



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2017-122-R1-3/2019

Date: ~~May 15, 2019~~ **June 19, 2019**

Recommendation: Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF MEMO

Site: 10-12 Ward Street

Applicant Name: Block Properties, LLC
Applicant Address: 1330 Boylston St., Ste. 600,
Chestnut Hill, MA
Owner Name: 14 Ward Street, LLC
Owner Address: Same as Applicant's
Agent: Peter Quinn
Agent Address: 259 Elm Street, Suite 301,
Somerville, MA 02144

Ward Councillor: J.T. Scott

Legal Notice: Applicant, Novo Development Holdings, LLC, and Owner, 84 Franklin Street, LLC, seek relief under §5.3.8 of the SZO to revise a previously-granted Special Permit. RB zone. Ward 1.*



Dates of Public Hearing: May 15, 2019

The case number for this project should have been listed as ZBA 2017-122-R1-3/2019. The case number is correct in the staff report. In addition, while a portion of the project site is located in the RB zone, a portion is also located in the BA zone.

STAFF NOTE: At the May 15, 2109 ZBA hearing, the Applicant team presented the proposed changes to the board. The ZBA tasked the Applicant team with providing better renderings of the changes so that the ZBA could perform a satisfactory assessment of the proposal. The updated renderings have been provided to the ZBA in their packets. Staff offers no further update on this matter.

I. DESCRIPTION

A. Background

On February 14, 2018, the ZBA granted Special Permits, a Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR) and Variances for the project at 10-12 Ward Street (decision attached). On January 9, 2019, the ZBA granted an extension of the Special Permits and SPSR and re-approved the Variances (decision attached).

In the months since the January 9, 2019 ZBA decision, the Applicant team has made changes to portions of the approved project that Planning Staff finds are beyond *de minimis* in nature. As stated in Condition #1 of all ZBA approvals, any changes to an approved proposal that are considered to not be *de minimis* in nature, those changes must be reviewed and approved by the Special Permit Granting Authority (SPGA).

Staff has found that, due to the nature and number of the proposed changes, they are not *de minimis* in nature and, therefore, must be reviewed and approved, denied, or altered by the ZBA.

B. Discussion of Proposed Changes

Some interior reconfiguration drove changes to the location, style, and size of windows and balconies across the façade of the building. However, it is the exterior changes (building and site) that are most noticeable to anyone reasonably familiar with the project. The exterior changes are as follows: key exterior and site changes include:

- Relocation, resizing, and re-design of windows across all facades
- Widening of balconies
- Inclusion of additional cedar siding to soften the look of the building
- Re-location and re-orientation of basement egress
- Change location of transformer from above-ground to underground vault
- Increased landscaping along right front of site
- ADA ramp extended to accommodate final grade on site
- Shifted location of covered bicycle spaces
- Change in building height – increased from 49’ 9” to 49’ 11” (a height increase of 2 inches)
- Shifting of downspout locations
- Slight alteration in parapet slope
- Change in proposed Ward Street front door/entry style
- Inclusion of 3-story bays on left elevation and removal of cedar-clad architectural protrusions on same.
- Change in proposed rear building entry door/entry style

At the Staff Planner’s request, the Applicant has provided an image of the originally-approved design partnered with their proposed changes. Accompanying each proposal sheet is a list of changes that the Applicant proposes.

Overall, Staff finds that the proposed changes constitute a design improvement to the building. The inclusion of additional cedar siding will help to soften the hard angles of the structure and will contrast with the proposed man-made materials (metal) on other sections of the building. It should be noted, however, that conditions attached to prior approvals all still apply, including the proviso that all material samples be submitted to Planning Staff for their review and approval.

II. RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the ZBA approval the proposed changes to the site and building and that all previously-approved conditions apply.