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CITY OF SOMERVILLE

Office of Strategic Planning & Community Development

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Planning & Zoning Division
DATE: August 28, 2020
RE: MPSP #2020-002, 101-153 South Street

This memo summarizes the master plan submitted for 101-153 South Street, 34 Ward, 29 Harding, and 33 Earle Street, identifies any additional discretionary or administrative development review that is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and provides related analysis or feedback as necessary. The application was deemed complete on August 14, 2020 and is scheduled for a public hearing on September 3, 2020.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

Boynton Yards LandCo, LLC is proposing a master plan for a 6.55 acre development site roughly bounded by South Street to the south, Harding Street to the east, the MBTA's Fitchburg rail ROW to the north, and Windsor Street to the west. The proposal includes:

- One new thoroughfare:
 - Lot T1, a new thoroughfare called Thoroughfare 1 that will extend Windsor Place to Harding Street
- Three new civic spaces including:
 - Lot C1, a neighborhood park totaling 22,360 SF
 - Lot C2, a neighborhood park totaling 16,904 SF
 - Lot C3, a pocket park totaling 7,142 SF
- Six buildings totaling 985,000 SF of commercial space, 340,000 SF of residential space, 10% arts and creative economy space, and 20,000 SF for a community center. Broken out, they are:
 - Lot B2 a LEED Platinum Certifiable Lab Building totaling 366,000 SF
 - Lot B3.1 a LEED Platinum Certifiable Lab Building totaling 351,000 SF
 - Lot B3.2 a Net Zero and LEED Gold Certifiable General Building totaling 30,000 SF
 - Lot B4.1 a Net Zero and LEED Platinum Certifiable General Building totaling 167,000 SF that will be primarily residential

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- Lot B4.2 a Net Zero and LEED Platinum Certifiable General Building totaling 119,000 SF that will be primarily residential
- Lot B4.3 a Net Zero and LEED Platinum Certifiable General Building totaling 62,000 SF that will be primarily residential

REVIEW NECESSARY

The development site is located in the Boynton Yards sub-area of the Master Plan Development (MPD) overlay district and in the Boynton Yards neighborhood represented by Ward 2 City Councilor JT Scott. The proposed Master Plan requires a Master Plan Special Permit (MPSP). If the MPSP is approved, entitlement of each individual thoroughfare, civic space, and building identified in the Master Plan will occur through subsequent development review by the Planning Board.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETINGS

Article 15.2 of the SZO requires a neighborhood meeting prior to the submittal of a master plan. Councilor Scott and the Boynton Yards LandCo, LLC hosted a neighborhood meeting on June 6, 2020. A summary of this neighborhood meeting is included in the application materials.

ANALYSIS

For proposed master plans, staff first analyzes the proposal based on the requirements of the sub area where the property is located. Second, staff reviews the project based on any adopted comprehensive plan, neighborhood plan, and urban design frameworks; and any other applicable documents as well as planning and urban design principles to achieve the City's objectives.

Proposed master plans utilizing the BY MPD must:

- Meet the required thoroughfare network for any land within their development site boundary
- Provide a space for a community center principal use that is either 5% of the total commercial floor area proposed or 20,000 SF, whichever is less.
- Provide for 20% civic space of the development site (minus thoroughfares)
 - Provide portions of any required civic space within the development site boundary
- Provide at least 75% of floor space as non-residential uses (excluding Auto-Oriented uses)
- Provide 10% of commercial floor area as Arts and Creative Enterprises principal use
- Provide a ratio of commercial square feet to dwelling units at 375:1
- Provide less than the maximum of 1,500 off-street parking spaces allowed for the district
- Provide less than the maximum of 300 reserved parking spaces allowed for the district

The master plan meets the requirements detailed above. The master plan is centered around Thoroughfare 1, the only required thoroughfare that's part of the development site. It will extend

Windsor Place to Harding Street. The intent is for this to be a shared 2-way curbsless street although any final design will be addressed in later phases. The thoroughfare will also intersect Earle Street.

Thoroughfare 1/Windsor Place/Columbia Street along with South Street will be the two east-west streets of the neighborhood. The intention is that the majority of car trips use South Street, and until connection to Webster Street, continue on Windsor Street. Garage entrances will primarily be off of South Street, Earle Street, and an alley located off of Thoroughfare 1.

Improvements are also proposed for existing streets including Harding, Earle, Windsor, and South Streets. Harding, the eastern boundary of the master plan, will be extended slightly to meet Thoroughfare 1. On the new portion, there will be parking on both sides of the street and expanded sidewalks. On the existing portion of Harding Street, there will be expanded sidewalks, street trees, and parking.

Earle Street will be de-emphasized for pedestrians as it's intended to be more alley-like with narrower sidewalks than the rest of the master planned area, no on-street parking, and green infrastructure. Windsor Street will maintain 2-way traffic with one-way on-street bike facilities. Lastly, South Street, which is intended to be re-aligned by other master plan proposals, will be 2-way with on-street bike facilities.

All together, the proposal is for 1,365,000 SF of development of which 984,500 SF is commercial, 42,500 is retail, and 338,000 SF is residential. This includes the development program of Building 1 or 101 South Street which is currently under construction as permitted by 8.3.5.b.iv since a certificate of occupancy is not anticipated until summer 2021.

A total of 1,027,000 SF of space is proposed to be non-residential uses which meets Article 8.3.12 that 75% of floor space be dedicated to commercial uses (excluding auto-oriented uses). 102,700 SF is proposed to be ACE space which meets the 10% requirement of Article 8.3.12.f.iii.b. The proposal meets the ratio of 1 dwelling unit to 375 SF of commercial space with a ratio of 1 unit to 3,112 SF. The proposal also includes 20,000 SF for community center. Final location of the community center and arts and creative uses will be determined in later phases.

Although not technically a use, the proposal includes the 20% requirement for civic space. The project includes a land area (minus thoroughfares) of 231,972 SF. Just over one acre or 46,406 SF is dedicated as civic space including two neighborhood parks and one pocket park. One neighborhood park is proposed within the required civic space area as shown in Map 8.3.12 (b). There will be additional landscaped areas as part of each development site that will add to the public realm.

The master plan is proposing a total of 1,002 underground parking spaces under each proposed building with no reserved spaces.

There are several adopted plans and policy documents that should be reflected on in the analysis of this master plan including SomerVision, the Union Square Neighborhood Plan, the Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework, and Climate Forward. MPD and the Boynton Yards Sub area were created to achieve previous planning efforts:

- implement the recommendations of SomerVision for transformational redevelopment
- implement design-based neighborhood and station area plans called for by SomerVision

- implement the Boynton Yards Urban Design Framework.

Urban Design Frameworks are a document to ensure coordinated planning, development, architecture, and landscape design within the sub-area as a supplement to the zoning.

SomerVision 2030, the adopted comprehensive plan of the City, identifies Boynton Yards as well as other industrial neighborhoods as places to transform into dynamic, mixed-use, and transit-oriented districts. In the transportation infrastructure section, it identifies Boynton Yards as a neighborhood to create a transportation network in an effort to reach the goal of connecting our neighborhoods and commercial centers within Somerville and beyond. It also identifies that further planning efforts were necessary around GLX station areas. With that recommendation, OSPCD engaged in multiple planning efforts including the Union Square Neighborhood Plan (USNP) which included the Boynton Yards neighborhood which was adopted in 2016.

The USNP sets forth a Vision for the Future that attempts to address the primary concerns of community members in the planning process. The City had never done planning work for the large scale transformation expected in the southeast portions of Union Square and community members wanted to make sure their concerns were addressed. This master plan proposal strengthens the neighborhood's position at fulfilling the goal of an Urban Employment Center - a place type that puts an emphasis on jobs and an alternative to other employment centers in Cambridge and Boston. All while maintaining a positive relationship with the Local Center in Union Square around the plaza and Bow Street. The MPSP includes a proposal for Arts & Creative economy (ACE) space which strengthens the Space = Work concept – that ACE space is threatened in Somerville and with each decrease in space, Somerville will lose artists and makers.

The Union Square Neighborhood Plan puts equity at the forefront. It's other city and non-profit programs that will increase equity in Somerville as a result of the development proposed in this master plan. For instance, jobs linkage will fund job training programs that will train Somerville residents for the variety of jobs available in the lab buildings that are a part of this development. The public realm will be expanded through civic space and shared streets where only South Street Farm exists today. The master plan includes relocation and expansion of South Street Farm to a proposed civic space.

The USNP also addresses housing. Although housing is a later phase of this proposal, it will include 320 units including 64 (20%) affordable units of which 20% of those affordable units must be 3-bedroom units. A recent [MAPC study found](#) that newer family-sized units are more likely to be occupied by families than older family-sized units. Although no one development will solve the region's housing problem of underproduction of all housing types, Somerville, with developments in Assembly Square, Union Square, and Boynton Yards, is one of the municipalities partnering with developers to do its part.

Many aspects of the USNP's Vision for Development are coded into zoning and will be addressed at the Site Plan Approval phase. Boynton Yards has some ability to establish its own design context because of the physical separation from Union Square. Development in Boynton Yards should honor the Prospect Hill landmark by maintaining some viewing vistas up to the monument and should also contribute towards creating an iconic skyline to be viewed from the hill. The adjoined buildings 4A, 4B, and 4C could hinder views from Prospect Hill and also limit viewpoints from Civic Space 1 to Prospect Hill. Orientation of the 'tower' elements of those buildings should be considered.

Development in this neighborhood of Somerville would be impossible without heavy investment in the neighborhood's infrastructure. Developers participating in the MPD BY-sub area district will contribute financially or with in-kind improvements to the infrastructure in Boynton Yards including separated storm and sewers and new streets. The master plan strengthens Boynton Yards street network with an emphasis on circulation through the neighborhood, not cut through traffic. The mobility management planning now required through zoning embraces smart parking policy and utilizing parking as a resources to be used at its highest efficiency.

Furthermore, the proposal starts to address the challenges and opportunities that exist in the neighborhood discussed in the neighborhood plan: it proposes new civic space, street connectivity, and a mix of uses to start the transition to an 18-hour neighborhood while addressing infrastructure needs and existing ownership patterns. Using a blended number accounting for commercial and lab uses, 985,000 SF of commercial development is equivalent to 3,940 jobs.

SomerVision 2040, an update to SomerVision, is going through the adoption process. Our community values and the SomerVision Map remain largely unchanged. The updated plan focuses on continued growth in Somerville but puts a concerted effort into fighting displacement and keeping equity at the forefront. SomerVision, along with other City policies, working together will help us achieve those goals. Redevelopment, enabled by zoning, includes community benefits like increases in civic space, a community center, affordable housing, and jobs, housing, and transportation linkages. Large buildings are expected to contribute to Somerville's goal of being carbon neutral by 2050 by both being sustainable and encouraging sustainable behavior like reduced vehicle trips. New development brings an increase in tax revenue which can fund existing and new programs.

The master plan also addresses city-wide sustainability goals, outside of the buildings proposed, that are detailed in neighborhood plans, engineering studies, the City's Climate Vulnerability Assessment, Climate Forward, and the UDF. The Boynton Yards neighborhood subsurface infrastructure is inadequate to facilitate the desired type of development. The stormwater and sanitary sewer in this neighborhood are separate from the remainder of the city and have dedicated connections to the MWRA sewer system.

Knowing that the desired development is infeasible without infrastructure investment, the City commissioned a consultant study on the neighborhood's infrastructure requirements. With this information, the City is using a contributions spreadsheet based on the square footage of development entitled. Developers can either make direct contributions or make specific project improvements to credit their contributions. Since it's divided by square footage of development entitled, each developer pays their fair share of infrastructure costs. Improvements include a storage tank for stormwater mitigation and sewer separation.

With the subsurface infrastructure addressed, at the street level, one of the goals of green infrastructure is trying to reduce the amount of water that reaches the system and increase the quality of the water. The application addresses the Green Infrastructure and Stormwater Plan in several sections and includes tree planting with structural cells, stormwater retention, and an increase in pervious area by 2/3 of an acre. The comprehensive tree planting strategy will help to address the high heat exposure risk in the neighborhood. Green infrastructure should be maximized in Boynton Yards because of the likelihood of precipitation events causing flooding.

In addition, the design of the streets should strengthen our position with Vision Zero, a worldwide campaign to reduce and eliminate transportation injuries and fatalities. Along with mobility management, the goal is to reduce the number of vehicular trips in and around the neighborhood. To transition trips from auto use, walking and biking facilities need to be designed for all users, not just those that are most enthusiastic. Although all streets have pedestrian and cyclist facilities, the considerations of all users needs to be taken into account in the designs to make them widely available to all ages and ability levels.

In summary, Somerville Climate Forward's goals are:

- Reduce Somerville's contribution to climate change and work towards carbon neutrality (mitigation)
- Prepare Somerville for the unavoidable impacts of climate change (adaptation)
- Fairly distribute the opportunities created by climate action and work to alleviate the unequal burdens of climate change (equity)

With the subsurface and surface infrastructure addressed, the buildings of the master plan will meet the zoning regulations. Depending on building type, this could include LEED Platinum, Zero Carbon, or PHIUS+ certifiable buildings. It also includes no on-site combustion for HVAC or cooking with the exception of the eating and drinking use category. Roofs will have green roof or solar panels. This requirements will be addressed in greater detail at later phases of development but it is important that these buildings reach the highest standards to help Somerville meet our carbon neutrality goal.

PHASING

Development of this scale takes years to implement. The MPSP is proposed to be constructed over 4 phases and will likely take 6-8 years to implement depending on construction and market demands.

Phase 1 includes Building 1/101 South Street and an interim open space that will be incorporated into a Neighborhood Park at a later phase. It also includes the installation of new pavement over Thoroughfare 1 and a new sidewalk on the south side of Thoroughfare 1 extending from Windsor Place to the Building 1 site; new bump outs, sidewalk and street trees on Thoroughfare 1 and improvements to Earle Street; a new bump out and sidewalk and street trees on South Street in front of the Building 1 site. Phase 1 also includes infrastructure work vital to bringing Building 1 and future buildings online:

- The installation of a portion of the 10-inch water main on the northern end of Earle Street from the existing 16-inch water line that traverses Building 3A northward to Thoroughfare 1;
- The installation of approximately 500 linear feet (LF) of a new 10-inch water main in Thoroughfare 1 from Windsor Street to Earle Street that will replace the long stretch of the existing 16-inch main that traverses the future locations of 101 South and Building 2;
- The installation of approximately 550 LF of a new 12-inch sanitary sewer in Thoroughfare 1 from Windsor Street to Earle Street, which will allow the existing 36-inch combined sewer to be removed;
- The installation of approximately 250 LF of a new 12 to 18-inch separated storm drain in Earle Street from just north of the intersection with South Street northward towards future Thoroughfare 1 and the provision of a temporary storm drain connection to the existing 36 to 42-inch combined sewer; and Boynton Yards Master Plan Special Permit

- The installation of approximately 550 LF of a new 36-inch separated storm drain in Thoroughfare 1 from Windsor Street to Earle Street, which will allow the existing 36-inch combined sewer to be removed.

Phase 2 includes the construction of Building 2 and Civic Space 1, the Neighborhood Park between Building 1/101 South and Building 2. The sidewalk on the north side of Thoroughfare 1 and improvements to Windsor Street.

Phase 2 includes utility work to bring Building 2 online:

- Electric duct bank in Windsor Street and electric service connection
- Telecomm service connections
- Connections from existing water main in South Street

Phase 3 includes Buildings 3A and 3B. Thoroughfare 1, in its final design, will be extended from Earle Street to Harding Street including the extension of Harding Street northward to meet Thoroughfare 1. Harding Street will be improved. Phase 3 also includes several utility upgrades including:

- The construction of approximately 300 LF of a new 10-inch water main in Thoroughfare 1 and Harding Street to connect from Earle Street to Ward Street, which will remove the existing 16-inch main within the future location of Building 3A;
- The installation of approximately 300 LF of a 12-inch sanitary sewer in Thoroughfare 1 and Harding Street to connect from Earle Street to Ward Street and removal of the 42-inch existing combined sewer;
- The construction of approximately 300 LF of a 42-inch separated storm drain in Thoroughfare 1 and Harding Street to connect from Earle Street to Ward Street, which will allow the 42-inch existing combined sewer to be removed; and
- The construction of an inlet control structure manhole within or in the vicinity of the intersection of Thoroughfare 1 and Harding Street.

Phase 4 includes Building 4A, 4B, and 4C and civic space 2 and 3, a neighborhood park and pocket park respectively. All streetscape and public realm improvements along the north side of Thoroughfare 1 will be completed. Phase 4 includes utility work to bring Building 4A, 4B, and 4C online:

- Electric Service
- Telecomm Service
- Gas Service
- Water Service

The phasing should take into account a proportional release of community benefits including civic spaces, arts and creative economy, and community space with each phase.