



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2013-41
Date: August 29, 2013
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 90 Washington Street

Applicant Name: Cobble Hill Center LLC

Applicant Address: 150 Mount Vernon Street, Suite 520, Boston, MA 02125

Property Owner Name: Cobble Hill Apartments Company

Property Owner Address: 150 Mount Vernon Street, Suite 520, Boston, MA 02125

Agent Name: Richard G. Di Girolamo, Esq.

Agent Address: 424 Broadway

Alderman: Maureen Bastardi

Legal Notice: Applicant, Cobble Hill Center LLC, and Owner, Cobble Hill Apartments Company, seek a Special Permit with Site Plan Review under SZO §7.11.1.c to construct 159 dwelling units with a ground floor commercial component, a Special Permit under SZO §9.13.d to park on a separate lot; and a Special Permit under SZO §9.13.e for shared parking. The Applicant and Owner also seek a Variance under SZO §8.5.F for height, and a Variance under SZO §9.5.1.a for parking relief. BB zone. Ward 1.

Zoning District/Ward: BB zone / Ward 1

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit with Site Plan Review under SZO §7.11.1.c; Special Permit under SZO §9.13.d; Special Permit under SZO §9.13.e; Variance under SZO §8.5.F; and a Variance under SZO §9.5.1.a

Date of Application: June 11, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **Wednesday, September 18, 2013**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property was recently subdivided (PB 2013-03), but previously consisted of a 437,090 square foot parcel that composed the Cobble Hill Apartments, four multi-story



buildings for senior housing, and a single-story commercial strip mall. The approved subdivision divided the lot into a 173,748 square foot lot and a 263,371 square foot lot. The land is located between East Somerville and Inner Belt, at the corner of Washington Street and New Washington Street. The 173,748 square foot parcel houses the existing strip mall while the 263,371 square foot parcel is located farther east and will continue to operate as senior housing.

The existing commercial strip mall is 12,500 gross square feet with a 0.07 floor area ratio. The landscape and pervious areas compose 60% of the lot while the ground coverage is 7.2% (see subdivision plan). The existing structure is setback 32 feet from Washington Street and 29 feet from New Washington Street. The parking lot is accessible by two curb cuts along Washington Street with approximately 57 parking stalls, which includes three handicap accessible spaces.



84-90 Washington Street, aerial view

According to the soil survey, the site is classified as Urban Land, which refers to land which has been previously excavated and filled. Borings illustrate that subsurface soils consist of sand with gravel, clays, brick, concrete and coal/coal ash while groundwater is located approximately 8-10 feet below grade. The stormwater runoff for this site, which has a general rolling topography, either flows offsite or is captured in a series of catch basins and routed to the City's closed drainage system. None of the current runoff is treated or detained prior to discharge offsite.

This site, as part of the Washington Street corridor, has been identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan and the Inner Belt/Brickbottom neighborhood plan as an area that should be redeveloped with the coming Green Line station. In the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan the site is labeled as a transformational area. The City is currently working on a Inner Belt and Brickbottom Plan (IBB Plan) or "Urban Streetscape and Adaptive Re-Use Plan for the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts" that is to be completed by the end of 2013. Due to the Green Line Extension project moving into the final design phase and contracts awarded momentarily for construction of the first three stations (Lechmere, Washington Street, and Union Square), this plan will provide transportation and zoning recommendations that are to coincide with the opening of the Green Line in Somerville. The IBB Plan will recommend a community-based vision to address a framework for the public realm, multi-modal infrastructure, and incentives or goals regarding mixed-use development and a reduced or shared parking requirement. One early recommendation suggested the subdivision of this large block to create a new street with a more appropriate pedestrian scale.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to demolish the existing single-story strip mall and to construct 159 dwelling units with a ground floor commercial component of approximately 13,000 square feet. The building would have six stories and be approximately 177,580 gross square feet. In addition, a new

Two pedestrian paths have been created that lead from the parking lot along Washington Street to the sidewalk for easy access to the proposed development. One path leads from the northwest corner of this lot to the north corner of Washington Street and the new road. This landscape area, approximately 416 square feet, will incorporate ornamental benches and a 5' wide pedestrian cut-through as well as shrubs, trees, and grass. While the remaining evergreen trees would be removed, the proposed landscaping is more appropriate for an urban corridor and would encourage pedestrian use of this space. The second path is located on the adjacent Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and leads from the south end of the parking lot, or north side of Building #84, to the sidewalk which has a crosswalk.

Residential Units

The development will be composed of 159 residential units that would be located on floors one through six. Of the total units, studio units will compose 16%, or 25 units; one-bedroom units will compose 43%, or 69 units; one-bedroom with study units will compose 13%, or 20 units; and two-bedroom units will compose 28%, or 45 units. Studio units are approximately 500 square feet; one bedroom units are 690 square feet; one bedroom with study units are 800-830 square feet; and two bedroom units are either approximately 950 square feet. While the unit types are dispersed throughout each floor, the one-bedroom with study units composes the west end corner units and interior southeast corner units while the two-bedroom units compose the northeast corner units as well as the exterior southeast corner units. There are four residential units located along the private street that are one-bedroom units and are designed to function similar to an artist live/work studio. The units are on the ground floor and are directly accessible to pedestrian, but not directly located on the main street. The primary residential entrance would be on Washington Street, located adjacent to the east end balconies, at the west end of the lobby. The interior plan would locate a stair well near either end of the building and at the interior corner middle at the back of the lounge. Common areas for the residential component of the project consist of the lobby, a lounge, fitness room, mail room, and bike room with a capacity for 80 bikes. Combined, these common areas compose approximately 5,000 square feet of the ground floor.

Commercial Space

The proposed project would be comprised of five ground level retail spaces that range from 2,052 square feet to 3,154 square feet, for a total of 12,976 square feet. These retail spaces would be primarily accessible from Washington Street; though, depending upon how these spaces are divided, access to corner units could also be provided from New Washington Street and/or the new private street at the east end of the development. The retail entrances would be interspersed throughout the façade depending upon the length of storefront and amount of retail space.

Landscaping

Landscaping would include a variety of trees, shrubs and plantings located along the sidewalks, within the plaza, adjacent to the rear façade of the structure and within the parking lot. The pedestrian plaza, to be located on the corner near the future MBTA Green Line Station, would be approximately 7,750 square feet and would incorporate bollards, 18" high seat walls, raised planters of varying heights, ground cover plantings, trees, and ornamental benches. The area that constitutes the plaza will be articulated through the proposed pavers and the circular geometric shape these pavers will create. The raised planters with seating would serve to give the plaza definition. Staff has conditioned that the final materials to be used in the plaza shall be reviewed by the Design Review Committee and approved by Staff. The final planting selections shall also be approved by Planning Staff, prior to construction of the plaza.

Parking & Traffic

The project proposes a parking lot behind the structure comprised of 131 spaces. This includes 4 handicap accessible parking spaces, 15 compact parking spaces measuring 8'x16' (numbered 85-99 and 104-108), and an 18 foot fire lane located along the interior of the building at the western end. The fire lane will be

clearly marked but not striped as this is also a driving lane for use within the parking lot. A pedestrian path would be located near the center of the lot and landscaping, which includes deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, and groundcover as well as streetlights, would be located in multiple islands throughout the lot to break up the visual impact and to add green space. These spaces would be not be assigned spaces, so as to be available on a first come-first serve basis to residents of the development.

A small parking lot east of the development, located along Washington Street, would provide parking for 34 vehicles. This entire parking lot will be shared between the residential and commercial uses of the proposed development. However, the logistics for how this shared parking lot will operate has been conditioned by Staff to be determined prior to receiving a building permit. A portion of this parking lot is located on the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel; therefore, a Special Permit to park on a separate lot is necessary. Two pedestrian paths have been created that lead from this parking lot, for easy access to the proposed development. One path leads from the northwest corner of this lot, across the landscaping, to the north corner of Washington Street and the new road. This landscape area, approximately 416 square feet, will incorporate ornamental benches and a 5' wide pedestrian cut-through as well as shrubs, trees, and grass. The second path is located on the adjacent Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and leads from the south end of the parking lot, or north side of Building #84, to the sidewalk which has a crosswalk.

The new private road, constructed to divide this large parcel, would also locate 17 parallel parking stalls on either side. Some spaces located on the east side of this new road are also located on the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and require a Special Permit for parking on a separate parcel. These parallel parking stalls would be for use by the residents of the proposed development.

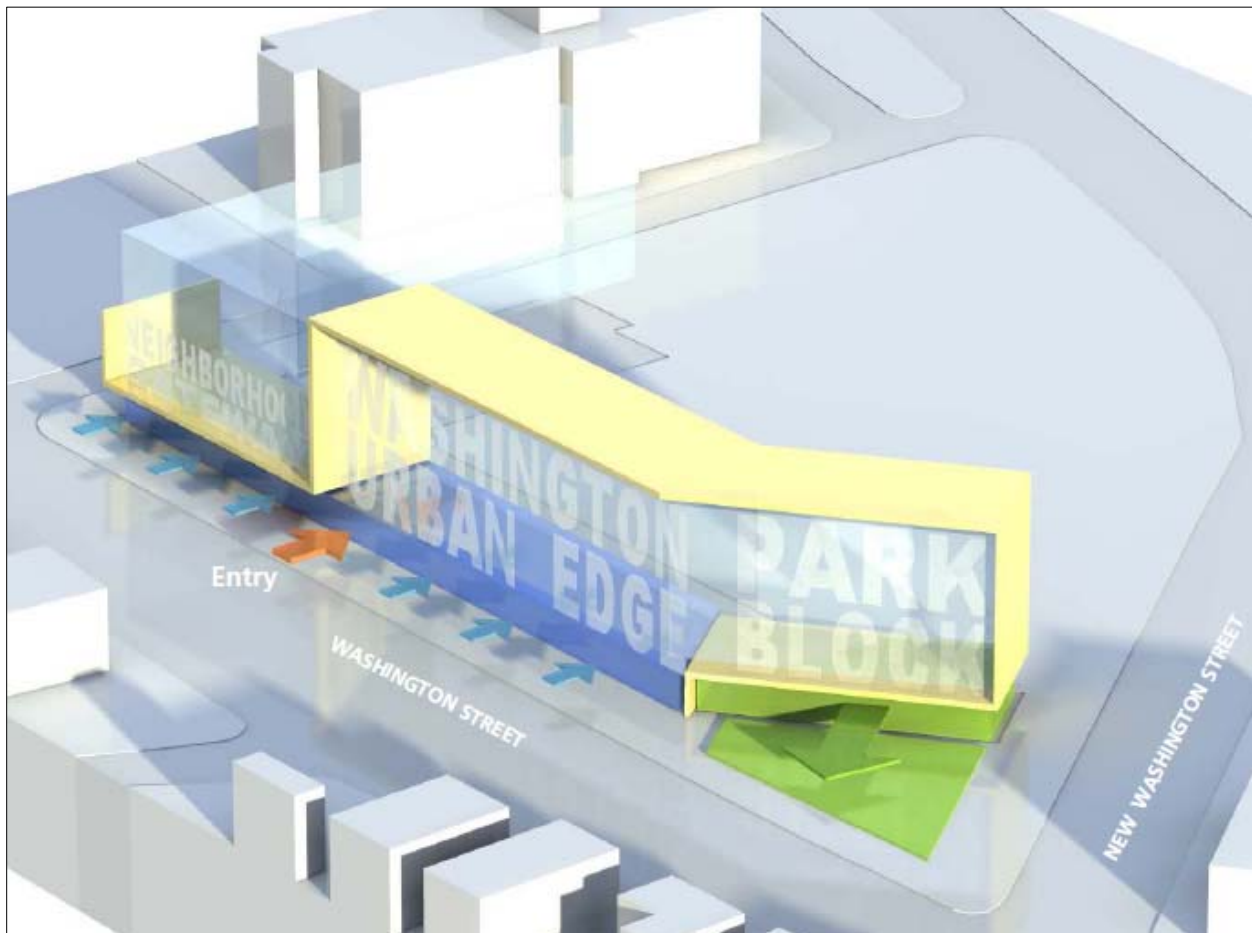
There is also land located at the southeast portion of the development site which has been designated as a potential future parking lot for 55 additional parking spaces. A condition requires that a parking study is conducted one year after full occupancy of the proposed project to determine if the overflow parking is constructed to provide an additional 55 parking spaces. Furthermore, this parking lot will incorporate 11 compact parking stalls and also extends onto the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and requires Special Permit approval to park on a separate lot, which is included within this proposal.

Currently, Cobble Hill Apartments has 92 standard parking spaces and 30 handicap accessible spaces for a total of 122 parking spaces. Due to the proposed development project, which necessitates a Special Permit for parking on a separate lot, the parking plan for the Cobble Hill Apartments has been modified. The new parking plan relocates all 122 parking spaces within the parcel and includes two additional parking spaces.

Building Design & Materials

The building is proposed to be a wood frame construction that is six stories in height. The materials that would compose this structure are Hardie Artisan (fiber cement) lap siding, a fiber cement panel, a metal panel system, lapped metal siding, a colored and wood-grain resin panel, and brick. The windows are composed of a metal frame with operable glass openings. Final materials are conditioned to be reviewed by the Design Review Committee and approved by Planning Staff. The structure would be divided into three main massing components: the East Block, the Middle Block, and the West Block. The use of a single "ribbon" element, which is a flush laid metal panel, unifies the individual massings into one building expression (see rendering below). This ribbon serves to define the scale and purpose of each of the three masses. The ribbon reduces the scale of the "Neighborhood Gateway" block, located farthest from the transit station, as the character of the building is related more directly to the scale of the neighborhood. The ribbon anchors the "Washington Urban Edge" block, located in the center, as an active urban edge which introduces a new scale with retail and the main residential entrance. The Middle Block is also highly visible from the new transit station; therefore, this Block will begin to establish a sense of

place through association of the architecture with accessibility to the transit station. Last, the ribbon shelters the commercial component of the “Park Block,” located nearest the Green Line Station in front of the plaza, and is configured to encourage views of the plaza and open space.



Rendering by DiMella Shaffer Architecture illustrating three individual massings and the ribbon component.

The East Block, or “Neighborhood Gateway,” is primarily composed of Hardie Artisan lap siding with a complex yet consistent rhythm of windows and a wood-grain resin panel on the residential floors (2-6). The first floor has a glass and metal retail storefront system that extends around the corner to the new road. The ribbon element also extends around the corner, extending up through the third floor. To focus the eye lower than the full six stories of height, the ribbon projects over the sidewalk, and to create shadow and texture, the projection is composed of a flush metal panel system and incorporates two balconies.

The Middle Block, or “Washington Urban Edge,” is also composed of a lapped metal siding with a central projecting component, which extends from the second through the five floors. Both ends of this massing are predominantly composed of glazed curtain wall with balconies. This glazing serves to articulate the residential entry at the east end and views of the park and transit station at the west end. The rhythm of the windows and wood grain resin panel are similar to the East Block in that the rhythm is complex yet consistent; however, the rhythm highlights the vertical expression on this massing due to the two story height of the lapped metal siding and wood grain resin panels.

The West Block, or “Park Block,” continues the rhythm of windows and materials as well as vertical expression, but is oriented to encourage views of the plaza and, therefore, is recessed from the street front. This Block also offers triangular balconies that are oriented to follow the Washington streetscape.

The left massing component of the east elevation, fronting the new private road, is primarily composed of brick and flush fiber cement panels. Floors one through five are composed of brick while the top floor is recessed slightly and composed of fiber cement panels, which creates a “top” for this component of the building. The window system is consistent with the Washington Street façades, but the rhythm is more clear and recognizable. Residential units intended to be live/work spaces for artists are accessible from the street on this elevation

The interior, or rear elevation, is predominantly fiber cement lap siding with fiber cement panels used for the sixth floor, which is also slightly recessed. The window system and inset colored resin panels create a consistently complex rhythm that continues to unify and create regularity for the building expression as a whole. The residential components of the first floor have been articulated with glass, which articulates the entrance and lobby, fitness room, and stairwell.

Lighting and Signage

The building will have wall-mounted fixtures located on each façade of the development for safety and security purposes as well as the highlight the building itself. The actual fixtures will be subject to review by the Design Review Committee and approval by Planning Staff. The address for the development, 90 Washington Street, will be articulated on the primary façade, located on the vertical portion of the ribbon element that faces east. Signage for the retail units will be located on the sign band above each individual storefront.

Trash & Utilities

Four of five commercial spaces would have access to a rear corridor which would access a trash and loading area on the west end of the building while the fifth space would have access to a trash loading area on the east end of the building. The interior corner of the building would also house two additional trash/loading areas, one for the commercial unit and the other for residents. Mechanicals would be located on the ground floor in the southeast corner of the building as well as on the rooftop.

3. Nature of Application: This portion of Washington Street is currently located in a Business B zoning district. While this district allows for some density and height the purpose of the district is generally auto-oriented and, therefore, not appropriate for a pedestrian and transit-oriented development that is currently planned for the area. While this current zoning does not fulfill the intent of a future transit station neighborhood, below is an explanation of how the project meets or does not meet the existing zoning requirements.

Use

In accordance with the SZO §7.11.1.c, a Special Permit with Site Plan Review is required to construct more than seven dwelling units in the BB district. Office uses (§7.11.7) less than 5,000 square feet would generally be as-of-right uses while most business services (§7.11.8) and sales or rental of goods or equipment (§7.11.9) less than 5,000 square feet are also as-of-right uses in a BB district. The five retail spaces are all significantly less than 5,000; therefore, the uses going into these retail spaces would likely be by-right. When tenants are sought the allowed uses and parking requirements will be required to be met or if special permits or variances are required, they will return to the Board for approval at that time.

Dimensional Requirements

The proposal complies with most of the dimensional requirements of the BB zoning district, with the exception of height and parking. Currently, the allowed height limit in a BB district is 50 feet; therefore, a Variance is required under SZO §8.5.F to construct a building that is 69 feet in height. The ground coverage of the project would continue to conform to the SZO but would increase from 7% to 17.4%. The proposed structure would be 177,580 gross square feet with a net floor area that is approximately 142,064 square feet (80% of gross square feet) which creates a 0.82 floor area ratio. The proposed 173,748 square foot parcel would create 477 feet of frontage along Washington Street, 190 feet of frontage along New Washington Street, and 225 feet along the new private road.

| Dimension | Required | Parcel – Existing | Parcel – Proposed |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Min Lot Size | None | 173,748 (3.9 acres) | 173,748 (3.9 acres) |
| Lot Area per Dwelling Unit | 1000 sf | No residential | 1092 square feet |
| Max Ground Coverage | 80% | +/- 7.2% | +/- 17.4% |
| Min Landscaped Area | 10% | +/- 60.0% | +/- 32.2% |
| Floor Area Ratio | 2.0 | +/- 0.07 | +/- 0.82 |
| Height | 50 feet | +/- 15 ft | +/- 69 feet |
| Setbacks | Front – 15 Rear – 20 ft for 6-story building Side – NA | Front +/-32 ft to Washington St / +/-29 ft to New Washington St Rear NA Side +/-144 ft | Front +/-15 ft to Washington St City sidewalk / +/-28.4 ft to New Washington St City sidewalk Rear NA Side +/-39.2 ft |
| Frontage | None | 596.42 on Washington Street | 477' on Washington St 190' on New Washington St 225' on new road |
| # Parking Spaces | Dependent on use | 57 for retail 37 for Cobble Hill Apts | 306 required / 182 proposed with 234 shared and an additional 55 possible with land banking |

Affordable Housing

Projects in the BB zoning district are subject to a 12.5% inclusionary housing requirement. For the proposed project, this figure translates into 20 affordable units (19.875 is rounded up to 20) at a location where none currently exist today. These 20 permanently affordable units will be made available to households in accordance with the City's inclusionary housing ordinance.

Parking and Loading Requirements

The project incorporates 131 on-site parking spaces, primarily for the residential component, although the 34 spaces located in the adjacent parking lot will be shared with the retail component and 17 spaces would be located along the new private road. While 306 parking spaces are required for the project as currently proposed, this calculation does not account for the proximity to transit, which would be accounted for once the zoning requirement is updated to reflect the current needs and goals of the City, as outlined in the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan.

As the existing parking requirement is 1.0 space for studio units, 1.5 spaces for one or two bedroom units, and 1.0 space for every 250 square feet of retail space, the proposed project requires 306 parking spaces. Since the project proposes 182 spaces with 34 spaces of shared parking, a Variance under SZO §9.5.1.a is required for 90 spaces of parking relief. In addition, as multiple parking spaces are partially located on the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel, a Special Permit under SZO §9.13.d is required to park on a separate lot. Last, the request to share 34 parking spaces between the residential and retail components requires Special Permit approval under SZO §9.13.e.

The project proposes three rear trash/loading areas which exceed the requirements for this project as none are actually required. There are no loading requirements for residential uses and as there are no retail spaces over 5,000 square feet, the retail also not require a loading dock.

Throughout the site along the street front, there will be 11 public single loop bicycle racks, which will accommodate 22 bicycles and far exceeds the requirement of 5. The residential component provides interior bike parking for up to 80 bikes, which also far exceeds the requirement of 53.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of uses and building types. A residential neighborhood is located north of the project site which is composed of two- and three-story dwellings while auto-oriented uses extend along Washington Street. Industrial buildings and uses are located south of the project site, and rail road tracks separate Cobble Hill from the Inner Belt area. The future Green Line Station at Washington Street will be a located one block west of the project site. The Holiday Inn Hotel and other commercial and industrial uses are located east of the project site.

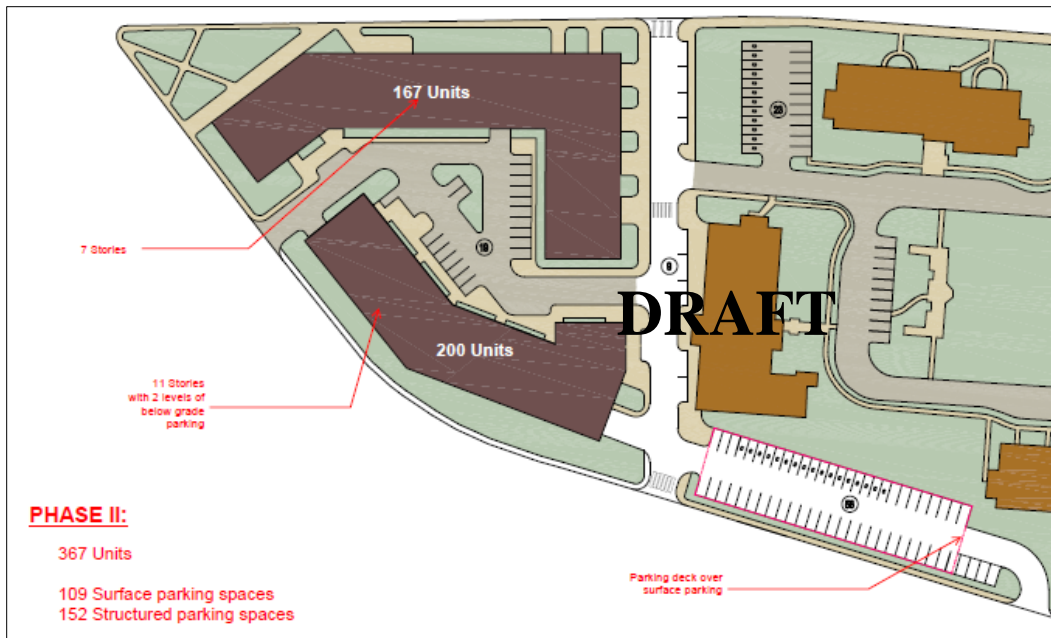
The road network that surrounds this parcel is composed of McGrath Highway/Route 28, two signalized intersections and several unsignalized intersections. McGrath Highway is located less than one mile west past the railroad tracks while the two signalized intersections are located at the intersection of McGrath and Washington and east of the subject parcel, at the intersection of Washington and Inner Belt Road by the Holiday Inn Hotel. This site is also served by public transit, being located less than a ½ mile from the MBTA Sullivan Square Station. Bus service is also readily accessible by Routes 86, 91 and CT2 directly in front of the project site.

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan discusses that the area north of the subject parcel is an area to enhance and conserve while the areas south and west of the railroad tracks, as well as the subject parcel, should be transformed into dynamic, mixed-use and transit-oriented districts to facilitate economic growth and complement the existing neighborhoods. Similarly, the IBB Plan, to be complete by the end of 2013, proposes that this transformational area be the focus of new development. As this portion of the Washington Street corridor would serve as the Inner Belt Gateway, facilitating a sense of place, multi-modal infrastructure and long-term, high value mixed-use would be a primary goal.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal will comply with the minimum lot area per dwelling unit (1,093 square feet per unit), ground coverage (17.4%), landscaped area (32%) and the floor area ratio (0.81) as well as setback requirements. The residential use requires a Special Permit with Site Plan Review; however, this is to ensure the site is designed to appropriately integrate the 159 dwelling units into the site while still allowing room for open space, landscaping, parking, etc. As the retail spaces are all less than 5,000 square feet, the uses that are likely to utilize these spaces will generally be as-of-right uses and would not require permits other than a building permit, though parking would need to be addressed under the existing zoning district when the retail spaces are tenanted.

The proposal will redevelop the subject parcel in a manner to be consistent with the purpose of the planning studies of the area but does not comply fully with the current dimensional requirements of the

zoning district. A future zoning district would likely be similar to a Transit-Oriented Development district (TOD) that permits a larger building scale than what currently exists, as this is a gateway and place-making corridor. The parking requirements for a TOD would likely be reduced due to the pedestrian and transit-oriented nature of this area. Reduced and shared parking incentives, an increase in bicycle parking requirements, and a prerequisite to add to the network of public places, such as plazas and green space, would also likely be required in this future district. Therefore, while the impacts of this proposal are not necessarily aligned with what the current zoning allows and requires, this project will begin the transformation of this area and corridor that is called for in the SomerVision plan as well as the yet to be released IBB Plan. Consequently, if a zoning change occurs to reflect the proximity and access to rapid transit, a Phase II of the development, which has yet to be fully developed, could be constructed; however, this would be largely dependant upon the parking requirements (see draft side plan below).



Draft site plan for a Phase II development at the subject development site.

The proposed development would be a mixed-use, transit-oriented development with well-designed pedestrian access near the future MBTA Green Line Washington Street Station. As the project will redevelop an underutilized parcel and replace incompatible development with compatible mixed-use development that creates a pedestrian oriented atmosphere, this project will improve the streetscape by providing an attractive and contextual building that creates a street wall along the Washington Street corridor where there currently are a number of auto-oriented buildings and parking lots. This will serve to provide more retail opportunity and pedestrian activity which should serve to incentivize investment along this corridor. The retail frontage and pedestrian activity that activates the proposed street-front building will begin to mitigate the auto-orientation of the expansive right-of-way on Broadway to create a pedestrian friendly commercial corridor that has a public realm and is transit-oriented.

The various articles and studies that discuss how to create walkable corridors and provide a level of comfort to residents when walking along fast moving urban streets often refer to buildings height, which is determined as a ratio dependent upon the combined width of the sidewalk and street. An essential street quality is definition, which is created by building boundaries that delineate the street edge, maintain eyes on the street, and create a sense of place. The combined width of a sidewalk and street determines building height for street definition; therefore, wider streets require taller buildings to create a

comfortable definition. The Washington Street width near the project site ranges from 80-100 feet while the sidewalk ranges from 5-10 feet, for a total of 90-120 feet wide. The current planning profession operates with the general understanding that a street with a ratio of 1:2 constitutes strong definition. Applying this principle to the project quantifies that the proposed building would provide a strong definition for this portion of the Washington Street corridor.

The residential component of this project will increase the number of residents in this corridor resulting in an increased level of pedestrian activity to support the existing and new businesses. This housing will also help meet the demand for housing identified in the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan and in urban areas near transit. In the IBB Plan, discussion around rezoning this corridor addressed the location where infill or redevelopment was desired, such as the subject parcel. The intent of both SomerVision and the resulting IBB Plan are to increase housing in certain redevelopment or transformational areas in an effort to meet the increasing housing demand and retain the existing neighborhoods. This increase in housing supply within such close proximity to both the future Green Line and the existing Orange Line stations will help reduce spikes in housing prices as well as make the surrounding neighborhood more desirable due to an increase in neighborhood amenities and built environment improvements. As housing prices in Somerville have remained consistent in areas with easy access to walkable centers, this proposal is among the first along this portion of the Washington Street corridor, which should incentivize redevelopment and other neighborhood improvements to enhance the pedestrian quality, improve neighborhood amenities, and create a clear sense of place.

The proposal will also increase the supply of housing and affordable housing units within the City, specifically near the future Washington Street Station and the existing Sullivan Square Station while continuing to provide commercial space, a more efficient parking solution and location, and usable open space that will help create a public realm and increase pedestrian activity.

Traffic

A study regarding the impact to traffic was submitted by the Applicant. This study evaluated existing conditions, projected future traffic volumes without the proposed project, projected future traffic volumes with the proposed project, and an analysis of the potential traffic impacts associated with the development. Existing conditions include roadway and intersection geometry, traffic control inventory, daily and peak period traffic volumes and crash data information. The study area includes 13 intersections, two of which are signalized while the remaining 11 have no signals. The signalized intersections are McGrath Highway/Washington Street and Inner Belt Road/Washington Street. Please refer to the study for a comprehensive list of the unsignalized intersections studied. Manual peak hour turning movements and vehicle counts were conducted at each of the study area intersections and daily traffic volumes for a typical weekday were obtained. The morning peak period was determined to be 7-9 a.m. while the weekday evening peak period was determined to be 4-6 p.m. Crash rates were also taken into account, whereby the intersection at McGrath Highway/Washington Street was found to exceed the MassDOT District 4 crash rate. Within this study area, no reported crashes involving a pedestrian have occurred within a three-year period. Six bicycle accidents were reported in the study area; however, while all accidents were a result of vehicular conflict, there is no database to quantify accidents from conflict with other bicycles, pedestrians or fixed objects.

This study concluded that while the trip generation projections estimate the worst case scenario to be 458 trips during the peak morning hours and 519 trips during the peak evening hours, the trip generation projections and corresponding traffic capacity analyses substantially overstate the traffic delays resulting from this project due to the conservative nature of the traffic projections. The study does not account for transit mode split due to the proximity to Sullivan Square Station nor a transit mode split credit due to proximity of the future Green Line; credits for reduced parking supply which limits the number of

vehicles to be parked at the site; and the mixed-use nature of the project to reflect trips internal to the site. Regarding vehicular traffic operations for future build out conditions, the Washington Street at McGrath Highway intersection would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour; the level of service would decrease during at least one peak hour at two both signalized intersections; and eight unsignalized intersections would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour while the level of service would decrease at two unsignalized intersections at two locations during the morning peak hour period. In addition to the conservative estimates by the traffic study, future implementation of the IBB Plan, roadway improvements associated with the Green Line Extension and access to the Community Path have also not been taken into consideration when generating this traffic impact analysis. While the IBB Plan and Community Path are not currently quantifiable, as the Green Line has moved into the final design phase and contracts are being awarded, the roadway improvements associated with implementing the Green Line Station are expected to commence in early 2017. A new traffic signal sequence and timing plan is proposed at the intersection of Washington Street and McGrath Highway to incorporate pedestrian accommodations as well as other complete street enhancements to increase the pedestrian quality. The intersection at Washington Street and Tufts Street will gain a traffic signal due to the pick-up/drop-off area and this area is proposed to be widened to provide four lanes, which would improve traffic operations and pedestrian safety.

Existing Parking

A parking analysis was also prepared for this project. Parking space utilization data was collected between the hours of 1-2 p.m. and 8-9 p.m. on two separate occasions in May 2012 within a ½ mile from the project site. The study noted a total of 745 on-street parking spaces, ½ of which were available on average in the afternoon (58%) or evening (63%) equating to 470 spaces. An estimate of the parking demand for the proposed project estimates 249 and 208 spaces, dependant upon the chosen method, which are both lower than what is required by the SZO and do not account for proximity to Sullivan Station or the future Green Line Station. Data accounting for the number of cars per household indicate one vehicle or less in Somerville, according to www.city-dat.com. A 2007 Cambridge parking memorandum that analyzed the rate of auto ownership near a transit station was also submitted as part of this application and analysis. This data illustrated that half the units surveyed had no registered vehicles and when comparing registered vehicles to number of dwelling units, this ratio was less than 0.75 cars per unit. On-site parking at the surveyed developments averaged 0.5 spaces per unit. Mode split data indicates that 55% of Somerville residents travel to work by an alternate mode of transportation and that almost 1/3 use public transit. This is likely to increase with the opening of the Green Line at Washington Street.

This analysis concluded that the project should be considered a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) district and would have negligible impact on the parking supply of the surrounding neighborhood due to vehicle ownership rates, proximity to public transportation, the mode-split data, the average of 530 parking spaces available on a weeknight (within ½ mile) .

While the study did not recommend any mitigation measures due to the conservative nature by which the data was collected and analyzed, Traffic and Parking requires mitigation efforts to be done through the purchase of a traffic controller to improve the level of service at a signalized intersection in the vicinity of the proposed development. Therefore, a condition has been added to provide a state of the art traffic controller and repaint all the pavement markings on Washington Street, from New Washington Street to the Boston city/line, as well as inventory and replace all signs along the above described corridor.

Proposed Parking

Parking would be located behind the proposed building, between the building and New Washington Street, as well as along the new private road, and within the parking lot located along Washington Street. These lots will have an approximate 10 foot landscape buffer between the pedestrian sidewalk and the

parked vehicles. If Phase II of the project moves forward, which has yet to be fully developed, these parking areas will become screened by additional buildings or redeveloped.

The parking lot behind the structure comprised of 131 spaces. This includes 4 handicap accessible parking spaces, 15 compact parking spaces measuring 8'x16' (numbered 85-99), and a 12 foot fire lane located along the interior of the building at the western end. The fire lane will be clearly marked but not striped as this is also a driving lane for use within the parking lot. A pedestrian path would be located near the center of the lot and landscaping, which includes deciduous and evergreen trees, shrubs, and groundcover as well as streetlights, would be located in multiple islands throughout the lot to break up the visual impact and to add green space. These spaces would not be assigned spaces, so as to be available on a first come-first serve basis to residents of the development.

A small parking lot east of the development, located along Washington Street, would provide parking for 34 vehicles. This entire parking lot will be shared between the residential and commercial uses of the proposed development. However, logistics for how this shared parking lot will operate has been conditioned by Staff to be determined prior to receiving a certificate of occupancy. A portion of this parking lot is located on the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel; therefore, a Special Permit to park on a separate lot is necessary. Two pedestrian paths have been created that lead from this parking lot, for easy access to the proposed development. One path leads from the northwest corner of this lot, across the landscaping, to the north corner of Washington Street and the new road. This landscape area, approximately 416 square feet, will incorporate ornamental benches and a 5' wide pedestrian cut-through as well as shrubs, trees, and grass. The second path is located on the adjacent Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and leads from the south end of the parking lot, or north side of Building #84, to the sidewalk which has a crosswalk.

The new private road, constructed to divide this large parcel, would also locate 17 parallel parking stalls on either side. Some spaces located on the east side of this new road are also located on the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and require a Special Permit for parking on a separate parcel. These parallel parking stalls would be for use by the residents of the proposed development.

Shadows

A shadow study was submitted for the proposal at 9 a.m. and 2 p.m. during the winter solstice, autumnal equinox, summer solstice and vernal equinox. The proposed building will not cast shadows on the neighboring properties during autumnal equinox, summer solstice, or vernal equinox. During the winter solstice, the building casts a shadow onto the neighboring properties north across Washington Street at 9 a.m., but by 2 p.m. this shadow is mostly confined to Washington Street.

6. Green Building Practices: The application does not list any green building practices.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention:

- In an email dated 8/19/2013, Fire Prevention sent Staff the following- According to 527 CMR 25.03 Exterior Access to Buildings Designed for Retail Occupancy - The plan for any new retail building shall include an access for fire equipment on at least two sides of the building, such access to be approved by the head of the fire department on the plans prior to construction of the building.

A City of Somerville Radio Master Box and Central Station monitoring, an NFPA and 527 CMR compliant Fire Alarm and Sprinkler Systems are required for the subject property.

527 CMR 10 Fire Lanes- (a) Designation. The head of the fire department shall require and designate public or private fire lanes as deemed necessary for the efficient and effective use of fire apparatus. Fire lanes shall have a minimum width of 18'.

(b) Obstructions. Designated fire lanes shall be maintained free of obstructions and vehicles and marked in an approved manner.

(c) Maintenance. All designated fire lane signs or markings shall be maintained in a clean and legible condition at all times and replaced when necessary to insure adequate visibility.

- An email dated 8/28/2013 requests for the plans to illustrate an 18' wide fire lane and explains that this lane should be clearly marked.

Traffic & Parking: The Applicant proposes to develop a 159 unit complex to be known as the Cobble Hill Center at the intersection of Washington Street and New Washington Street. The single story retail plaza at this location will be demolished. The Applicant will then develop 25 studio apartments, 134 one and two bedroom apartments and 13,217 square feet of ground level retail space.

Per the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) 306 off-street parking spaces are required for this development. The applicant/developer will only be providing 182 off-street parking spaces. The Applicant has hired a professional Transportation Consulting Firm, Fort Hill Infrastructure, to prepare both a Traffic Impact and Access Study and a Parking Study. This Transportation Consulting Firm has submitted a well prepared and professional Traffic and Access Study and also a Parking Study.

The Traffic and Access Study employed the proper and accepted traffic engineering standard methodology of comparing the existing traffic conditions in the vicinity of the proposed project with the projected future conditions with and without the proposed project. The existing conditions assessment includes an inventory of roadway geometry, on- and off-street parking, assessment of recent crash trends, observation of traffic flow and collection of peak hour traffic counts. The Traffic and Access Study then analyzed the projected conditions versus no build and build conditions vis a vis traffic and safety issues that may be needed to be mitigated if the proposed project is built.

These comparisons determined that the west side of the Washington St/McGrath Highway intersection and the Washington Street/Inner Belt Road signalized intersections Level of Service would decrease during at least one peak hour period for the built conditions when compared to the no build conditions. Level of Service (LOS) is the letter designation used to denote the different operating conditions that occur at a given intersection under various traffic conditions. A decrease in the LOS results in an increase of vehicle congestion, delay and queues.

Two unsignalized intersections would also have a decrease in LOS during the morning peak hour period for the build conditions when compared to the no build conditions. These intersections are Washington St/ Pinckney Street and Washington St/Florence St. Traffic and Parking does not disagree with the analysis provided by the Traffic Consultant regarding the no build conditions and the proposed build conditions.

Traffic mitigation provided by the developer would lessen the impact of the lowering of the LOS of both the signalized and unsignalized intersection discussed above. Required traffic mitigation will be discussed at the conclusion of the memorandum.

Off-street parking requirements for proposed developments are mandated by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO). These requirements are based on the number of studio, one and two bedroom units and the square footage of retail space in the proposed development. Per the above formula, this proposed development requires 306 off street parking spaces. However, only 182 off-street parking spaces are being provided by the developer. Thirty four of the provided off-street parking spaces will be “shared” parking spaces between retail and residential units.

The submitted Parking Study inventoried the number of existing on street parking space and the percentage of these parking spaces that were occupied during various time periods during the day. The parking study also reviewed the percentage of vehicles owned in rental occupied apartments in Somerville. Shared parking spaces between retail space requirements and apartment unit required parking spaces were examined using accepted professional industry standards. A further empirical examination reviewed the number of vehicles owned by residents who resided in close proximity to mass transit stations. Finally, a review was conducted identifying the various methods for commuting to work by Somerville residents, i.e. drive a car, carpooled, bus, streetcar, subway, railroad, taxi, motorcycle, bicycle or walked. This Parking Study concluded that with the typical vehicle ownership rates in Somerville, the proximity to public transportation, the mode split data and the available on street parking spaces available in the immediate vicinity of the project, the number of proposed off street parking spaces being provided by the developer is adequate. Traffic and Parking does not disagree with this analysis. However, the lack of the required off-street parking spaces will result in a slight increase in degradation of pedestrian safety. There will also be an increase in vehicle congestion, delay and queues. Traffic mitigation can also improve these conditions.

Provided a state of the art traffic controller (a TS 2, Type 2 traffic controller) is purchased by the developer to improve the LOS at a signalized intersection in the vicinity of the proposed development (Myrtle St) and then installed by a contractor suitable and approved by the City and also that the developer is required to have a contractor suitable and approved by Traffic and Parking repaint all the pavement markings on Washington St from New Washington St to the Boston city/line and further have a contractor inventory and then subsequently replace via a contractor suitable and approved by Traffic and Parking all signs along the above described corridor, then Traffic and Parking will have no objections to this application.

Wiring Inspection: In an email to Staff dated 8/20/2013, the Wiring Inspector explains that the plans note the transformer in the rear on what appears to be a grassy area and the standard zoning requirements stating new services shall be underground covers any concerns.

Lights and Lines: In an email to Staff dated 7/30/2013, the Inspector notes that the new road between the project site and the Cobble Hill Apartments will be maintained by the property owner, this includes snow plowing, sweeping etc.

Engineering: In an email dated 8/27/2013, Engineering explains the City’s stormwater policy. As required by the stormwater policy, applicants will be required to comply with the inflow/infiltration (I/I) removal required due to increases in wastewater generation at the project site. The I/I mitigation must be met prior to issuance of a building permit.

Staff understands that this can be accomplished through:

1. An increase in stormwater infiltration;
2. Pay \$4 per gallon (at the 4:1 ratio) to the City to fund future I/I removal projects; or
3. Identify, design and construct I/I removal projects to provide the required mitigation.

Historic Preservation: The subject structure is located within the boundaries of the Inner Belt Industrial Park District, for which building located within this district are excluded from review under the Demolition Review Ordinance.

Ward Alderman: In an email dated 7/31/2013, Alderman Bastardi explains that there have been two neighborhood meetings (both attended by Planning Staff) and she says residents were overwhelmingly supportive of this project and they were probably the best neighborhood meetings she has had to date. The Alderman did ask for clarification on the variances, which Staff provided.

Design Review Committee

On **July 25** the DRC reviewed the design for a residential/commercial development at 90 Washington that includes 159 residential units and 5 commercial spaces. The building has a long façade and the Applicant likened that to styles of architecture in numerous European cities. There is a transparent base (retail), floating infill, a grounded block that faces Cobble Hill, and floating infill (residences). The building will have painted metal panel, a fiber cement panel system, brick, and corrugated metal siding. The DRC addressed the following:

- Members of the DRC appreciated the expression of the long building instead of an attempt to make it look like a grouping of smaller buildings.
- The materials and detailing of the European facades are achieving something that the project proposed is not yet on par with.
- The building needs relief and shadow in order to mitigate the size of the building. It should aspire to the European façade precedents that were presented, but utilize contemporary expressions of those design concepts. This could include devices as sun shades, vertical fins, changes in color and recessed windows
- The Applicant should propose some further design development for the retail environment at street level that illustrates the expected level of activity. This could include a study of the relationship between the landscape design and the storefront.

The Applicant was to incorporate the design changes and present at a special DRC meeting on August 15.

On **August 15** the DRC reviewed the design for a residential/commercial development at 90 Washington that includes 159 residential units and 5 commercial spaces for the second time. The building's long façade is broken up into three forms. The eastern façade is ribbon wrapped with a Hardie Artisan field with Trespa (or similar) accents. The center façade has vertical articulation as well as a base, middle, and top using Hardie Artisan, metal panel, and an accent metal panel or painted Hardie board. The western façade uses the same materials as the center façade with some ribbon detailing and a larger accent field.

Northwest View (Cobble Hill side)



Front View (Cobble Hill on the left, Washington Street T station on the right)

The DRC addressed the following:

- Members of the DRC were drawn to the design of the eastern façade that included a more modern interpretation of the exterior envelope.
- The design of the western façade is lacking idea cohesiveness across the entire length of the facade. DRC members suggested re-iterating the approach used at the eastern façade. The western façade is the T station side and needs as much attention as the eastern façade.
- The building needs a base material that is suitable for contact with the ground plane and durable enough to address New England weather. The Hardie “Artisan” siding is not visually strong enough to ‘hold up’ the building. The Committee suggested the use of some type of watertable as one method to address this issue.

The Applicant will incorporate the design changes and send electronic copies for DRC review. The DRC will determine from the electronic files if the Applicant needs to present again on August 29th or can proceed, with comments, to the ZBA.

On **September 3** the DRC emailed comments to Planning Staff. Comments included:

- Support for the new scheme as it improves on all the discussion points raised at the last meeting. One criticism is the angled balconies, prefer traditional or Juliet, with a rectilinear geometry to reinforce building design.
- Did incorporate some previous feedback regarding dimension, creating shadows, and play with materials, but building still feels heavy. While understand use of repetition, feels very linear and plaza needs work.
- Latest version is much improved. Intent is reasserted, clearer and the execution of the intent is more convincing. Still confusion over the horizontal versus vertical expression. Retail zone should have stronger relationship to plaza. Balconies are good addition but may need work.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW (SZO §7.11.1.c) and SPECIAL PERMITS (§9.13.d & §9.13.e):

In order to grant a special permit with site plan review, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.2.5 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.2.5 in detail.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.2.3 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project.
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 with site plan review.”

In accordance with the SZO §5.2.4, Design Guidelines for Business Zones, the guidelines have been met.

1. Maintain a strong building presence along the primary street edge, continuing the established streetwall across the front of the site so as to retain the streetscape continuity; however, yards and setbacks as required by Article 8 shall be maintained.
2. Differentiate building entrances from the rest of the primary street elevation, preferably by recessing the entry from the plane of the streetwall or by some other articulation of the elevation at the entrance.
3. Make use of the typical bay widths, rhythms and dimensions prevalent in buildings adjacent to the site, especially in new construction or substantial redevelopment.
4. Clearly define these bay widths, rhythms and dimensions, making them understandable through material patterns, articulations and modulations of the facades, mullion design and treatment, etc.
5. Provide roof types and slopes similar to those of existing buildings in the area.
6. Use materials and colors consistent with those dominant in the area or, in the case of a rehabilitation or addition, consistent with the architectural style and period of the existing building. Use of brick masonry is encouraged, but not considered mandatory.
7. When parking lots are provided between buildings, abutting the primary street and breaking the streetwall, provide a strong design element to continue the streetwall definition across the site, such as a low brick wall, iron works or railing, trees, etc.
8. Locate transformers, heating and cooling systems, antennae, and the like, so they are not visible from the street; this may be accomplished, for example, by placing them behind the building, within enclosures, behind screening, etc.
9. Sites and buildings should comply with any guidelines set forth in Article 6 of this Ordinance for the specific base or overlay zoning district(s) the site is located within.

The proposed development maintains a strong building presence due to the 69 foot height proposal which serves to delineate the street edge, maintain eyes on the street, and create a sense of place. All existing setback requirements have been maintained. The residential entry into the structure has been differentiated and the intent of the design of the retail spaces will distinguish each storefront from each other. The rhythm of the bay widths and dimensions are consistent along the street front, which are defined to distinguish the residential entry and individual retail spaces. The roof is flat, which is consistent with others in the area, though this is not the predominant roof type. The design incorporates compatible materials and details that are consistent with the architectural history and building stock of the City. The parking lot along Washington Street does not incorporate a streetwall but does have a 10 foot landscape buffer which is continued across the private road and along Cobble Hill Apartments. Utility infrastructure would not be visible from the street and are screened either by trees and shrubs or located on the rooftop.

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO the Applicant must be able to demonstrate that granting the requested special permit would not cause detriment to the surrounding neighborhood through any of the criteria as set forth under SZO §9.13, which are as follows:

- 1) increase in traffic volumes;

- 2) increased traffic congestion or queuing of vehicles;
- 3) change in the type(s) of traffic;
- 4) change in traffic patterns and access to the site;
- 5) reduction in on-street parking;
- 6) unsafe conflict of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

A study regarding the impact to traffic was submitted by the Applicant. This study concluded that while the trip generation projections estimate the worst case scenario to be 458 trips during the peak morning hours and 519 trips during the peak evening hours, the trip generation projections and corresponding traffic capacity analyses substantially overstate the traffic delays resulting from this project due to the conservative nature of the traffic projections. The study does not account for transit mode split due to the proximity to Sullivan Square Station nor a transit mode split credit due to proximity of the future Green Line; credits for reduced parking supply which limits the number of vehicles to be parked at the site; and the mixed-use nature of the project to reflect trips internal to the site. Regarding vehicular traffic operations for future build out conditions, the Washington Street at McGrath Highway intersection would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour; the level of service would decrease during at least one peak hour at two both signalized intersections; and eight unsignalized intersections would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour while the level of service would decrease at two unsignalized intersections at two locations during the morning peak hour period. In addition to the conservative estimates by the traffic study, future implementation of the IBB Plan, roadway improvements associated with the Green Line Extension and access to the Community Path have also not been taken into consideration when generating this traffic impact analysis. While the IBB Plan and Community Path are not currently quantifiable, as the Green Line has moved into the final design phase and contracts are being awarded, the roadway improvements associated with implementing the Green Line Station are expected to commence in early 2017. A new traffic signal sequence and timing plan is proposed at the intersection of Washington Street and McGrath Highway to incorporate pedestrian accommodations as well as other complete street enhancements to increase the pedestrian quality. The intersection at Washington Street and Tufts Street will gain a traffic signal due to the pick-up/drop-off area and this area is proposed to be widened to provide four lanes, which would improve traffic operations and pedestrian safety.

Existing Parking

A parking analysis was also prepared for this project. Parking space utilization data was collected between the hours of 1-2 p.m. and 8-9 p.m. on two separate occasions in May 2012 within a ½ mile from the project site. The study noted a total of 745 on-street parking spaces, ½ of which were available on average in the afternoon (58%) or evening (63%) equating to 470 spaces. An estimate of the parking demand for the proposed project estimates 249 and 208 spaces, dependant upon the chosen method, which are both lower than what is required by the SZO and do not account for proximity to Sullivan Station or the future Green Line Station. Data accounting for the number of cars per household indicate one vehicle or less in Somerville according to www.city-dat.com. A 2007 Cambridge parking memorandum that analyzed the rate of auto ownership near a transit station was also submitted as part of this application and analysis. This data illustrated that half the units surveyed had no registered vehicles and when comparing registered vehicles to number of dwelling units, this ratio was less than 0.75 cars per unit. On-site parking at the surveyed developments averaged 0.5 spaces per unit. Mode split data indicates that 55% of Somerville residents travel to work by an alternate mode of transportation and that almost 1/3 use public transit. This is likely to increase with the opening of the Green Line at Washington Street.

This analysis concluded that the project should be considered a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) district and would have negligible impact on the parking supply of the surrounding neighborhood due to

vehicle ownership rates, proximity to public transportation, the mode-split data, the average of 530 parking spaces available on a weeknight (within ½ mile) .

While the study did not recommend any mitigation measures due to the conservative nature by which the data was collected and analyzed, Traffic and Parking requires mitigation efforts to be done through the purchase of a traffic controller to improve the level of service at a signalized intersection in the vicinity of the proposed development. Therefore, a condition has been added to provide a state of the art traffic controller.

There is also land located at the southeast portion of the development site which has been designated as a potential future parking lot for 55 additional parking spaces. A condition requires that a parking study is conducted one year after full occupancy of the proposed project to determine if the overflow parking is constructed to provide an additional 55 parking spaces. Furthermore, this parking lot also extends onto the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and requires Special Permit approval to park on a separate lot, which is included within this proposal.

3. Purpose of District: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with the intent of the specific zoning district as specified in Article 6".

The residential portion proposal is largely consistent with the purpose of the Business B district, §6.1.7, which is, "To establish and preserve general commercial and high density residential areas consisting of multi-family developments, shopping centers, commercial strips and automobile related establishments where customers reach individual businesses primarily by automobile."

The subject parcel is currently located within a BB zoning district which is not adequate to address the needs of a future transit station. While this district is compatible with regard to the allowed density and height, though to a lesser degree, this type of district is auto-oriented, whereas the area for a future transit station should be pedestrian and transit-oriented. This project will create housing near transit, including 20 affordable units where none previously existing; a streetwall and pedestrian plaza which will enhance the pedestrian quality of this corridor and add to the network growing of public spaces, and incorporate a mix of uses to increase the neighborhood amenities that will activate the street and help establish a sense of place. Together, these will catalyze market interest in high-value commercial and office redevelopment to transform the larger area into a vibrant and pedestrian centered corridor that illustrates a clear sense of place.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the existing natural features of the site and is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area, and that the scale, massing and detailing of the buildings are compatible with those prevalent in the surrounding area".

The soil survey establishes that the existing soil is categorized as "Urban Infill" and there are no natural features of the site. The surrounding neighborhood is a mix of uses and building types. A residential neighborhood is located north of the project site which is composed of two- and three-story dwellings while auto-oriented uses extend along Washington Street. Industrial buildings and uses are located south of the project site, and rail road tracks separate Cobble Hill from the Inner Belt area. The future Green Line Station at Washington Street will be a located one block west of the project site. The Holiday Inn Hotel and other commercial and industrial uses are located east of the project site.

The SomerVision Comprehensive Plan discusses that the area north of the subject parcel is an area to enhance and conserve while the areas south and west of the railroad tracks, as well as the subject parcel,

should be transformed into dynamic, mixed-use and transit-oriented districts to facilitate economic growth and complement the existing neighborhoods. Similarly, the “Urban Streetscape and Adaptive Re-Use Plan for the Inner Belt and Brickbottom Districts,” otherwise known as the IBB Plan which is to be completed by the end of 2013, is envisioned as mid-rise buildings along the district edges, with the potential for high-rise construction in the core of the Inner Belt District. This Washington Street corridor would serve as the Inner Belt Gateway, facilitate a sense of place and long-term, high value mixed-use development would be a primary goal as well as multi-modal infrastructure.

The proposal is to construct a mixed-use development that will implement the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan and the not yet released IBB Plan which will address transportation infrastructure and new zoning as appropriate to the pedestrian and transit-oriented nature of this proposal. This project will create housing near transit, including 20 affordable units where none previously existing; a streetwall and pedestrian plaza which will enhance the pedestrian quality of this corridor and add to the network growing of public spaces, and incorporate a mix of uses to increase the neighborhood amenities that will activate the street and help establish a sense of place. Together, these will enhance the neighborhood north of Washington Street and facilitate larger development interest in the area to further the transformation of this district.

The proposed structure is taller than the surrounding buildings, comprised of a modern design aesthetic, and proposes a mix of uses. However, this development is compatible in scale, design and use with the neighborhood as this corridor is intended to become pedestrian and transit-oriented, which requires a larger scale and density as well as a mix of uses. SomerVision calls for a clear vision for the desired scale and type of redevelopment within transformative mixed-use areas that speak to the City’s economic and urban design goals. The scale will create a strong streetwall while the design is compatible to and consistent with the architectural history and building stock of the City. The mix of uses will add residential to an area served by transit as well as increase neighborhood amenities while activating the streetfront.

5. Functional Design: The project must meet “accepted standards and criteria for the functional design of facilities, structures, and site construction.”

The structure will function well as a mixed-use building as the five retail spaces and residential lobby would all be accessible from either Washington Street or one of the two side streets. In addition the residential units to be accessible from the new road are designed to operate as artist studio live/work spaces and would help activate this new private street. The sidewalk along New Washington Street will extend to the corner of the new private street to complete the pedestrian experience of this newly subdivided parcel. The strong streetwall and pedestrian plaza will help establish a sense of place along the corridor. The parking is predominantly located behind the building while the east parking lot will be redeveloped in the future in a way that continues the streetwall and enhances the pedestrian quality of the corridor that leads to Sullivan Station.

6. Impact on Public Systems: The project will “not create adverse impacts on the public services and facilities serving the development, such as the sanitary sewer system, the storm drainage system, the public water supply, the recreational system, the street system for vehicular traffic, and the sidewalks and footpaths for pedestrian traffic.”

The approval of a Special Permit with Site Plan Review shall be contingent upon a determination by the City Engineer that no adverse impact on public systems will result from the proposed development. The change in use from a single story retail strip mall to a mixed-use residential development would not appear to greatly impact the City sanitary sewer system. Planning Staff has proposed a condition that

requires the Applicant to demonstrate that the project is in compliance with the City stormwater policy. The Stormwater Management Report explains that the increase in impervious area would be offset by providing adequate detention and recharge through a subsurface infiltration system to match or reduce run-off rates and volumes to existing condition levels.

7. Environmental Impacts: “The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.”

Staff does not foresee the proposed project resulting in any environmental impacts beyond activities that are typically associated with residential units or a retail use that is less than 5,000 square feet.

8. Consistency with Purposes: “Is consistent with: 1) the purposes of this Ordinance, particularly those set forth in Article 1 and Article 5; and 2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit with site plan review which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those at the beginning of the various sections.”

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 provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; 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 prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; 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.”

The proposal is to construct a mixed-use development that will implement the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan and the not yet released IBB Plan that addresses transportation infrastructure as appropriate to the pedestrian and transit-oriented nature of this proposal. This project will create housing near transit, including 20 affordable units where none previously existing; a streetwall and pedestrian plaza which will enhance the pedestrian quality of this corridor and add to the network growing of public spaces, and incorporate a mix of uses to increase the neighborhood amenities that will activate the street and help establish a sense of place. Together, these will catalyze market interest in high-value commercial and office redevelopment to transform the larger area into a vibrant and pedestrian centered corridor that illustrates a clear sense of place.

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO the SPGA may grant such a special permit only when consistent with the purposes set forth in Section 9.1.

A study regarding the impact to traffic was submitted by the Applicant. This study concluded that while the trip generation projections estimate the worst case scenario to be 458 trips during the peak morning hours and 519 trips during the peak evening hours, the trip generation projections and corresponding traffic capacity analyses substantially overstate the traffic delays resulting from this project due to the conservative nature of the traffic projections. The study does not account for transit mode split due to the proximity to Sullivan Square Station nor a transit mode split credit due to proximity of the future Green Line; credits for reduced parking supply which limits the number of vehicles to be parked at the site; and the mixed-use nature of the project to reflect trips internal to the site. Regarding vehicular traffic

operations for future build out conditions, the Washington Street at McGrath Highway intersection would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour; the level of service would decrease during at least one peak hour at two both signalized intersections; and eight unsignalized intersections would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour while the level of service would decrease at two unsignalized intersections at two locations during the morning peak hour period. In addition to the conservative estimates by the traffic study, future implementation of the IBB Plan, roadway improvements associated with the Green Line Extension and access to the Community Path have also not been taken into consideration when generating this traffic impact analysis. While the IBB Plan and Community Path are not currently quantifiable, as the Green Line has moved into the final design phase and contracts are being awarded, the roadway improvements associated with implementing the Green Line Station are expected to commence in early 2017. A new traffic signal sequence and timing plan is proposed at the intersection of Washington Street and McGrath Highway to incorporate pedestrian accommodations as well as other complete street enhancements to increase the pedestrian quality. The intersection at Washington Street and Tufts Street will gain a traffic signal due to the pick-up/drop-off area and this area is proposed to be widened to provide four lanes, which would improve traffic operations and pedestrian safety.

Existing Parking

A parking analysis was also prepared for this project. Parking space utilization data was collected between the hours of 1-2 p.m. and 8-9 p.m. on two separate occasions in May 2012 within a ½ mile from the project site. The study noted a total of 745 on-street parking spaces, ½ of which were available on average in the afternoon (58%) or evening (63%) equating to 470 spaces. An estimate of the parking demand for the proposed project estimates 249 and 208 spaces, dependant upon the chosen method, which are both lower than what is required by the SZO and do not account for proximity to Sullivan Station or the future Green Line Station. Data accounting for the number of cars per household indicate one vehicle or less in Somerville, according to www.city-dat.com. A 2007 Cambridge parking memorandum that analyzed the rate of auto ownership near a transit station was also submitted as part of this application and analysis. This data illustrated that half the units surveyed had no registered vehicles and when comparing registered vehicles to number of dwelling units, this ratio was less than 0.75 cars per unit. On-site parking at the surveyed developments averaged 0.5 spaces per unit. Mode split data indicates that 55% of Somerville residents travel to work by an alternate mode of transportation and that almost 1/3 use public transit. This is likely to increase with the opening of the Green Line at Washington Street.

This analysis concluded that the project should be considered a Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) district and would have negligible impact on the parking supply of the surrounding neighborhood due to vehicle ownership rates, proximity to public transportation, the mode-split data, the average of 530 parking spaces available on a weeknight (within ½ mile) .

While the study did not recommend any mitigation measures due to the conservative nature by which the data was collected and analyzed, Traffic and Parking requires mitigation efforts to be done through the purchase of a traffic controller to improve the level of service at a signalized intersection in the vicinity of the proposed development. Therefore, a condition has been added to provide a state of the art traffic controller.

There is also land located at the southeast portion of the development site which has been designated as a potential future parking lot for 55 additional parking spaces. A condition requires that a parking study is conducted one year after full occupancy of the proposed project to determine if the overflow parking is constructed to provide an additional 55 parking spaces. Furthermore, this parking lot is also extends onto the Cobble Hill Apartments parcel and requires Special Permit approval to park on a separate lot, which is included within this proposal.

9. Preservation of Landform and Open Space: The Applicant has to ensure that “the existing land form is preserved in its natural state, insofar as practicable, by minimizing grading and the erosion or stripping of steep slopes, and by maintaining man-made features that enhance the land form, such as stone walls, with minimal alteration or disruption. In addition, all open spaces should be designed and planted to enhance the attractiveness of the neighborhood. Whenever possible, the development parcel should be laid out so that some of the landscaped areas are visible to the neighborhood.”

There are no remaining natural features on site. As discussed previously, the soil has been categorized as “Urban Infill.” The Stormwater Management Report explains that the project will disturb 3.7 acres of land and that a Construction Period Pollution Prevention and Erosion and Sedimentation Control Plan has been submitted. The erosion and sedimentation control shall be installed and maintained as identified in the Site Plans, Sheet C-4.

Open space for the development was designed to enhance the pedestrian experience along this corridor and to assist in the creation of a network of public spaces. These spaces are located along Washington Street while grass and trees create a landscape buffer between the parking lots and the sidewalk.

10. Relation of Buildings to Environment: The Applicant must ensure that “buildings are: 1) located harmoniously with the land form, vegetation and other natural features of the site; 2) compatible in scale, design and use with those buildings and designs which are visually related to the development site; 3) effectively located for solar and wind orientation for energy conservation; and 4) advantageously located for views from the building while minimizing the intrusion on views from other buildings.”

There are no remaining natural features on site. As discussed previously, the soil has been categorized as “Urban Infill.”

The proposed structure is taller than the surrounding buildings, comprised of a modern design aesthetic, as opposed to the historic residential and industrial building stock that surrounds this parcel. However, this development is compatible in scale, design and use with the neighborhood as this corridor is intended to become pedestrian and transit-oriented, which requires a larger scale and density as well as a mix of uses. The scale will create a strong streetwall while the design is contemporary and appropriately incorporates human scale elements. Views from the neighboring parcels will be enhanced as they will no longer look to industrial buildings in the Inner Belt and will instead view a new building that symbolizes an exciting transition for this corridor and the City.

The proposal is to construct a mixed-use development that will compliment and enhance the pedestrian and transit-oriented nature of this proposal. This project will create housing near transit, including 20 affordable units where none previously existing; a streetwall and pedestrian plaza which will enhance the pedestrian quality of this corridor and add to the network growing of public spaces, and incorporate a mix of uses to increase the neighborhood amenities that will activate the street and help establish a sense of place. Together, these will catalyze market interest in high-value commercial and office redevelopment to transform the larger area into a vibrant and pedestrian centered corridor that illustrates a clear sense of place.

11. Stormwater Drainage: The Applicant must demonstrate that “special attention has been given to proper site surface drainage so that removal of surface waters will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the public storm drainage system. Storm water shall be removed from all roofs, canopies, and paved area, and routed through a well-engineered system designed with appropriate storm water management techniques. Skimming devices, oil, and grease traps, and similar facilities at the collection

or discharge points for paved surface runoff should be used, to retain oils, greases, and particles. Surface water on all paved areas shall be collected and/or routed so that it will not obstruct the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic and will not create puddles in the paved area. In larger developments, where practical, the routing of runoff through sheet flow, swales or other means increasing filtration and percolation is strongly encouraged, as is use of retention or detention ponds. In instances of below grade parking (such as garages) or low lying areas prone to flooding, installation of pumps or other devices to prevent backflow through drains or catch basins may be required.”

The project appears to meet the stormwater requirements. Documentation regarding how the site will address the wastewater generation component of the stormwater policy will be submitted prior to a building permit being issued. As required by the stormwater policy, the Applicant will be required to comply with the inflow/infiltration (I/I) removal required due to increases in wastewater generation at the project site. The I/I mitigation must be met prior to issuance of a building permit. This can be accomplished by one of three methods:

1. An increase in stormwater infiltration;
2. Pay \$4 per gallon (at the 4:1 ratio) to the City to fund future I/I removal projects; or
3. Identify, design and construct I/I removal projects to provide the required mitigation.

12. Historic or Architectural Significance: The project must be designed “with respect to Somerville’s heritage, any action detrimental to historic structures and their architectural elements shall be discouraged insofar as is practicable, whether those structures exist on the development parcel or on adjacent properties. If there is any removal, substantial alteration or other action detrimental to buildings of historic or architectural significance, these should be minimized and new uses or the erection of new buildings should be compatible with the buildings or places of historic or architectural significance on the development parcel or on adjacent properties.”

The proposal would redevelop an under utilized parcel of land in a manner consistent with the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan which indentifies this corridor as an area to transform, enhance and link with Union Square. The design incorporates compatible materials and details that are consistent with the architectural history and building stock of the City.

The existing strip mall is located within the boundaries of the Inner Belt Industrial Park District, whereby buildings located within this district are excluded from review under the Demolition Review Ordinance, due to the general understanding that these buildings are not historically significant and should be redeveloped.

13. Enhancement of Appearance: The Applicant must demonstrate that “the natural character and appearance of the City is enhanced. Awareness of the existence of a development, particularly a non residential development or a higher density residential development, should be minimized by screening views of the development from nearby streets, residential neighborhoods of City property by the effective use of existing land forms, or alteration thereto, such as berms, and by existing vegetation or supplemental planting.”

The proposal is to construct a mixed-use development that will implement the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan and the not yet released Inner Belt/Brickbottom Plan. This project will create housing near transit, including 20 affordable units where none previously existing; a streetwall and pedestrian plaza which will enhance the pedestrian quality of this corridor and add to the network growing of public spaces, and incorporate a mix of uses to increase the neighborhood amenities that will activate the street and help establish a sense of place. Together, these will catalyze market interest in

high-value commercial and office redevelopment to transform the larger area into a vibrant and pedestrian centered corridor that illustrates a clear sense of place.

14. Lighting: With respect to lighting, the Applicant must ensure that “all exterior spaces and interior public and semi-public spaces shall be adequately lit and designed as much as possible to allow for surveillance by neighbors and passersby.”

Lighting for on-site parking shall be directed downward so as not to spill onto adjacent properties or into the night sky. Light fixtures for the parking lot and building will be reviewed by the Design Review Committee and approved by Planning Staff prior to construction.

While streetlights and wall-mounted light fixtures will remain lit throughout the night for auto and pedestrian safety, Staff has added a condition that allows the businesses signage to remain lit until the last business establishment closes operations for the day. Staff has also conditioned that light is not allowed to spill onto nearby residential properties. This likely means that signage will be lit later during the weekend than during the week.

Signage, which includes lighting and material regarding the residential component of the proposal will be reviewed by the Design Review Committee and approved by Staff prior to construction. Additional signage for individual retail storefronts will require review and approval from the Design Review Committee as well as Planning Staff.

15. Emergency Access: The Applicant must ensure that “there is easy access to buildings, and the grounds adjoining them, for operations by fire, police, medical and other emergency personnel and equipment.”

The proposed building will be accessible from two public streets, one private road and from the rear parking lot. An 18’ fire lane will be clearly marked at the rear of the building.

16. Location of Access: The Applicant must ensure that “the location of intersections of access drives with the City arterial or collector streets minimizes traffic congestion.”

There will be three new curb cuts as part of this proposal. One would be located along New Washington Street while two would be located along the new private road to allow access to the parking lot and rear of the building. On Washington Street the existing curb cut will be closed and one will be installed at the end of the private street. In addition, as a new private road would be created between the proposed development and the Cobble Hill Apartments, a new curb cut would also be located on this new road to allow access to the small parking lot to be located along Washington Street. All of the new proposed curb cuts require vehicles to turn off Washington Street to access parking or the rear of the proposed structure.

A study regarding the impact to traffic was submitted by the Applicant. This study concluded that while the trip generation projections estimate the worst case scenario to be 458 trips during the peak morning hours and 519 trips during the peak evening hours, the trip generation projections and corresponding traffic capacity analyses substantially overstate the traffic delays resulting from this project due to the conservative nature of the traffic projections. The study does not account for transit mode split due to the proximity to Sullivan Square Station nor a transit mode split credit due to proximity of the future Green Line; credits for reduced parking supply which limits the number of vehicles to be parked at the site; and the mixed-use nature of the project to reflect trips internal to the site. Regarding vehicular traffic operations for future build out conditions, the Washington Street at McGrath Highway intersection would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour; the level of service would

decrease during at least one peak hour at two both signalized intersections; and eight unsignalized intersections would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour while the level of service would decrease at two unsignalized intersections at two locations during the morning peak hour period. In addition to the conservative estimates by the traffic study, future implementation of the IBB Plan, roadway improvements associated with the Green Line Extension and access to the Community Path have also not been taken into consideration when generating this traffic impact analysis. While the IBB Plan and Community Path are not currently quantifiable, as the Green Line has moved into the final design phase and contracts are being awarded, the roadway improvements associated with implementing the Green Line Station are expected to commence in early 2017. A new traffic signal sequence and timing plan is proposed at the intersection of Washington Street and McGrath Highway to incorporate pedestrian accommodations as well as other complete street enhancements to increase the pedestrian quality. The intersection at Washington Street and Tufts Street will gain a traffic signal due to the pick-up/drop-off area and this area is proposed to be widened to provide four lanes, which would improve traffic operations and pedestrian safety.

While the study did not recommend any mitigation measures due to the conservative nature by which the data was collected and analyzed, Traffic and Parking requires mitigation efforts to be done through the purchase of a traffic controller to improve the level of service at a signalized intersection in the vicinity of the proposed development. Therefore, a condition has been added to provide a state of the art traffic controller.

17. Utility Service: The Applicant must ensure that “electric, telephone, cable TV and other such lines and equipment are placed underground from the source or connection, or are effectively screened from public view.”

All utilities are conditioned to be located underground.

18. Prevention of Adverse Impacts: The Applicant must demonstrate that “provisions have been made to prevent or minimize any detrimental effect on adjoining premises, and the general neighborhood, including, (1) minimizing any adverse impact from new hard surface ground cover, or machinery which emits heat, vapor, light or fumes; and (2) preventing adverse impacts to light, air and noise, wind and temperature levels in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development.”

The proposal will maintain 32% of the lot for landscaping, which would include trees, shrubs and groundcover. Washington Street includes several tree pits, ornamental benches, and a pedestrian plaza as well as a variety of plantings and groundcover. While the landscaping is predominantly located in the rear of the lot and is comprised of islands within the parking area, there will be a condition to have a 6 foot landscape buffer between the sidewalk and the parking lot on New Washington Street. There will also be landscaped areas along the sidewalk on Washington Street and street trees along the three streets abutting the project.

19. Signage: The Applicant must ensure that “the size, location, design, color, texture, lighting and materials of all permanent signs and outdoor advertising structures or features shall reflect the scale and character of the proposed buildings.”

Signage locations are illustrated on the plans. Signage details, which includes lighting and material will be reviewed by the Design Review Committee and approved by Staff prior to construction to ensure that the implementation of the signage is similar in nature to that on the elevations/renderings. While streetlights and wall-mounted light fixtures will remain lit throughout the night for auto and pedestrian safety, Staff has added a condition that allows businesses signage to remain lit until the last business

establishment closes operations for the day and does not allow light to spill onto nearby residential properties. This likely means that signage will be lit later during the weekend than during the week.

20. Screening of Service Facilities: The Applicant must ensure that “exposed transformers and other machinery, storage, service and truck loading areas, dumpsters, utility buildings, and similar structures shall be effectively screened by plantings or other screening methods so that they are not directly visible from either the proposed development or the surrounding properties.”

A transformer and generator on top of a concrete pad are to be located within the rear parking lot, near the new private road. These are proposed to be screened with a variety of trees and shrubs including evergreens to mitigate views of the equipment from the parking lot and the street. There are three trash/loading areas at the rear of the building, so there will not be dumpsters located within the parking lot. The rear of the building would have a small landscape buffer of grass between the structure and the sidewalk as screening of this equipment cannot prevent trucks from loading/unloading as well as utility companies from reading and maintaining meters and other miscellaneous equipment.

21. Screening of Parking: The parking will be predominantly located behind the proposed structure, though a small parking lot will be located along Washington Street, east of the proposed development. The rear lot will have a landscape buffer which will include grass and trees to mitigate views of the parked cars. The small lot will have a 10 foot landscape buffer and 28 foot buffer on the corner, next to the private road. This lot will be screened with trees and shrubs to help prevent a clear viewshed of the parked vehicles. However, once the new zoning has been implemented, there is the opportunity to redevelop this lot and continue the streetwall along Washington Street. Therefore, these parking stalls will likely be located elsewhere on the lot, or may no longer be necessary per the new parking requirement.

22. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use of structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.

A study regarding the impact to traffic was submitted by the Applicant. This study concluded that while the trip generation projections estimate the worst case scenario to be 458 trips during the peak morning hours and 519 trips during the peak evening hours, the trip generation projections and corresponding traffic capacity analyses substantially overstate the traffic delays resulting from this project due to the conservative nature of the traffic projections. The study does not account for transit mode split due to the proximity to Sullivan Square Station nor a transit mode split credit due to proximity of the future Green Line; credits for reduced parking supply which limits the number of vehicles to be parked at the site; and the mixed-use nature of the project to reflect trips internal to the site. Regarding vehicular traffic operations for future build out conditions, the Washington Street at McGrath Highway intersection would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour; the level of service would decrease during at least one peak hour at two both signalized intersections; and eight unsignalized intersections would continue to operate at the lowest level of service during at least one peak hour while the level of service would decrease at two unsignalized intersections at two locations during the morning peak hour period. In addition to the conservative estimates by the traffic study, future implementation of the IBB Plan, roadway improvements associated with the Green Line Extension and access to the Community Path have also not been taken into consideration when generating this traffic impact analysis. While the IBB Plan and Community Path are not currently quantifiable, as the Green Line has moved into the final design phase and contracts are being awarded, the roadway improvements associated with implementing the Green Line Station are expected to commence in early 2017. A new traffic signal sequence and timing plan is proposed at the intersection of Washington Street and McGrath Highway to incorporate pedestrian accommodations as well as other complete street enhancements to increase the

pedestrian quality. The intersection at Washington Street and Tufts Street will gain a traffic signal due to the pick-up/drop-off area and this area is proposed to be widened to provide four lanes, which would improve traffic operations and pedestrian safety.

While the study did not recommend any mitigation measures due to the conservative nature by which the data was collected and analyzed, Traffic and Parking requires mitigation efforts to be done through the purchase of a traffic controller to improve the level of service at a signalized intersection in the vicinity of the proposed development. Therefore, a condition has been added to provide a state of the art traffic controller.

III. FINDINGS FOR VARIANCE UNDER SZO §8.5.F and §9.5.1.a

While 306 parking spaces are required for the project as currently proposed, this calculation does not account for the proximity to transit, which would be accounted for once the zoning requirement is updated to reflect the current needs and goals of the City, as outlined in the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan.

- 1. Explain any special circumstances affecting the land or structure (related to soil conditions, shape or topography) that are unusual and do not affect other properties and any hardship that results from these special circumstances.*

Special circumstances affecting the land relative to the proposed project is the shape of the lot which is located in a Business B zoning district. The shape of this parcel and the nature of the existing parking requirement create an inefficient layout with regard to site design as a majority of the site is necessary to be designated for parking, which still does not meet the parking requirement. Therefore, the proposed building must be taller than the existing zoning permits, to allow the maximum area of the lot to be designated as surface parking. Reducing the height of the building would make the project no longer feasible and while the site plan could incorporate more parking, this would be done at the expense of eliminating landscape and open space. This would not be an appropriate balance as, for the new transit station and gateway corridor to be a successful mixed-use and transit-oriented transformational district, quality public space and a pedestrian friendly corridor will need to incorporate green and open space.

- 2. Explain if and how the variance is the minimum approval necessary to grant reasonable relief to the owner and results in a reasonable use of the land or structure.*

The height and parking variances are the minimum necessary to grant reasonable relief for the applicant. Due to goals of having a substantial transit oriented development at this site and the parking requirements, a project would be difficult to present on this site that would not require a variance. Meeting the parking requirement or reducing the height of the building would change the project to a degree that would not match the urban design standards and transportation demand data that point to a project of this quality and magnitude.

- 3. Explain if and how the granting of the variance will be in harmony with the SZO and will not be injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare.*

The granting of the height and parking variances will be in harmony with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance and not be injurious to the neighborhood or otherwise detrimental to the public welfare, as the proposed structure and uses are consistent with the SomerVision Comprehensive Plan which identifies this corridor as a transformational area. This proposal is also consistent with

early results of the Inner Belt/Brickbottom Plan, which identifies transportation improvements and appropriate zoning for a successful pedestrian and transit-oriented district.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit with Site Plan Review under SZO §7.11.1.c; Special Permits under SZO §9.13.d & §9.13.e; and Variances under §8.5.F and §9.5.1.a

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 requested **SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW and VARIANCES**.

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 a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to construct 159 dwelling units with a ground floor commercial component, a Special Permit to park on a separate lot, a Special Permit for shared parking, a Variance for height, and a Variance for parking relief. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant: | CO / BP | ISD/Plng. | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>(June 11, 2013)</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>January 31, 2013 (September 12, 2013)</td> <td>Subdivision plan submitted to OSPCD</td> </tr> <tr> <td>September 11, 2013 (September 12, 2013)</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (T, A0.1, C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, C-6, C-7, Ex-1, L-1, L-2, A1.00, A1.01, A3.01, A3.02, A3.03, A3.04, & A3.05)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>September 4, 2013 (September 12, 2013)</td> <td>Balcony Study</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | | | Date (Stamp Date) | Submission | (June 11, 2013) | Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office | January 31, 2013 (September 12, 2013) | Subdivision plan submitted to OSPCD | September 11, 2013 (September 12, 2013) | Plans submitted to OSPCD (T, A0.1, C-1, C-2, C-3, C-4, C-5, C-6, C-7, Ex-1, L-1, L-2, A1.00, A1.01, A3.01, A3.02, A3.03, A3.04, & A3.05) | September 4, 2013 (September 12, 2013) | Balcony Study |
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| September 4, 2013 (September 12, 2013) | Balcony Study | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Affordable Housing/Linkage | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | Affordable Housing Implementation Plan (AHIP) should be approved by the OSPCD Housing Division and executed prior to issuance of Building Permit. Affordable units shall be provided on-site. | BP | Housing | | | | | | | | | | | |

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|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------|---------|--|
| 3 | Written certification of the creation of affordable housing units, any fractional payment required, or alternative methods of compliance, must be obtained from the OSPCD Housing Division before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.). No C.O. shall be issued until the OSPCD Housing Division has confirmed that the Affordable Housing Restriction has been approved and recorded and the developer has provided the promised affordable units on-site. | CO | Housing | |
| Pre-Construction | | | | |
| 4 | The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to obtain a street address prior to a building permit being issued. | BP | Eng | |
| 5 | The Applicant shall work with the Engineering Department to determine the street name should be for the private road. | BP | Eng. | |
| 6 | The Applicant will be required to demonstrate that the updated project plans meet the current City of Somerville stormwater policy. Utility, grading, and drainage plans must be submitted to the Engineering Department for review and approval. | BP | Eng. | |
| 7 | The Applicant shall submit a proposed grading and drainage plan, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts that demonstrates compliance with the City's stormwater policy. | BP | Eng. | |
| 8 | The Applicant shall develop a demolition plan in consultation with the City of Somerville Inspectional Services Division. Full compliance with proper demolition procedures shall be required, including timely advance notification to abutters of demolition date and timing, good rodent control measures (i.e. rodent baiting), minimization of dust, noise, odor, and debris outfall, and sensitivity to existing landscaping on adjacent sites. | Demolition Permitting | ISD | |
| Construction Impacts | | | | |
| 9 | 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. | |
| 10 | The Applicant shall at his expense replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard. | CO | DPW | |
| 11 | 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 | |
| Design | | | | |
| 12 | Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, doors, and light fixtures (to the Design Review Committee for review and comment) and to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to construction. | BP | Plng. | |

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|-------------|--|------------------------------|---------------------|--|
| 13 | Each balcony shall be sized to accommodate a circle with a diameter of five feet. | BP | Plng. | |
| 14 | The address, 90 Washington, illustrated on the east facing ribbon element between the East and Middle blocks shall be written vertically, so as to read from top to bottom. | BP | Plng. | |
| 15 | The Applicant shall continue to work with Planning Staff on the square projecting element of the east elevation of the East Block. Staff shall approve this component prior to a building permit being issued. | BP | Plng. | |
| Site | | | | |
| 16 | Landscaping should be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards; | Perpetual | Plng. / ISD | |
| 17 | There shall be a 6 foot deep landscape buffer between the road and sidewalk along New Washington Street. This landscaped buffer shall have street trees placed between 20 to 30 feet apart on center. This sidewalk shall be at least 5 feet wide and constructed in accordance with City standards. | BP | Plng./ISD | |
| 18 | There shall be a minimum of one tree for each 1,000 sf of required landscaped area under SZO §10.3. | BP | Plng./ISD | |
| 19 | The electric, telephone, cable TV and other such lines and equipment shall be placed underground from the source or connection. The utilities plan shall be supplied to the Wiring Inspector before installation. | Installation of Utilities | Wiring Inspector | |
| 20 | The small landscape area adjacent the Washington St parking lot shall have a 5' diagonal pedestrian path with no less than 2 benches, facing the path. The remainder of this area shall be grass, shrubs, and trees. The Applicant shall submit a plan and receive Staff approval regarding this space prior to receiving a building permit. | BP | Plng. | |
| 21 | All new sidewalks will be installed by the Applicant in accordance with the specifications of the Highway Superintendent. Specifically, all driveway aprons shall be concrete. | CO | Plng. | |
| 22 | Evergreen trees and shrubs, similar to those that surround the transformer, shall be added throughout the rest of the rear parking lot area. There shall be a minimum of 75 evergreen trees/shrubs added to this lot beyond what is illustrated and does not include the proposed deciduous trees. | CO | Plng. | |
| 23 | Applicant will supply 11 bicycle racks, as specified on the plans, for public use, to be located along sidewalks throughout the site. | CO | Plng. | |
| 24 | All new streets shall be constructed by the Applicant in accordance with the specifications of the Highway Superintendent and in accordance with City standards. | CO | ISD | |
| 25 | If not taken off-site, snow plowed from the development can only be stored in the landscaped area in the back of the site. | Cont. | ISD | |

| Plaza Design | | | | |
|------------------------------|--|----|-----------------|--|
| 26 | To create seating immediately accessible from the sidewalk, the planters along the Washington Street and New Washington Street in the plaza shall provide additional seating ledges adjacent to the sidewalk at a minimum depth of 22 inches. | CO | Plng. | |
| 27 | All seating in the plaza is required to be a height between 16 and 30 inches above grade (adjacent walking surfaces). Deterrents to seating, such as spikes, rails, or deliberately uncomfortable materials or shapes, placed on surfaces that would otherwise be suitable for seating are prohibited. Deterrents to skateboards, rollerblades and other wheeled devices are permitted on seating surfaces if they do not inhibit seating, maintain a minimum distance of five feet between deterrents, and are integrated into the seating surface at the time of manufacture or construction. | CO | Plng. | |
| 28 | A minimum of 50% of the seats in the plaza shall have seat backs that are a minimum of 14 inches high and either contoured in form for comfort or reclined between 10 to 15 degrees from vertical. Walls located adjacent to a seating surface shall not count as seat backs. | CO | Plng. | |
| 29 | Movable chairs shall not be chained, fixed, or otherwise secured while a civic space is open to the public, however may be removed during the hours of 9:00pm to 7:00am. | CO | Plng. | |
| 30 | Four litter receptacles shall be provided in the plaza that are 30 to 50 gallon containers with an opening no more than 36 inches above grade and designed in such a manner that users do not have to touch the receptacle or push open a door in order to dispose of litter. Litter receptacles shall be constructed of durable materials that are graffiti-, fire-, rust-, and stain-resistant and function to permit emptying from the top. Litter receptacles should be located near entrances to civic spaces and within reasonable proximity to seating areas. Plazas that contain open air cafes or kiosks providing food service shall provide one additional litter receptacle for each 1,500 square feet of plaza area occupied by such outdoor eating area. | CO | Plng. | |
| 31 | Final materials for the plaza shall be reviewed by the Design Review Committee and approved by Planning Staff. | BP | Plng. | |
| 32 | Final plant selections for the plaza and the overall site shall be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff | BP | Plng. | |
| Traffic & Parking | | | | |
| 33 | A state of the art traffic controller (a TS 2, Type 2 traffic controller) shall be purchased by the developer and then installed by a contractor suitable and approved by the City. | CO | Traffic/Pk g | |
| 34 | The developer shall have a contractor, approved by Traffic and Parking, repaint all the pavement markings on Washington St, from New Washington St to the Boston city/line, as well as inventory and replace all signs along the above described corridor. | CO | Traffic/Pk g | |

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|----------------------|--|-------------------------------|----------------|--|
| 35 | Not before one year after full occupancy of the building and during the school year, the owner shall submit a parking study to the City that includes parking counts of the parking lot in the evening for weekday 8 nights and parking counts of the area surrounding the subject site as defined in the baseline parking study dated August 7, 2013. Only if the parking lot is 95% occupied for 7 of the 8 nights and overflow parking has extended into the surrounding area as compared to the baseline parking study, the owner shall construct the 55 space overflow parking lot. | One year after full occupancy | Plng. | |
| 36 | Documentation detailing how 34 spaces of parking will be shared between the residential and retail components shall be submitted to Planning Staff. | CO | Plng. | |
| Miscellaneous | | | | |
| 37 | 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 | |
| 38 | The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of new private street located between Cobble Hill Apartments and the proposed development. This includes but is not limited to general maintenance, snow plowing, sweeping etc. | Cont. | ISD | |
| Public Safety | | | | |
| 39 | The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements. | CO | FP | |
| 40 | The fire lane shall be clearly marked and no less than 18 feet in width. | CO | FP | |
| 41 | Any transformers should be located as not to impact the building or landscaped area. | Elec.permits & CO | ISD | |
| 42 | Notification must be made, within the time period required under applicable regulations, to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) if there is any release of oil, hazardous materials, or regulated hazardous substances at the site. The City's OSE office, Fire Department and the Board of Health shall also be notified. | CO | OSE/FP/B OH | |
| 43 | If there unknown underground fuel tanks on this site, these are to be removed under the supervision of the Fire Prevention Bureau. Permits will be required for these removals. | CO | FP | |
| 44 | To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties. | CO | Plng. | |
| 45 | The Applicant shall provide notice of intent to strictly comply with applicable State and Federal regulations regarding air quality including without limitation continuous dust control during demolition and construction. | CO | Plng/OSE | |
| Signage | | | | |
| 46 | Signage will be limited in size and location to that shown in the elevation diagrams. Applicant shall provide signage, including lighting and material, (to the Design Review Committee for review and comment and) to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to Installation. | BP For signage | Plng. | |

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|-----------------------|---|----------------|-------|--|
| 47 | Signage may remain lit until the last business establishment has closes operations for the day, this includes both retail and residential signage and will likely be different between weekday and weekend. | Perpetual | ISD | |
| Final Sign-Off | | | | |
| 48 | 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. | |

90 Washington Street

