



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2014-29
Date: October 5, 2014
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: North Point

Applicant Name: CJUF III NorthPoint, LLC c/o The HYM Investment Group, LCC
Applicant Address: One Congress Street, 10th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Owner Name: CJUF III NorthPoint, LLC c/o The HYM Investment Group, LCC
Owner Address: One Congress Street, 10th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Agent: Thomas N. O'Brien
Agent Address: One Congress Street, 10th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner CJUF III NorthPoint, LLC c/o The HYM Investment Group, LLC, seeks Neighborhood Development Plan Review under SZO §5.4 & §6.6.3 for review of the North Point Neighborhood Development Plan. NP-SD zone. Ward 1

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board - Thursday, October 16, 2014

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property:

“North Point” refers to an area of land along the north bank of the Charles River, over sixty acres in total, inclusive of the area north of Msgr. O’Brien Highway from the MBTA’s Fitchburg line right-of-way to the Charles River, on both sides of the Charlestown Avenue (Gilmore) Bridge. Over the past few decades, the area has been host to multiple PUD based development projects in the City of Cambridge including PUD 175 on the west side of Charlestown Avenue/Gilmore Bridge (Avalon North Point, Avalon North Point Lofts aka “The Maple Leaf Building, and a proposal for 1-5 East Street for a six-story 300 unit residential building) and PUD 85 on the east side of Charlestown Avenue/Gilmore Bridge (Regatta Riverview Residences and the EF Building near North Point Park). North Point Park is a 14-acre park designed by Carr, Lynch, and Sandell located between the 1910 Charles River Dam and the new 1978 Charles River Dam and was completed in 2007 as part of mitigation for the Big Dig.

Approximately 45 acres of North Point is owned by CJUF III NorthPoint LLC, the Applicant, and includes just over 5 acres of developable land in the southeastern corner of Somerville. The site straddles a unique spot where the municipal boundaries of Somerville, Cambridge, and Boston all meet. The Somerville portion of North Point is physically isolated from the rest of the City by railroad right-of-way and the MBTA’s Boston Engine Terminal/Commuter Rail Maintenance Facility. Due to meandering city boundaries (which follow the centerline of a historic river bed), the Somerville portions of North Point include three pieces of land that are not contiguous. There is no current vehicular access to this land from Somerville and access to and between the three parcels is only available from and through Cambridge.



Aerial photograph of the North Point area as it exists today

Previous Planning

In 2001, the Cambridge portion of North Point was part of a major planning and rezoning project conducted by the City of Cambridge, known as the East Cambridge Area Planning Study. The East Cambridge Planning Study was undertaken by the Cambridge Community Development Department and the Eastern Cambridge Planning Study Committee, with the assistance of a multi-disciplinary consultant team led by Goody, Clancy & Associates. The study was initiated in response to a citizen petition submitted to the Cambridge City Council in November 1999, asking for an 18-month development moratorium for residential and commercial projects above a certain size in East Cambridge. Neighborhood residents were motivated to seek the moratorium, which was approved by the City Council in January 2000, as a result of a number of large development proposals that were felt to be creating significant growth pressures and impacts throughout the City of Cambridge, and in East Cambridge in particular. The East Cambridge Planning Study was undertaken during this moratorium.

The study was completed in October 2001. Its recommendations formed the basis for the Cambridge Planning Board's East Cambridge Rezoning Petition, filed with the City Council in June 2001, and subsequently adopted. These recommendations became part of the City-wide rezoning adopted in February 2001, which excluded East Cambridge while the East Cambridge Planning Study was in progress. Two areas singled out for special treatment and visioning in the East Cambridge Planning Study were the U.S. Department of Transportation's Volpe Transportation Research Center site near Kendall Square, which is a candidate for major redevelopment and open space, and North Point. The East Cambridge Planning Study analysis of the North Point area, and the specific vision and recommendations developed for North Point, are summarized below.

The East Cambridge Planning Study establishes a number of "key themes and opportunities...for future planning" in East Cambridge based on analysis of existing urban design conditions. While these are intended to apply throughout the study area, they are particularly relevant to North Point given the major opportunity for new development in the district. These themes include the following:

- The historic block pattern of East Cambridge creates a walkable, pedestrian-scale environment, and is a useful model for large development sites.
- The creation of pleasant and accessible neighborhoods is closely tied to the continuity of pedestrian connections, emphasizing the importance of connecting to existing street grids and pathways.
- Well-designed civic buildings such as the Bulfinch Courthouse on Cambridge Street play a key role in the image and identity of existing neighborhoods and should be established in new development areas, where possible.
- The location of open space adjacent to other community facilities creates a strong interaction of uses that supports community life.
- Well-defined street walls, human-scale buildings, and windows at street level are essential to creating an attractive pedestrian environment.
- A critical mass of street-level retail is important in creating lively commercial districts serving adjacent developments, and should be encouraged where appropriate.

The East Cambridge Planning Study also notes that the dense residential fabric of East Cambridge offers very little opportunity for new public open space, suggesting that major new parks and recreational facilities will have to be developed outside the existing residential neighborhood, linked to the neighborhood by good pedestrian and bicycle connections. The key opportunities envisioned for such open space development are the Volpe Center site to the south, and North Point.

The planned North Point Park and North Point Wilds, part of the new riverfront open spaces defined in the New Charles River Basin Master Plan, will provide large new public open spaces and greatly

enhanced access to the river from North Point. In addition to these long-planned parks along the river, the East Cambridge Planning Study calls for several other public open space facilities in North Point:

- A bike and pedestrian path connection between North Point and the Linear Park through Davis Square.
- A tot lot for North Point.
- A neighborhood or community park for East Cambridge or North Point.

Like any community in the dense Boston metropolitan area, one of Cambridge's key concerns with respect to major development is the amount of additional traffic it will generate. A major planning goal in Cambridge, reflected in the East Cambridge Planning Study, is Auto Trip Reduction, achieved with a combination of land use and density policies and a reduced parking ratio. A 20% reduction in parking ratios is estimated to reduce auto mode share by 10% and overall auto trip generation by 20%. As traffic impact along the McGrath and O'Brien Highways is one of the areas in which North Point development will affect Somerville most directly, these Cambridge policies will benefit Somerville as well. The East Cambridge Planning Study also recommends that project proponents implement "significant demand management programs – above and beyond what is currently required under the City's Parking and Transportation Demand Management (PTDM) ordinance – and/or improve transit accessibility to a given area."

The transportation opportunities noted by the East Cambridge Planning Study are particularly relevant to North Point:

- The relocation of Lechmere station presents an opportunity to extend First Street to connect directly with Monsignor O'Brien Highway, which would encourage the use of First Street. This will be especially important as development occurs in North Point.
- Measures to ensure safe at-grade pedestrian and bicycle crossings of Memorial Drive and Msgr. O'Brien Highway.
- Improved transit access to the North Point area by the proposed Green Line extension and the proposed Urban Ring would ease congestion on O'Brien Highway and greatly enhance non-auto access to and from the study area.
- Pedestrian and bus links from North Point to the Bunker Hill Community College Station would provide access to the Orange Line from the study area.
- In addition to Lechmere, a number of the new MBTA bus routes proposed in Phase I of the Urban Ring would serve Kendall Station. Several of these routes would benefit from a link to Third Street at Broadway/Main streets.
- Truck traffic related improvements would help keep through truck traffic off residential streets.
- Off-road, multi-use paths could provide a significant transportation and recreation resource for the study area. Opportunities for such paths lie along the Grand Junction railroad right-of-way and at North Point, connecting the proposed Somerville regional bike path to the river. The City of Cambridge has committed funds for a feasibility study of the Grand Junction path in the fiscal year of 2001-02.
- City policy requires consideration of bike facilities on all streets as they are reconstructed and restriped.

North Point was identified early in the East Cambridge Planning Study as a focus area based on its significant development potential and likelihood for change. Substantial development has already occurred in North Point east of the Gilmore Bridge, with the 434 unit Museum Towers high-rise development and the EF Centre office building. The study notes that these developments, lacking an immediate context, bear "little relationship to the traditional, small-scale block pattern of East Cambridge." The East Cambridge Planning Study Composite Urban Design Goals diagram suggests the small block pattern, and the pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular connections between North Point and the existing East Cambridge neighborhood are the fundamental organizing concepts for the site.

The East Cambridge Planning Study notes that, while North Point is currently cut off from its nearby

context – by the rail yards in Somerville to the north, the O’Brien Highway to the south, and the Gilmore Bridge to the east – the site presents many opportunities:

- The potential for creation of a new residential neighborhood, providing housing opportunities for a variety of residents.
- The potential to connect East Cambridge (and by extension, Somerville) to the extensive new riverfront park development, particularly in conjunction with the relocation of the Green Line.
- The opportunity to create better connections to the Orange Line Bunker Hill stop through a walkable pedestrian neighborhood.
- The opportunity to create a significant amount of public open space in Eastern Cambridge.

The overall East Cambridge Planning Study Vision Statement and broad planning goals for Eastern Cambridge, (reproduced below) reiterate the opportunities described above. More detailed goals for urban design, open space, land use and density, housing, economic development, and transportation can be found in the East Cambridge Planning Study document. Although these goals are intended to apply to Eastern Cambridge as a whole, they are particularly relevant as descriptors of planning and urban design goals for North Point.

Eastern Cambridge is a remarkably diverse community of historic neighborhoods, state-of-the-art research facilities, a world-renowned university, a vibrant traditional main street, arts cinemas, neighborhood parks and Charles River frontage all within a short walk of each other. The resulting mix, which interweaves housing with research, single family houses with office towers, historic with cutting edge architecture, walking and bicycles with heavy vehicular traffic, and other contrasts of urban life, provides the basis for a uniquely vital community- a quality often sought but rarely achieved in other urban communities.

Yet this mix is also the source of tensions and conflicts. The core mission of this study is to preserve and enhance the benefits of Eastern Cambridge’s diversity, while managing and diminishing the accompanying negative impacts. The mission translates into broad goals that govern planning for future change in every part of Eastern Cambridge:

- Promote land use patterns that improve quality of life in residential neighborhoods and foster a vital public realm in mixed-use districts.
- Expand housing opportunities for a wide range of residents, across the community.
- Support economic development policies that address the needs of small and start-up businesses and people in need of jobs and public services.
- Shift transportation patterns toward more walking, transit use, and bicycle use, reducing reliance on automobiles.
- Meet the open space needs of current and future residents.
- Pursue urban design policies that enhance the character of residential neighborhoods, support creation of more lively pedestrian-friendly areas in mixed-use districts, and result in more attractive and convenient pedestrian connections between every part of Eastern Cambridge.

The East Cambridge Planning Study also establishes design guidelines that are intended to describe the desired form and character of future development throughout the East Cambridge Planning Study area, with particular goals established for North Point:

- Create a lively new mixed-use district with strong visual and pedestrian connections to East Cambridge. The new district should be a place to live, work, and enjoy a variety of parks and public spaces.
- Create a new east-west main street through the center of North Point, connecting East Cambridge with the future MDC park.
- Extend First Street into North Point to connect existing and new neighborhoods.
- Create a major new public park easily accessible from the relocated Lechmere T station, First Street, and O’Brien Highway.

- Create a new retail edge at the relocated Lechmere T station and at the intersection of First Street, Cambridge Street, and O'Brien Highway that will complement, not compete with, existing retail on Cambridge Street.

Additionally, the East Cambridge Planning Study makes development and policy recommendations in several areas, including open space, neighborhood transportation, retail strategy, and zoning relevant to North Point:

Open Space

Development of a community of several thousand residents and workers will create new open space needs, but also presents significant opportunities to create new open space. In addition to the planned MDC North Point parks along the Charles River, the East Cambridge Planning Study calls for a new central 2.5-acre open space and a series of smaller green spaces along the major east-west transportation spine through the district. This space is intended to serve residents of the broader community as well as of North Point itself. Development of North Point should also facilitate the creation of a pedestrian/ bicycle link between the Somerville Community Path and North Point Park – a “vital link in a regional connection.”

Transportation

North Point's development as a transit-oriented mixed-use community with a high proportion of residential use addresses the East Cambridge Planning Study's transportation goals of reducing new auto trips, influencing traffic movement, and enhancing non-auto mobility. Some of these goals are addressed through such zoning measures as reducing parking requirements (or limiting parking allowed) for new development.

Cambridge also requires transportation demand management measures that support alternatives to driving. Specific transportation recommendations for North Point include intercepting east-bound traffic bound for North Point along O'Brien Highway at the earliest opportunities, and improving pedestrian and bicycle connections across O'Brien Highway.

From a regional perspective, the East Cambridge Planning Study recognizes the importance of supporting planned public transportation improvements such as the Urban Ring and extension of the Green Line, to maximize system-wide transit accessibility. These projects, and especially the Green Line extension, are particularly important to Somerville as well.

Retail Strategy

The recommended retail development for North Point is proposed to be focused around the relocated Green Line station, and concentrated around the O'Brien Highway/First Street intersection. It is intended to complement, rather than compete with, the existing Cambridge Street retail environment. Street-level retail is also seen as enhancing neighborhood pedestrian activity and public safety. Zoning recommendations, as described above, are oriented in particular to limiting opportunities for big box development by limiting the size of any individual establishment. Retail in North Point is seen as likely to include a mix of regional retailers and independent stores, with a focus on convenience offerings, such as restaurants, convenience grocery, video, dry cleaning, coffee shops, flowers, sundries, and prepared foods. The East Cambridge Planning Study estimated the amount of retail supportable in North Point to be in the range of 35,000-50,000 square feet at full build-out.

Zoning

Key zoning recommendations for North Point, designed to encourage mixed-use development with a preponderance of residential use, are as follows:

- Require at least 65% residential development with a maximum of 35% commercial development and create a cap on non-residential parking for the district.
- Reduce automobile traffic generated by the site – by setting an FAR of 2.4 for a mixed-use project, but allowing FAR to increase to 3.0 as the percent of residential use increases, since residential uses generate less peak hour traffic.
- Reduce the parking required on site by 20% from the Citywide Rezoning Proposal and require corresponding auto vehicle trip reduction measures.
- Establish lower heights closer to the East Cambridge residential neighborhood and taller heights farther away.
- Encourage retail uses to support the new neighborhood that will complement, not compete with, existing retail on Cambridge Street. Retail is permitted on the street level of any building, with a maximum floor area for a single establishment of 10,000 square feet.
- Require the creation of a major new public park easily accessible from the relocated Lechmere T station.

Zoning recommendations also propose that:

- The first 50,000 square feet of retail within a 500-foot radius of the intersection of Cambridge and First Streets is exempt from the 35% commercial gross floor area limit.
- Maximum floor area for a single establishment is 10,000 square feet (no big boxes).
- Accessory parking is not required for street level retail (supports pedestrian and transit access rather than automobile).

In February 2003, the City of Somerville carried out the North Point Somerville Planning Study in response to a proposal for over 5 million square feet of mixed-use development at North Point. The City commissioned the study to look not only at the land area of North Point that was within Somerville, but also at contiguous areas along McGrath Highway in Brickbottom and in the Inner Belt district. The planning study examined existing conditions within the district, potential for future development, plans of neighboring municipalities, and proposed development at North Point. In preparation for the study, several stakeholder meetings were held to discuss the future of the land area within Somerville. Although the majority of the meetings were a reaction to previous planning and the proposed development, the participation from local stakeholders and the public helped to identify initial strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. In seeking to increase the city's commercial tax base, promoting commercial development became a major goal and during several of the stakeholder meetings there was a clear message that with any future development proposals, a focus on commercial development would be paramount.

The North Point Somerville Planning Study found that the majority of the planning recommendations of the East Cambridge Planning Study were also sound for the portions of North Point that were in Somerville. Similarly, it was found that the Cambridge's Zoning Ordinance, particularly in Article 13.70 (North Point PUD) was developed to be consistent with the recommendations for North Point found within the East Cambridge Planning Study and that the proposed development project was designed to meet both the policy objectives of the East Cambridge Planning Study and the guidance of the accompanying design guidelines created for North Point.

As a result of those findings, the North Point Somerville Planning Study recommended the creation of a new PUD overlay district to promote redevelopment on the Somerville portions of North Point that should include the following policies:

- Similar to existing PUD reviews in Somerville, the Planning Board should be the Special Permit Granting Authority, and should retain the authority to review and approve all proposals that take place within the municipal boundary of Somerville.
- While the Planning Board should deal with the specific portions of the development within Somerville, it should accept that the NPS portion of the project is part of a larger PUD that includes land in Boston and Cambridge, and should recognize that much of the flexibility traditionally associated with PUDs includes tradeoffs for height, parking, and open space that occur outside of Somerville, but which are part of an integrated project that meets specific overall design standards.
- Affordable Housing: Somerville should consider mirroring Cambridge's public benefit criteria for approval, which includes providing affordable housing in excess of the city-wide standard. Article 13 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, Inclusionary Housing, requires 12.5% of the units in developments of over 8 units to be affordable housing.
- Open Space: Since NPS is challenged by its unusual serpentine boundary, open space shall be reviewed for the overall development without consideration of municipal boundaries and consideration of the overall site plan. However, approval agreements should stipulate that all Somerville residents should have access to open space and any recreational facilities that may be developed thereon equal to that of Cambridge residents.
- Parking Requirements: In promoting a dense mixed-use urban development, it is recommended that PUD-NPS parking requirements be lower than existing zoning permits. NPS is located within 1,000 feet of rapid transit, which would reduce parking requirements for non-residential development by 20%; however the city should consider permitting an additional reduction to parking requirements for both residential and non-residential development in promoting a more transit-oriented development due to close proximity to rapid transit and to downtown destinations. These parking requirements should only be applied to PUD-NPS where lower parking requirements can be justified. Also, as recommended before, parking requirements should be reviewed without consideration of municipal boundaries and as a larger development parcel. This reasoning is similar to the current Somerville Ordinance (9.6.4), which requires parking spaces and loading bays to be reviewed as an entire PUD versus by individual parcels.
- As a result of lower parking requirements, it will be necessary to require a Transportation Demand Management Plan (TDM) for the approval of PUD-NPS. Similar to ASIPD, the applicant will be required to submit a set of procedures, policies, and practices that will reduce the number of single occupant vehicle trips traveling to or from NPS. The Director of Traffic and Parking shall approve a plan prior to the issuance of any permit.
- Similar to existing PUD requirements, a traffic analysis will be required for PUD-NPS. The analysis should include current traffic counts for streets surrounding the project, the existing capacity of those streets, projections of the amount of traffic that will be generated, and ability for the existing system to handle additional traffic.
- Use Requirements: Unlike with open space and parking issues PUD-NPS should specifically require a mixture of uses within Somerville land to promote commercial development. Parking and open space are not generally considered as primary uses.
- If the overall design and development standards of the North Point project, as they have been described in the preliminary design documents and DEIR, are acceptable to the Somerville Planning Board, review and approval of the proposed Spaulding and Slye Development should take place within the context of the overall PUD proposal. Notwithstanding the above guidelines and recommendations, final approval by the Somerville Planning Board of any development in NPS should be contingent upon a satisfactory resolution of a strategy for sharing the revenues and costs of such development among all relevant parties to the development – including the cities of Somerville and Cambridge (and possibly Boston), the MBTA, and the developer.
- At a minimum, an agreement between the cities of Cambridge and Somerville as to how municipal services are to be provided (costs) and real estate taxes allocated (revenues) should be established.

In 2013, the City of Somerville amended the Somerville Zoning Ordinance to enact the North Point Special District which built upon the previous planning and visioning work conducted by the cities of Cambridge and Somerville, numerous meetings with the current property owners of the remaining undeveloped portions of North Point, and with special consideration given to the goals, policies and

actions recommended by SomerVision, the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Somerville. The purpose of the North Point Special District is to establish regulations supporting the development of a comprehensively planned neighborhood of mixed-use, moderate- to high-density development within easy walking distance to transit with the following characteristics:

1. An interconnected street grid and comprehensive thoroughfare network that distributes multi-modal circulation throughout the entire North Point neighborhood;
2. Thoroughfares that accommodate all modes of transportation - pedestrians, bicycles, public transit, and private motor vehicles.
3. Thoroughfares that feature frequent intersections, on-street parking, and large street trees to promote safe vehicular operating speeds by modulating the appearance and feel of the street space to drivers;
4. Appealing physical connections to surrounding areas including East Cambridge, the Community College Orange Line T-Station via the Gilmore Bridge, MDC New Charles River Basin Park, and regional pathways;
5. Pedestrian infrastructure that is accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities;
6. A North First Street extension as the primary connection to East Cambridge;
7. A distribution of diverse civic space types to serve the various social needs of neighborhood residents, workers, and visitors, including a central green;
8. A retail oriented plaza in close proximity to the relocated Lechmere T-Station;
9. Primary uses distributed throughout the neighborhood so that the many activities of daily living can occur within walking distance to residences and workplaces;
10. A constrained supply of parking spaces to encourage the use of public transit, bicycles, and walking in lieu of automobiles.
11. A diverse supply of residential unit types, sizes, and price points that meets the life-long housing needs of the community.
12. Architecture and landscape design that spatially defines civic spaces and thoroughfares as outdoor rooms and corridors.

The special district utilizes a multi-step permitting process that requires Neighborhood Development Plans to be submitted and approved prior to the submittal of Design and Site Plans for individual sites in recognition of the real-world development process involved with building a complete new neighborhood.

3. Proposal:

The Applicant, CJUF III NorthPoint LLC, proposes to transform an existing unproductive area of Somerville into an integral part of a new and vibrant work-live-play urban community consistent with the goals identified in SomerVision for Transformational Mixed-Use areas. The Somerville portion of the project, which has land parcels both partially and wholly within Somerville, will incorporate a diverse mix of commercial uses including high-end office space, a grocery store, fitness center, and commercial parking. These uses will be balanced with an appropriate amount of ground-level retail as well as a combination of for sale and rental units located throughout the project site, including the Somerville portion.



Artist's rendering of a future North Point

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted; no comments received.

Traffic & Parking: Has been contacted; no comments received.

Lights and Lines: Has been contacted; no comments received.

Engineering: Has been contacted; no comments received.

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted; no comments received.

II. FINDINGS FOR NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN REVIEW (SZO §5.7 & §6.6.3):

Based on review of the submitted Neighborhood Development Plan, Staff finds that the proposal meets all of the requirements outlined in §6.6.3.A.3 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through the findings required by §6.6.3.A.3 in detail.

1. ***Staff finds that the submitted Neighborhood Development Plan demonstrates conformance to the adopted Master Plan of the City of Somerville, existing policy plans and standards established by the City, or to other plans deemed to be appropriate by the Planning Board.***

SomerVision, the comprehensive Master Plan of the City of Somerville, establishes a series of aspirational targets for economic development, open space improvement, housing growth, transportation, and land use detail below:

The SomerVision Numbers

- 30,000 New Jobs
- 125 New Acres of Publically-Accessible Open Space
- 6,000 New housing Units, 1,200 Permanently Affordable
- 50% of New Trips via, Transit, Bike, or Walking
- 85% of New Development in Transformative Areas (as identified by the SomerVision Map)

The submitted Neighborhood Development Plan contributes toward the first three of these aspirational targets as follows:

	Existing	Proposed
Dwelling Units:	0	226
Estimated Affordable Units:	0	28
Commercial Sq. Ft.:	0	425,000 sq. ft.
Estimated Employment:	0	1400
Publicly Accessible Open Space:	0	0.57 acres

In relationship to transportation mode share, the 2002 North Point Transportation Impact Study targeted person trips to and from uses within the North Point neighborhood by modes other than the automobile at 60% for Office & R&D, 90% for Retail, 48% for Residential, and 25% for Hotel – well within range of the SomerVision target when taking into consideration the build-out program proposed for the Somerville portions of North Point. Finally, North Point is located entirely with the area of the city identified as an “Area to Transform” on the SomerVision map, satisfying SomerVision’s goal for having new development be focused in predetermined Transformative areas of the city.

In addition to the contributing toward the SomerVision Numbers, the submitted Neighborhood Development Plan achieves a number of the Comprehensive Plan’s goal statements, including:

Neighborhoods:

- Foster vital, healthy, inclusive and distinctive urban neighborhoods that are the best possible places to live, work, play, do business, learn and serve.

Commercial Corridors, Squares, and Growth Districts:

- Make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.
- Transform key opportunity areas, such as Assembly Square, Inner Belt, Brickbottom, Boynton Yards and the southeastern portion of Union Square into dynamic, mixed-use and transit-oriented districts that serve as economic engines to compliment the neighborhoods of Somerville.
- Facilitate thoughtfully-designed, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use development and reuse opportunities in commercial corridors, squares and around transit stations that are sensitive to neighborhood context, and serve existing and future residents and businesses.

Resources:

- Design and maintain a healthy and attractive public realm (e.g., streets, sidewalks, and other public spaces) that fosters community connection.
- Create and program a network of vibrant public open spaces and shared use paths throughout the city that are multi-purpose, promote healthy living, and reflect changing recreational interests and cultural opportunities.

Transportation & Infrastructure:

- Expand bike and pedestrian use by transforming existing infrastructure with accommodations for all bicyclists and pedestrians, resulting in safe, accessible and well-connected networks.
- Manage parking supply and demand in a flexible, rational and innovative manner, to balance transportation, economic development and residential goals.

Housing:

- Preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups.
- Promote mixed-use, mixed-income transit-oriented development to provide new housing and employment options.

Staff deems the East Cambridge Planning Study, the East Cambridge Design Guidelines: North Point, and the PUD Master Plan approved by the City of Cambridge as applicable plans guiding development of the North Point area and finds the submitted Neighborhood Development Plan proposal in conformance with those documents.

2. Staff finds that the submitted Neighborhood Development Plan demonstrates consistency with the purpose of the North Point Special District and of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance in general.

The submitted Neighborhood Development Plan is consistent with the purpose of the North Point Special District which is: “to support the development of a comprehensively planned neighborhood of mixed-use, moderate- to high-density development within easy walking distance to transit and having the following characteristics:

1. An interconnected street grid and comprehensive thoroughfare network that distributes multi-modal circulation throughout the entire North Point neighborhood;
2. Thoroughfares that accommodate all modes of transportation - pedestrians, bicycles, public transit, and private motor vehicles.
3. Thoroughfares that feature frequent intersections, on-street parking, and large street trees to promote safe vehicular operating speeds by modulating the appearance and feel of the street space to drivers;
4. Appealing physical connections to surrounding areas including East Cambridge, the Community College Orange Line T-Station via the Gilmore Bridge, DCR New Charles River Basin Park, and regional pathways;
5. Pedestrian infrastructure that is accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities;

6. A North First Street extension as the primary connection to East Cambridge;
7. A distribution of diverse civic space types to serve the various social needs of neighborhood residents, workers, and visitors, including a public common;
8. A retail oriented plaza in close proximity to the relocated Lechmere T-Station;
9. Primary uses distributed throughout the neighborhood so that the many activities of daily living can occur within walking distance to residences and workplaces;
10. A constrained supply of parking spaces to encourage the use of public transit, bicycles, and walking in lieu of automobiles.
11. A diverse supply of residential unit types, sizes, and price points that meets the life-long housing needs of the community.
12. Architecture and landscape design that spatially defines civic spaces and thoroughfares as outdoor rooms and corridors.

The submitted Neighborhood Development Plan is also consistent with the general purpose of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes “to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to provide adequate light and air; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to encourage housing for persons of all income levels; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.”

3. Staff finds that the submitted Neighborhood Development Plan demonstrates compliance to the standards set forth in §6.6.4 Urban Design and §6.6.5 Thoroughfares.

Submittal requirements for Neighborhood Development Plan Review require the following plan drawings so that the proposed thoroughfare network and design of individual thoroughfares can be properly evaluated:

Requirement	Plan Sheet Provided
Proposed Block & Lot Plan	NDP-1
Existing Thoroughfare Network Plan	NDP-2
Proposed Thoroughfare Network Plan	NDP-3
Proposed Thoroughfare Layout & Geometry Plan	Appendix A
Proposed Cycling Infrastructure Plan	NDP-5
Proposed Civic Space Plan	NDP-6
Existing & Proposed Utilities Plan	NDP 7 & NDP 8
Proposed Retail Frontage Plan	NDP-9

The Applicant has also included plan sheet NDP-4, an enlarged detail of the proposed thoroughfares within Somerville.

6.6.4 Urban Design

§6.6.4.A. Thoroughfare Network

§6.6.4.A. requires that all thoroughfares intersect with other thoroughfares so that a network is formed, that thoroughfares align where possible with those on adjacent sites, and prohibits cul-du-sacs and other dead-end thoroughfares unless a waiver is granted on a case-by-case basis by the Planning Board.

Staff finds that the proposed thoroughfare network illustrated on the plan sheets included in the Neighborhood Development Plan complies with the intersection and alignment requirements of §6.6.4.A.

Staff acknowledges that the proposed thoroughfare plan includes a dead-end thoroughfare with a cul-du-sac (West Street). However, this thoroughfare is entirely within the municipal boundaries of the City of Cambridge and outside the jurisdiction of the City of Somerville. However, because the design of West Street has been proposed in such a manner that preserves the possibility of a bridge connection from Inner Belt Road to West Street, and the rest of North Point, while providing access to Lot A and the infill development already under construction at 22 Water Street, Staff finds that this thoroughfare segment is highly deserving of the waiver permitted under §6.6.4.A.3, had it been located at whole or in part within the City of Somerville.

§6.6.4.B. Block Structure

§6.6.4.B.1 requires that the thoroughfare network be structured to define blocks with a total perimeter no greater than 1,400 feet and individual block faces no greater than 500 feet. The Somerville Zoning Ordinance defines block as “the aggregate land area circumscribed by thoroughfares or other rights-of-way.” Pursuant to §6.6.4.B.2, the Applicant has requested a waiver from the requirements of §6.6.4.B.1. because the block containing developable lots within the City of Somerville abuts a rail right-of-way making strict adherence to the provision of §6.6.4.B.1 difficult while still maximizing developable land within Somerville. Figure 1 (below) demonstrates the perimeter run of the block in question

Staff recommends approval of the requested block face and block length waiver pursuant to §6.6.4.B.2 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

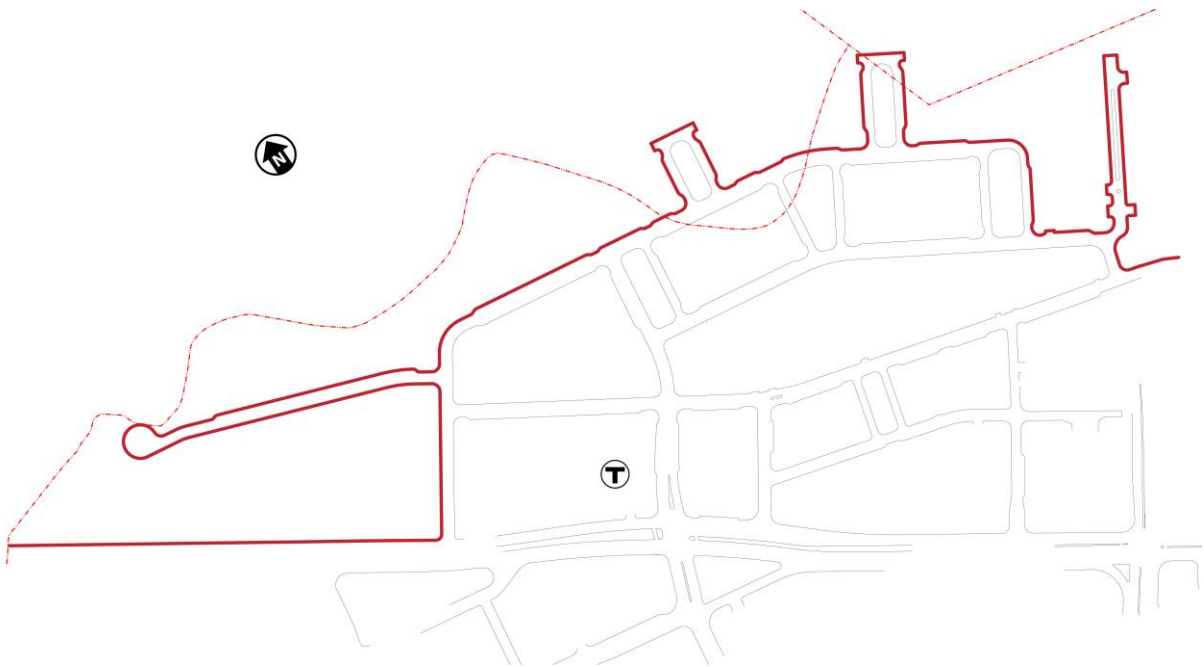


Figure 1

§6.6.4.C. Lots

§6.6.4.C.1 requires that lots be platted to have a primary frontage abutting a thoroughfare and a lot width between 30 feet and 500 feet maximum.

Staff finds that lots A, D, E, F, J, and K identified on plan sheet NDP-1 Proposed Lot and Block Plan all comply with the lot frontage standards of §6.6.4.B.

Staff finds that the lot width indicated for lots D, E, F, J, and K on plan sheet NDP-1 Proposed Lot and Block Plan complies with the lot width standards of §6.6.4.B.

Staff finds that the lot width indicated for Lot A on plan sheet NDP-1 Proposed Lot and Block Plan does not comply with the lot width standards of §6.6.4.B and recommends that the Planning Board attach a condition to the Neighborhood Development Plan Approval requiring Lot A to be subdivided accordingly.

The Applicant is within their right to apply for a Variance to develop a nonconforming lot at a later date. Approval of this Neighborhood Development Plan permits the Applicant to submit a subdivision plan reflecting the Block & Lot Plan illustrated on plan sheet NDP-1 according to §5.4 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

§6.6.4.D. Civic Space

§6.6.4.D.1 requires that at least 5% of the total land area of the development site be designed as publicly accessible civic space and be distributed throughout the site as a series of separate spaces of various types and sizes. §6.6.4.D.2 exempts civic space designed as a public common from the block size requirements of §6.6.4.B.1. Finally, §6.6.4.D.3 restricts civic spaces with only a north-facing exposure other sun from qualifying for the land area designed as civic space requirement of §6.6.4.D.1

Staff finds that the land area proposed to be designed as civic space complies with the requirements of §6.6.4.D.

Staff acknowledges that the Neighborhood Development Plan illustrates a civic space on numerous plan sheets that meets the definition of a public common according to the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. Although this civic space is entirely within the City of Cambridge, it would be exempt from the block face requirement of §6.6.4.B.1 automatically. There are no civic spaces included in the proposal with only a north-facing exposure to the sun.

Staff does not agree with the identification of Fuller Park, Baldwin Park, and West Street Green Space as “pocket parks” on Table 4, page 3-25 of the proposal, finding that the definition of a “public square” is more appropriate to these spaces as shown on the submitted plan sheets. The SZO defines public square as “a civic space type for unstructured recreation and civic purposes, free standing in the block pattern, with landscape consisting of formally disposed lawns, paths, and trees” and pocket park as “a civic space type designed for unstructured recreation, integrated as part of a block/lot or located internal to a block/lot, consisting of greenery and a place to sit outdoors for adults, and spatially defined by surrounding buildings.” The specific design of individual civic spaces is not within the scope of the Neighborhood Development Plan Review process because it can be more properly addressed during the Design & Site Plan Review process required for each individual civic space. Staff anticipate resolving this discrepancy with the Applicant at that time.

§6.6.4.B. Build Out

Staff finds that the build-out projections indicated on page 3-24 of the Neighborhood Development Plan comply with the requirements of §6.6.4.E.

6.6.5 Thoroughfares

Thoroughfare is defined in Article 2 of the SZO as “a way for use by vehicular and pedestrian traffic and providing access to lots and open spaces.” Plan sheet NDP-3 does not identify street segments abutting Fuller Park, Dix Park, Baldwin Park, the segment between the North First Street green space and Lot J, or the segment marked private way between the green space abutting Child Street and Lot N as thoroughfares.

The enlarged detail of proposed thoroughfares within Somerville shown on plan sheet NDP-4 illustrates design details (street trees, lane markings, crosswalks, etc) for thoroughfare across the illustration, regardless of identification by the Applicant as thoroughfares on the proposed thoroughfare network plan of plan sheet NDP-3. Similarly, the unidentified segments are included on the plan sheets identifying proposed cycling infrastructure and major and minor pedestrian routes in relation to proposed retail frontage.

Staff finds that the street segments mentioned above, both by reason of definition and their inclusion by the Applicant on other plan sheets aside from NDP-3, are thoroughfares and subject to the provisions of §6.6.5 Thoroughfares.

§6.6.5.A requires that all thoroughfares include vehicular lanes and sidewalks.

Staff finds that the proposed thoroughfares identified in the Neighborhood Development Plan submittal comply with the provisions of §6.6.5.A.

§6.6.5.B requires that all thoroughfares be designed and constructed in accordance with the City of Somerville’s adopted thoroughfare design standards or, In the absence of adopted standards, that thoroughfares be designed and constructed in accordance to standards deemed to be appropriate by the Planning Board.

§6.6.3.1.B prohibits the construction or reconstruction of thoroughfares until a design and site plan has been approved by the Planning Board. The Applicant has chosen not to simultaneously submit Design & Site Plan applications for the thoroughfares proposed in the Neighborhood Development Plan submittal. As a result, City standards referenced in §6.6.5.B related to the engineering and design of thoroughfares are not enforced at this time. In seeking development review for lots within the City of Cambridge, the Applicant has typically submitted plan documentation for individual development parcels and the abutting thoroughfares that provide access to the site for review at the same time. The Staff anticipates a similar process and expects the Applicant to submit Design & Site Plan Review applications for the proposed thoroughfares at a late date.

Staff recommends that the Planning Board attach a condition to the Neighborhood Development Plan Approval limiting approval of the proposed thoroughfares to the general alignment, connectivity, right-of-way width, and geometry of the proposed thoroughfares.

§6.6.5.C identifies specific dimensional standards for motor vehicle travel lands, motor vehicle parking lanes, bike lanes, sidewalks, sidewalk extensions, pedestrian crosswalks, and driveways & alley crossings.

Staff finds that the proposed thoroughfares identified in the Neighborhood Development Plan submittal comply with the provisions of §6.6.5.C.

§6.6.5.D permits a waiver to be granted from the requirements of §6.6.5.C at the discretion of the Planning Board for any thoroughfare designed as a “close.” Close is defined in the Somerville Zoning Ordinance as “a one-way thoroughfare surrounding a civic space providing vehicular access to abutting lots.” Staff has determined that the thoroughfare segment abutting Fuller Park meets the definition of a Close. However, a waiver has not been requested by the Applicant and Staff believes such a request would be unnecessary for the thoroughfare as proposed so long as the motor vehicle travel lands, motor vehicle parking lanes, bike lanes, sidewalks, sidewalk extensions, pedestrian crosswalks, and driveways & alley crossings meet the standards of §6.6.5.C.

§6.6.5.E requires all water and sewer utilities, storm water management infrastructure, public lighting, and public furniture be designed and constructed according to criteria established by relevant City departments and/or adopted by the Planning Board.

The Applicant is not seeking Design & Site Plan Approval for construction of the proposed thoroughfares at this time.

Staff recommends that the Planning Board attach a condition to the Neighborhood Development Plan Approval requiring engineering plans to be submitted to the Planning Director and the City Engineer for approval of any water and sewer utilities or storm water management infrastructure that does not correspond with thoroughfare construction to ensure compliance to required standards.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Neighborhood Development Plan Review under §5.7 & §6.6.3

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the submitted **NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN**.

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes		
1	Approval is for the North Point Neighborhood Development Plan. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	DSP/BP/CO	Planning/ISD			
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>September 11, 2014</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices</td> </tr> <tr> <td>September 11, 2014</td> <td>Plan Sheets: NDP1 - NDP9 Appendix A</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission
Date (Stamp Date)	Submission					
September 11, 2014	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices					
September 11, 2014	Plan Sheets: NDP1 - NDP9 Appendix A					
Any changes to the approved neighborhood development plan that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive approval from the Planning Board.						
Lot Size						
2	Lot A must be subdivided to comply with the lot width standards of §6.6.4.C.1	DSP	Planning			
Thoroughfares						
3	Approval is limited to the general alignment, connectivity, right-of-way width, and geometry of the proposed thoroughfares only. Construction of thoroughfare requires an approved Design & Site Plan by the Planning Board	Prior to trench permit for roadway construction	Planning/ Engineering			
4	The Applicant must submit engineering plans to the Planning Director and the City Engineer for approval of any water and sewer utilities or storm water management infrastructure that does not correspond to with the construction of a thoroughfare to ensure compliance to required standards.	Prior to trench permit for roadway construction	Planning/ Engineering			