Development Approval Process in Somerville

1. **Pre-Application**
   Before applying for a project, developers typically meet with planning staff to review regulations, get their perspective on whether a project would be supported, and explore their options.

2. **Submit Application**
   Developers submit their application. This typically includes an application form, a site survey, and plans for the existing and proposed interior and exterior.

3. **Community Meetings**
   Abutters within 300 feet are notified of the project. In addition, the City strongly encourages developers to host community meetings and get feedback about their project.

4. **Staff Report**
   Based on the application (which may include amended plans) and feedback from community meetings, planning staff issues a recommendation.

5. **Public Hearing**
   A public hearing is held where community members can testify, then the special permit granting authority will approve, reject, or ask the applicant to make adjustments.

6. **Appeals**
   If approved, abutters have 20 days to appeal the decision before developers can pursue a building permit.

7. **Construction**
   Developers typically have two years to begin construction, allowing them to finalize their finances and carry out other pre-construction steps.

**What about big projects?**
Neighborhood-wide developments (like Union Square or Assembly) follow a similar process but go through it multiple times - once for the master plan and again for each building and civic space.

**Who grants special permits?**
Special permits are granted by the Planning Board and/or the Zoning Board of Appeals, depending on the nature of the project. For clarification on which board(s) will review a project, contact the City’s planning department.

Learn more about this process at somervillema.gov/planningandzoning