



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

PLANNING DIVISION  
**ZONING BOARD OF APPEALS MEMBERS**

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ANNE BROCKELMAN  
DREW KANE, ALT.

**Case #: ZBA 2019-14**  
**Site: 24-26 Robinson Street**  
**Date of Decision: April 3, 2019**  
**Decision: *Petition Approved with Conditions***  
**Date Filed with City Clerk: April 16, 2019**

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**ZBA DECISION**

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**Site:** 24-26 Robinson Street  
**Applicant Name:** North America Development, LLC  
**Applicant Address:** 93 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145  
**Owner Name:** 24-26 Robinson Road LLC  
**Owner Address:** 35 Fairway Drive, Woburn, MA 01801  
**Agent Name:** Nicole Starck, Esq.  
**Agent Address:** 6 Lexington Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, Waltham, MA 02452  
**City Councilor:** Mark Niedergang

Legal Notice: Applicant, North America Development, LLC, and Owner, 24-26 Robinson Road LLC, seek a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by finishing a portion of the basement. RA Zone. Ward 5.

<u>Zoning District/Ward:</u>	RA Zone. Ward 5.
<u>Zoning Approval Sought:</u>	SZO §4.4.1
<u>Date of Application:</u>	February 6, 2019
<u>Date(s) of Public Hearing:</u>	March 20, 2019 and April 3, 2019
<u>Date of Decision:</u>	April 3, 2019
<u>Vote:</u>	5-0

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Case # ZBA 2019-14 was opened before the Zoning Board of Appeals in the Aldermanic Chambers at Somerville City Hall on March 20, 2019. Notice of the Public Hearing was given to persons affected and was published and posted, all as required by M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 11 and the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. On April 3, 2019 the Zoning Board of Appeals took a vote.



CITY HALL • 93 HIGHLAND AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02143  
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[www.somervillema.gov](http://www.somervillema.gov)

**I. DESCRIPTION:**

The proposal is to alter the interior layouts of the two units and finish a portion of the basement. The project also includes as-of-right construction of a two-story rear deck.

**II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1):**

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 Board 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."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements: lot area, lot area per dwelling unit, floor area ratio (FAR), front yard setback, rear yard setback, right side yard setback, and street frontage.

The proposal will impact the nonconforming dimension of FAR. The current dimension is 0.81, the proposal to add 725 square feet of living area by adding a family room, bedroom, and bathroom will increase the FAR to .93. The requirement in the district is 0.75. This alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that “[I]awfully existing one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5.”

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, the Board finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal will allow for the creation of a modest amount of living space in the basement. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for number of dwelling units, ground coverage, landscaped area, pervious area, building height, and left side yard setback will continue to be conforming to the requirements of the SZO.

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 lessen congestion in the streets; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the RA district, which is, “to establish and preserve quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts.”

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 subject property is located on the southeastern side of Robinson Street, which is located between Bartlett Street and Central Street. It is a residential neighborhood that includes single, two-, and three-family dwellings.

*Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility)*: The proposal includes the installation of a light well in the front of the house. To minimize the visual impact of the light well the Applicant is proposing landscaping improvements in the front yard. There was a question at the March 20, 2019 ZBA hearing about basement windows on both sides of the house being removed. That was a drafting error and windows are now shown on the revised plan set. The Board has conditioned that the entire driveway be constructed of permeable pavers to enhance the aesthetics of the site and to help reduce stormwater runoff.

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

6. 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.

### III.DECISION:

Present and sitting were Danielle Evans, Josh Safdie, Anne Brockelman, Elaine Severino, and Drew Kane. Upon making the above findings, Josh Safdie made a motion to approve the request for a Special Permit. Elaine Severino seconded the motion. The Zoning Board of Appeals voted **5-0** to **APPROVE** the request **WITH CONDITIONS**. The following conditions were attached:



#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for the finishing of the basement. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>February 6, 2019</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>March 27, 2019</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Z0.1, Z0.2, Z0.3, EX1.1, A1.1, A2.1, and A2.2)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	February 6, 2019	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	March 27, 2019	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Z0.1, Z0.2, Z0.3, EX1.1, A1.1, A2.1, and A2.2)
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Any changes to the approved plans that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
<b>Pre-Construction</b>										
2	The proposed basement finished floor elevation shall not be less than is 1 foot above the Seasonal High Ground Water elevation. The seasonal high ground water elevation shall be determined by a Massachusetts certified soil evaluator and stated on a signed soil test pit log.	BP	Eng.							
<b>Construction Impacts</b>										
3	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	Plng.							
4	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P							
5	For the convenience of and respect for the neighborhood, during the construction phase, construction work shall not begin prior to 7:30am and shall finish no later than 5pm Monday through Friday. There shall be no construction or construction-related work performed on weekends or holidays.	During Construction	ISD							
<b>Miscellaneous</b>										
6	Granting of the applied for use or alteration does not include the provision for short term rental uses, such as AirBnB, VRBO, or the like. Separate approvals are needed for the aforementioned uses.	Ongoing	ISD / Plng.							
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							
8	The entire driveway shall be constructed of a permeable paver material.	CO	Plng.							
<b>Public Safety</b>										



9	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
10	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.	



Attest, by the Zoning Board of Appeals:

Danielle Evans, *Acting as Chair*  
Josh Safdie, *Acting as Clerk*  
Elaine Severino  
Anne Brockelman  
Drew Kane (Alt.)

Attest, by the Administrative Assistant:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Monique Baldwin

Copies of this decision are filed in the Somerville City Clerk's office.  
Copies of all plans referred to in this decision and a detailed record of the  
SPGA proceedings are filed in the Somerville Planning Dept.

**CLERK'S CERTIFICATE**

Any appeal of this decision must be filed within twenty days after the date this notice is filed in the Office of the City Clerk, and must be filed in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40A, sec. 17 and SZO sec. 3.2.10.

In accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, no variance shall take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and no appeal has been filed, or that if such appeal has been filed, that it has been dismissed or denied, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title.

Also in accordance with M.G.L. c. 40 A, sec. 11, a special permit shall not take effect until a copy of the decision bearing the certification of the City Clerk that twenty days have elapsed after the decision has been filed in the Office of the City Clerk and either that no appeal has been filed or the appeal has been filed within such time, is recorded in the Middlesex County Registry of Deeds and indexed in the grantor index under the name of the owner of record or is recorded and noted on the owner's certificate of title. The person exercising rights under a duly appealed Special Permit does so at risk that a court will reverse the permit and that any construction performed under the permit may be ordered undone.

The owner or applicant shall pay the fee for recording or registering. Furthermore, a permit from the Division of Inspectional Services shall be required in order to proceed with any project favorably decided upon by this decision, and upon request, the Applicant shall present evidence to the Building Official that this decision is properly recorded.

This is a true and correct copy of the decision filed on \_\_\_\_\_ in the Office of the City Clerk, and twenty days have elapsed, and

FOR VARIANCE(S) WITHIN

\_\_\_\_\_ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or  
\_\_\_\_\_ any appeals that were filed have been finally dismissed or denied.

FOR SPECIAL PERMIT(S) WITHIN

\_\_\_\_\_ there have been no appeals filed in the Office of the City Clerk, or  
\_\_\_\_\_ there has been an appeal filed.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ City Clerk Date \_\_\_\_\_

