does not intersect with other thoroughfares. However, the design of the overall thoroughfare network meets the requirements for block structure to the extent possible.

C. Lots. This requirement is not applicable to this length of Morgan Avenue.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Design & Site Plan Review under Section 5.4.

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following recommended conditions, the Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the submitted **DESIGN & SITE PLAN**.

This recommendation by the Staff is based upon a technical analysis of the application materials submitted by the applicant and is based only upon information submitted prior to the required public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings, or conditions based upon additional information.

#	Condition	Compliance Timeframe	Verification	Notes				
A. Overall								
1	<p>Development must comply with the approved plans and other application materials submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>August 23, 2019</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any changes to the submitted plans and other materials, as approved and conditioned, that is not determined to be <i>de minimis</i> by the Planning Director are considered a Major Amendment to the approved plans and must be processed as a revision to previously approved plans.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	August 23, 2019	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	Perpetual	ISD/ P&Z	
Date (Stamp Date)	Submission							
August 23, 2019	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office							
2	<p>This approval certifies that the proposed thoroughfare, if constructed and operated in conformance with this decision, as conditioned, complies with the previously approved NDP Decision (<i>Case# PB2014-29</i>) issued on October 16, 2014 and minor amendments (<i>Cases# PB2014-29-MA1-0916, PB2014-29-MA2-0917, & PB2014-29-MA3-0818</i>).</p>	Perpetual	ISD					
3	<p>The details of the crosswalks shall match other crosswalks throughout the neighborhood and, therefore, meet the standards specified by the City of Cambridge</p>	BP	ISD/ P&Z					