



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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*PLANNING DIVISION*

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**PLANNING BOARD MINUTES**

**City Council Chamber, City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue**  
**Thursday, September 19, 2019**  
**6:00 P.M.**

A **joint public hearing** for all interested parties was held by the **Planning Board** and the **City Council Land Use Committee** on **Thursday, September 19, 2019 at 6:00pm**, in the Council Chambers on the Second Floor of Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA, to receive public comments concerning the following:

**ADOPTION OF A NEW SOMERVILLE ZONING ORDINANCE  
TO SUPERSEDE THE CURRENT ZONING ORDINANCE AS  
ORIGINALLY ADOPTED ON MARCH 23, 1990.**

LDavis: presentation, comments tonight, consulted to keep public comment until Nov 1st, 12pm

GProakis: will close officially at noon, will deliver shortly after, check in before introducing Dan, will focus on differences between versions

Can reach out for feedback on previous presentations, reach out at [planning@somervillema.gov](mailto:planning@somervillema.gov).

Hope that we can work together toward passing with adjustments as boards see fit

Things that we will fix before version 4, and other ideas to fix going forward

Not an attempt to get all questions resolved but to build a better operating system and then amend and update as we go forward, best to do this off of the new document

Note of thanks, especially to ward councilors who worked with us to bring this draft forward, work with councilors who understand ward better than we do

Will still have things to keep adjusting, but map is more reflective of where we are and where we are going



Areas or districts we haven't gotten right, we can address, and other things we are leaving draft with knowledge that we will address it soon

Changes to second, affordable unit

Have good opportunity to present tonight, hear what people have to say

Had noticed for comments by tonight appreciate the extension to Nov 1

MCapitano - for those who can't see tonight, will be online?

GProakis - somervillezoning.com will have slides, link to recording

DBartman: Going to keep presentation short as I can, tell story of what we've changed by reviewing districts

Comment to [planning@somervillema.gov](mailto:planning@somervillema.gov), and we'll distribute, cc as you choose, no online copy of comments

Zoning atlas itself is 50 to 60 pages of maps,

Sat with as many councilors as possible through the summer to adjust maps, consult neighborhood plan if one existed, or SomerVision if not

All changes are reflected in new atlas.

Projects largely by right with more dimensional requirements, carriage house generally not because close to property lines (permitted by site plan approval)

Residential by right, group by permit

No rooming house in this ordinance

Comments from the public

1. opposed to change in Davis square, leave Davis as is
2. Chris Iwerks - oppose increases in Davis sq, letter sent, changes surreptitious, out of character,
3. Alan Bingham - agree with first two, no one thinks six stories is a good idea, slipped in, not part of public hearings, four stories as ideal, Davis has different character, will create canyon, overshadow, zoning should reflect and let organically grow, all current are 4 with step back, those don't intrude, don't skin the square (shear a sheep every year, only skin once)
4. Lyn Thompson - sacrificing housing in RB zoning, 3000 will be downzoned, no one will build ADU unless they have a need, city is creating condition where all units will be unaffordable, Boston considers all renters Somerville will have haves and have nots, don't take away by right third unit
5. Jack Slade- parcel to be classified as fabrication, inconsistent categorization, want map change to UR, consistent with spirit of Somerville, not spot zoning, don't approve zoning until changed
6. David Fossack, Edge of Davis Square, neighborhood business, was mr3, last minute change to mr4, don't want 4 story adjacent to me, residents are lowest priority in the city, want a yard and sunlight, some have been downzoned, not clear what was reason, "game going on" with developments, revert lot to what it was
7. Meredith Porter, concerned about affordability, would like affordable housing org committee addressed properly, not all reflected, openness, transparency, want people to know what is coming up, some improvements still needed,



hardship is optional should be required review, heights in Davis concerned about, don't need buildings taller than 4 stories, access to documents would like to include staff reports and other materials to understand a project before the board, including conditions

8. Daniel Liu, want to get clarity on lot splits, require site plan approval, 12 steps, but lot division only 10 steps, why does some require more and some fewer? Some clarity is requested

9. Laura Evans housing crisis, critical part of solution must be drastic increase in supply, 85 feet in Davis sounds great, need drastic action, can do now, or adopt and move forward but please do

10. George in Somerville half my life, some properties occupied by startups, last year bought legion, want to do something beneficial for city, consulted with neighbors, commercial building for startups would be good, like green town labs, zoning was mr5, now changed to civic for a park, but this will incubate drug dealers, zoning proposed here is spot zoning, silly, reconsider, request meeting with Lance

11. David Delbaca, does not reflect ... 60 % of residences are non-compliant and will not be able to be made compliant, home based biz not permitted in assembly square, not sure how to enforce without invading, clarify what is meant, mixed use district, affordable housing is 17.5%, not sure why not 20%, tables need to be scrubbed, some errors

12. Brit Stiner, Star Market on Beacon Street, appreciate changes, will deliver on future econ growth, but some should be revisited, ours is designated as fabrication which limits uses, not residential, support arts community, but fabrication non-economic for new construction, integrate with more economic use to enable actual development,

13. Suzanne, Zone ,1 change in zoning to urban residential at 501 Mystic Parkway, was deemed historic in June, transit parking a designation, Boston Ave and Irvington road, 2 family houses in that area, not sure why, neighborhood meeting notices should be published publicly, had trees removed and want to know what is going on as neighbors

14. Tim Finn Davis Square - live, shop, dine, will move out for a year but will commute in, Davis is particular and different, 5 and 6 stories is too tall, small funky square, out of proportion

15. Bill Shelton, 17 - 18% of property commercial, Boston and Cambridge can spend more, we have structural fiscal deficit, no money to pay for affordable housing, only way to fix is to build more commercial development, yet commercial corridors properties are being snapped up for large, unaffordable housing development, should be commercial

16. Jennifer Kimball, 23 Dane Ave, 20 years that street has flooded, know there will be mitigation, is huge issue with water running to MWRA, will still have flooding, so much development but want to know what city's plan is for mitigating, severe lack of open space, too much paving, need fewer units, more green space on development lots, grateful to J.T. Scott to engage, want to know what plans are for preserving open spaces (public and private) and mitigating flooding

17. Charlie Ball, amazing undertaking, love a lot of what is here, point is that rents here are high, not bad because nice place to live, people purchase land and invest to make nicer, but indication that we need more housing units, need to look at supply to alleviate demand, most property owners put life savings into purchase, most would not add extra units if forced to make affordable, will have opposite effect

18. Gordon Senser Jay Street, Davis Sq, complement planning on work done so far, outstanding example, hope they work to resolve few incongruences, affordable housing will prohibit small scale housing, ADUs will constrain small scale, desire to add commercial space to Davis square, elm is already too crowded, will double number of people visiting, and double road traffic, but no increased size of street and capacity

19. Randy speaking on behalf of 11 and 9 year old children, will go and protest to take action for addressing climate change, zoning can't do everything but can do a lot, applaud sustainability measures already, do everything possible, even if it gives rise to legal challenges, do more than we think we can do,



20. Jeff Keller Meacham road, concerned about Scape lease, implications for character of neighborhood, announced as fait accompli, don't want taller buildings in Davis square, not happy about adding late in the game, no reason to relax rules to help corporations

21. Kevin no individual should be denied in choosing unit of their choice, increase housing production and affordability, accommodating growth takes pressure off, oppose red b to neighborhood residential and depriving adding third unit, will increase cost of housing, exacerbating cost increases, will only intensify

22. Chris Drain, 90 Orchard St, talked about 17 Otis St, previous was UR now rezoned to NR. Would like to see it moved back into UR.

23. John Marshall, disapprove of change in building height in Davis square, shutting down dover street is awful idea and will cause a lot of traffic, doesn't work.

24. Victoria Campezie, struggling to follow, very much against changes in Davis square, love it the way it is, will make wholesale changes in feel and lifeblood of the square, shutting down dover is nothing less than asinine, no benefit to any of the changes

25. Skip small prop owners own two rental buildings, have not seen proposal or way to bring rents down broadly across city, households have shrunk, 1/2 to 2/3 of all households, but live in units 1840 - 1940 built for wealthy families, allow owners to create smaller units inside envelope of existing buildings, naturally affordable, one of the best ways to reduce rent is to move to smaller units, will release larger units and increase supply

26. Pat Jehlen, current situation is horrible, motivated by what is going on with destruction of open space and urban forest, destruction of neighborhood enjoyment, believe zoning will be good, will commend staff, is more can and should do to protect neighborhood character, urban forest, increase coverage, change definition of landscaped and pervious to reflect, consider intersection of neighborhood residence and fab, green score

27. John Sullivan Hudson Street, 55 years in city, member of Somerville property owners corporation, against not being able to add units, crazy and absurd, losing places that housing could be built up, restrictive because has to be affordable, all new laws are crushing the homeowners, have to look at restrictions effects are negative, concerned about Davis, takes away vibrancy, its eclectic,

28. Barbara Steinerm strongly second Bill Shelton point about commercial development, will pay for affordable housing, 6 stories in Davis won't work, won't be viable even before you talk about canyon, won't be affordable, developers can give money for open space, but price of land, what can it buy and where? Open space is not the same as green space, green rooves not a substitute for green on ground, makes city cooler, better for air quality and water, worried about in lieu of, won't get us the space

29. Ben, issues open space, parking not equitable, accessory dwelling units, can alleviate housing crisis and maintain character, concerns are that zoning is technical, made it technical to understand how to do, prohibitive, confusing, aiming at a different audience, does not consider what stresses it places on people, not my work, challenges that homeowners face

30. Lee, Chapel Street, visited city hall this week to look at visualization software staff uses, disappointed, shocked to have visualizations for new Davis Square had not been done, proportion of Davis square, concern is width of street 27 to 40 feet, noncompliant but code omits discussion of challenges, problems of overburdening city, some districts address overburdening, want to shift to master plan to address these concerns

31. Ulysses sent in some technical comments, Davis changes are inappropriate, want to talk about process, i participated in Davis Sq. neighborhood plan, all arguments were put forward constantly in public hearing, atlas from public process was mid rise 4, but somehow the map is now 5 to 6, process wasn't taken seriously, inappropriate, annoys me, invited to participate in process which was unanimous, put it back to where we all agreed to

LDavis: - version 3 of atlas was not from the panning, was placeholder to reflect what current zoning would allow, Ms. Woods, Mr. Bartman can attest, version 4 is reflecting neighborhood process, listening to all input

32 Christine Wicker, just a homeowner who spends a lot of time in Davis, own two condos in Cambridge could live there but want to live in Somerville, quirky, strange, this will completely change the dynamic, tons more cars on roads, reconsider

33 Collin, Elm Street in Davis, 6 to 8 story buildings have no place in Davis, not human scale, enough traffic already, caused by people and we're bringing more, bus lanes but busses don't run because of traffic, trees on sidewalks will be in shadow, just take a walk through Davis and try to imagine what it would be like

34 Robert Antonelli thanks to all, Alderman doing excellent job so far, will read, don't want RA zone changed to urban residence changed, signed by all in senior housing, question is if zone has not passed yet, what is purpose of Wednesday?

35. Tori Antonino share vision where we all want to be, climate resilient, equity, put people first, put environment first, won't matter how many pipes getting bigger will get flooded without ability to deal, need to get stormwater into ground, can't depend on releasing to deer island, need to use vegetation, bioswales, want meadow to be everywhere, buildings getting taller scares people, need to have open space to allow buildings to get larger, need to plan bioswales, eco-districts

36 Davis Square Neighborhood, disagree on Davis, one of our only heavy rail places, embrace growth of the city at that place, have to make sustainable by making sure we can have people at all times, need to let Davis grow, had great neighborhood process, some people who are not here would agree, would like to embrace this plan will let us make more changes over time

37. Pat Kane, Linden Ave, Chamber of Commerce, reiterate what Dan said, based on 1990 ideas, not once and done, will be continuing to update and change, hate to have people held up on this

38 Jason, St. James Ave, brings happiness to see young families strolling through, that happiness tempered by fact that 2/3 here for kindergarten, 1/2 by high school, losing people, more than 40 kids left from my daughter's school, cities becoming childless, sad, more understanding of benefit of raising kids in city, zoning as written was to protect and encourage housing to keep families, nothing concrete in document to do that

39 Chris Dwan, encourage city council give courage, use language of emergency a lot, treat climate aspects as emergency, treat housing as emergency, incremental approach will not work, transportation with 4 people killed, be thoughtful about how to bring people in, don't envy you but wish you courage

40 Paul Christie, Davis square and business owner, selfishly, concerned about zoning changes, scape development and business changes, naive to think it won't change the neighborhood

41 Steve Mackey, Chamber of Commerce, expressing support of chamber, with understanding that some members have already spoken about downsizing of 2 and 3 families, if not persuaded by argument, will be persuaded by data, that fits with plan to develop a new platform and continue to amend, because one of first amendments will be with the change to accessory units, Davis square, don't expect every parcel, but we need to talk about a taller ceiling, Davis square plan meeting will be next week, will be room to change

This will be open until noon on November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Next Thursday meeting on Davis Square, Somerville High School Auditorium, will be about neighborhood plan not zoning

Planning board will adjourn and take up in future.

LDavis: zoning looks like 6 stories sidewalk to sidewalk



DBartman: because of Davis, adjusted to require setbacks so that there will never be sheer vertical street wall except where exempt and that is not the case in Davis, due to feedback of the public for 5th and 6th floor will be set back

LDavis expressed that might be too high but wanted to hear public, this is ongoing conversation, was moved to zoning because that was my request, that's why difference in two versions 3 and 4 of zoning, wanted to make sure that was clear, lot more nuance and more to discuss, look forward to hearing more next week

**Previously Opened Cases to Request a Continuance:**

<b>57 Broadway: (PB 2018-08)</b>	
Applicant:	Centrie Realty, LLC
Property Owner:	Centrie Realty, LLC
Agent:	Richard G. DiGirolamo
Legal Notice:	Applicant and Owner, Centrie Realty, LLC, seek Special Permits to alter a non-conforming property. The existing structure will be demolished and a new building with three residential units and ground floor retail will be constructed. Parking relief. Articles 4, 5, 7, 8, & 9 of the SZO. CCD45. Ward 1.
Date(s) of Hearing(s):	5/2, 5/16, 6/6, 6/20, 7/11 (re-advertised), 8/8, 8/22, 9/4, 9/19
Staff Recommendation:	None at this time.
PB Action:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.
Case Status:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.

<b>176-182 Broadway (PB 2017-22)</b>	
Applicant:	Yihe Patsy's Corporation
Property Owner:	Yihe Patsy's Corporation
Agent:	Richard G. DiGirolamo
Legal Notice:	Applicant and Owner, Yihe Patsy's Corporation, seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR) to construct a 26-unit mixed-use building with commercial space along the street frontage and residences above. CCD-55 zone. Ward 1.
Date(s) of Hearing(s):	<b>2018:</b> 6/21, 8/23, 10/4, 11/8, 11/29, 12/13 <b>2019:</b> 1/9, 1/24, 2/7, 2/21, 3/7, 3/21, 4/4, 4/18, 5/2, 5/16, 6/6, 6/20, 7/11 (re-advertised), 8/8, 9/4, 9/19
Staff Recommendation:	None at this time.
PB Action:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.
Current Status:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.

<b>346 Somerville Avenue (PB 2019-08)</b>	
Applicant:	346 Somerville Avenue, LLC
Property Owner:	Palmac Realty Corp
Agent:	Richard G. DiGirolamo, Esq.
Legal Notice:	Applicant, 346 Somerville Avenue, LLC, and Owner, Palmac Realty Corp, seek Special Permits and Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR) to construct a 100-unit residential structure with inclusionary housing. SZO sections and articles including §4.4.1, §8.5, §7.11, Article 9, Article 13. CCD55 zone. Ward 2.
Date(s) of Hearing(s):	3/7, 4/4, 4/18, 5/2, 5/16, 6/6, 6/20, 7/11 (re-advertised), 8/8, 8/22, 9/4, 9/19
Staff Recommendation:	Conditional approval
PB Action:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.
Current Status:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.



**New Cases to be Opened and Requesting a Continuance**

<b>1060 Broadway (PB 2016-79-R1-7/19)</b>	
Applicant:	Powderhouse Living, LLC
Property Owner:	Powderhouse Living, LLC
Agent:	N/A
Legal Notice:	Applicant & Owner, Powderhouse Living, LLC, seek revisions to a previously-issued special permit by making changes to the building's facades. §6.7 and §5.3.8 of the SZO. PRD zone. Ward 7.
Date(s) of Hearing(s):	9/19
Staff Recommendation:	None at this time.
PB Action:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.
Case Status:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to continue to October 3, 2019.

**Previously Opened Cases to be Heard:**

<b>365 Somerville Avenue: (PB 2018-08):</b>	
Applicant:	Nikhilsh Rao Goruknati
Property Owner:	Riggins Holdings, LLC
Agent:	N/A
Legal Notice:	Applicant, Nikhilsh Rao Goruknati, and Property Owner, Riggins Holdings, LLC, seek special permits to convert from a café use to dentist office. Parking relief under Article 9. CCD-55. Ward 2
Date(s) of Hearing(s):	7/11, 8/8, 8/22, 9/4, 9/19
Staff Recommendation:	Conditional approval.
PB Action:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to accept the withdrawal the request.
Case Status:	Voted on September 19, 2019 to accept the withdrawal the request.

**Other Business**

No other business was addressed.

Meeting adjourned.

*NOTICE: While reasonable efforts have been made to assure the accuracy of the data provided in these minutes, do not rely on this information as the complete and accurate portrayal of the events in the meeting without first checking with the Planning Division staff. If any discrepancies exist, the decisions filed by the Board serve as the relevant record for each case. The Planning Division also maintains audio recordings of most Board meetings that are available upon request.*

