



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2013-04
Date: February 28, 2013
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 150 & 200 Inner Belt Road

Applicant Name: Fine Art Storage Partners (Somerville) LLC

Applicant Address: 9600 Blackwell Rd #200, Rockville, MD 20850 Attn: John Austin

Property Owner Name: same

Agent Name: John Slater III

Agent Address: Sherin and Lodgen LLP, 101 Federal Street, Boston, MA 02110

Alderman: Maureen Cuff-Bastardi

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner, Fine Art Storage Partners (Somerville) LLC, seek a Site Plan Approval for a subdivision under SZO §5.4 to divide a 368,388 sf lot into two lots.

Zoning District/Ward: IA / 1

Zoning Approval Sought: Site Plan Approval under SZO §5.4

Date of Application: Feb 4, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board Mar 7, 2013

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject parcel is a 368,388 square foot parcel on which sits a four-story, approximately 190,000 square foot building and 209 parking spaces. The building is occupied by an office, a fine arts storage facility, art preservation space and space for Harvard University Art Museum. Typical days and hours of operation are Monday through Friday from 7am to 6pm with occasional weekends when sufficient notice is provided to the landlord. There are approximately 130 employees at the site during regular daytime hours.

In March of 2000 (appeal # 2000-06) the Zoning Board of Appeals issued a Special Permit with Site Plan Review and a variance for height for two buildings, each totaling approximately 190,000 sf and 64 ft in height. The use was projected to be telecommunication businesses in 75% of the space. The remaining

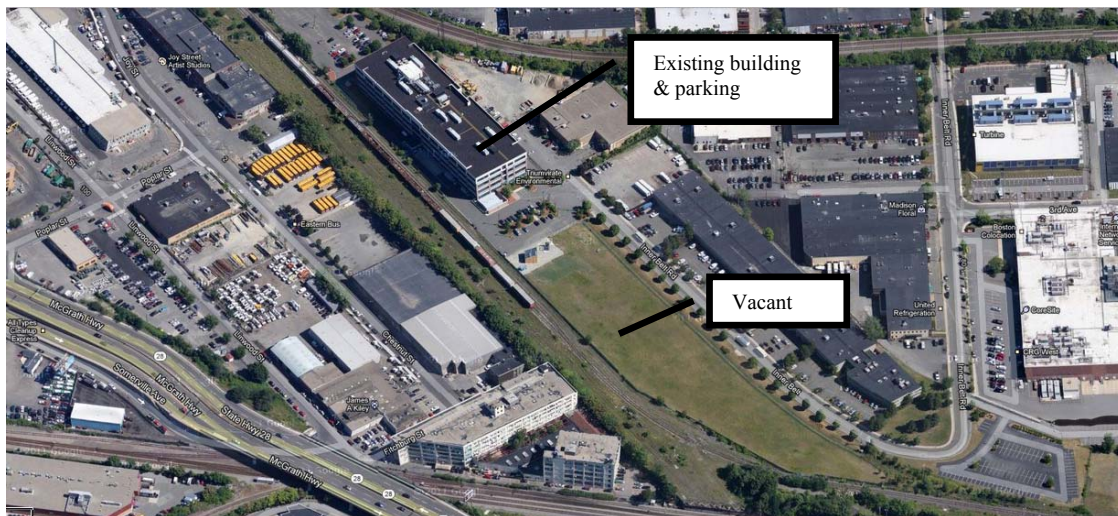


25% of the buildings would be devoted to general office use with the build-out to be done by the tenants. Site improvements included surface parking for approximately 335-400 cars, landscaping and an underground storm water drainage system. The plan referenced were stamped in at the City Clerk's Office on January 14, 2000 as well as supplemental materials submitted on January 26, 2000, except for the layout plan. The layout plan is dated February 15, 2000. Only one of the buildings has been constructed and the remainder of the site that was a parking garage in the final plans is a grassy field.

In September of 2001 (appeal #2001-63) the site was granted a variance to construct a ten foot high masonry block wall to screen an electrical switchgear area. In November 2001 (appeal #2001-66) the site was granted permission to change the use to a biotechnology manufacturing and laboratory use. Plans are from 2000-06 approval and additional plans are dated September 27, 2001.

In 2005 the Zoning Board allowed 200 Inner Belt to become wholesale storage to use the existing building as an arts storage facility. A few revisions to the originally approved plans were granted to enclose a loading dock, reduce the number of parking spaces, erect a mechanical penthouse on the roof and replace tinted glass with clear glass.

Later permits (# 2011-24) allowed for 25,000 square feet of building to return to an office use and continue the wholesale business or storage use in the remaining 135,000 square feet.



150-200 Inner Belt Road

2. Proposal: The proposal is to subdivide the existing 368,388 square foot lot into two lots. The existing building and associated parking will be on a lot that is 178,697 square feet (labeled A1-1) and the vacant parcel will be 189,691 square feet (labeled A1-2). It is not yet known who will develop the lot. The owner is subdividing the land in order to put it on the market and will determine the next steps depending upon offers received.

3. Nature of Application: In order to subdivide the lot, the Applicant requires Site Plan Approval under SZO §5.4 and §8.8. A subdivision that only creates one new lot is classified as a minor project under SZO §5.4.5 and the rules and regulations pertaining to site plan approval; however, due to the large size of the parcels and extensive prior zoning approvals on the site, it will go before the full Board for a public hearing.

If the land is subdivided the parcels would continue to meet the dimensional requirements for the Industrial-A (IA) district in §8.5. The table contains the required dimensions and the proposed dimensions for the subdivided parcels.

Dimension	Required	Parcel A1-1	Parcel A1-2
Min Lot Size	None	178,697 (4.1 acres)	189,691 (4.3 acres)
Lot Area per Dwelling Unit	875 sf / 1000 sf	N/A - use is office/storage	N/A - residential is not allowed in IA
Max Ground Coverage	80%	27%	Future structures will need to comply
Min Landscaped Area	10%	20%	Future site plan will need to comply
Floor Area Ratio	2.0	0.85	Future structures will need to comply
Height	50 feet	64 feet (received variance)	Future structures will need to comply
Setbacks	None	Front – 32 ft 2 in Rear – 35 ft Left Side – 164 ft Right Side – 172 ft 4 in	None required
Frontage	None	184 ft	878 ft
Pervious Surface	None	20%	None required
# Parking Spaces	Dependent on use	209	Future site plan will need to comply
# Bicycle Parking Spaces	Dependent on use	12	Future site plan/building will need to comply
# Loading Docks	Dependent on use	2	Future site plan/building will need to comply

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding area primarily consists of industrial and office uses. The closest residential building to the property is the Brickbottom Artist complex, which is located a considerable distance away, on the opposite side of the railroad tracks that run along the rear of the building.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The City is currently working on a neighborhood plan for the Inner Belt area. The plan is scheduled to be complete in June of 2013. One early recommendation of the plan that relates to this application calls for property owners to work together to develop land so that the current lack of access to parcels and odd-shaped parcels are able to be developed in a logical way. Another early recommendation is that there is a future connection from Inner Belt Road, over the 150 Inner Belt property and the rail road tracks to the Brickbottom neighborhood.

Since there is a substantial building at 200 Inner Belt that is fully tenanted and in good condition, it would likely not be redeveloped along with the vacant portion of the parcel. The subdivision would therefore not create a situation where a larger site would be required to develop the vacant land to get the highest and best use of the property. Additionally, the subdivided parcel is large in size and could easily gain access to Inner Belt Road with the installation of a curb cut along its extensive frontage. The subdivision may expedite the development of this land with non-residential uses (since they are not allowed under the current zoning district) that would increase the number of jobs and tax base in the City.

6. Green Building Practices: No construction is proposed at this time. The owner and applicant are not aware of any 21E reports, environmental assessments, analysis, clean-up studies, enforcement actions or environmental documentation, including underground storage tanks associated with the property.

II. FINDINGS FOR SITE PLAN APPROVAL (SZO §5.4):

In order to grant a site plan approval, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.4.4 and 5.4.6 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.4.4 and 5.4.6 in detail.

1. *The Planning Board “shall approve a submission in the form submitted or with reasonable conditions pertaining to the purpose of this Section 5.4 unless the Planning Board finds that:*

- 1. The submission is incomplete;*
- 2. The imposition of reasonable conditions would not ensure that the project would conform to the standards and criteria set forth in Section 5.4.6; and*
- 3. The project does not comply with other specifically applicable requirements of this Ordinance.”*

The Applicant has provided a complete application, reasonable conditions can be placed on the proposal to ensure that the project conforms to the standards and criteria set forth in Section 5.4.6, and the project complies with applicable requirements of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

2. *The development complies with all standards set forth for the overlay district in which it is located.*

The subject property is not located within an overlay district.

3. *“The development shall be integrated into the existing terrain and surrounding landscape. Building sites shall, to the extent feasible: minimize use of wetlands, steep slopes, floodplains, hilltops; preserve natural or historic features; maximize open space retention; preserve scenic views from publicly accessible locations; minimize tree, vegetation and soil removal, blasting and grade changes; screen objectionable features from neighboring properties and roadways.”*

There are no wetlands, floodplains or hilltops located onsite. The site is relatively flat and there are no trees to preserve. Future development will be evaluated to determine if the plan has sufficient screening of objectionable features from neighboring properties and roadway.

4. *“The development shall be served with adequate water supply and sewage disposal systems. For structures to be served by sewage disposal systems, the applicant shall document the status of Department of Environmental Management (DEM) and/or other sewage permits.”*

The future developers of the site will have to work with the Department of Public Works and the DEM to ensure that adequate water supply and sewage disposal systems are satisfactory to these departments.

5. *“The development shall incorporate measures that are adequate to prevent pollution of surface and groundwater, to minimize erosion and sedimentation, and to prevent changes in groundwater levels, increased rates of runoff and minimize potential for flooding. Drainage shall be designed so that groundwater recharge is maximized, and at the project boundaries the runoff shall not be increased in amount or velocity.”*

Any future development on the lot would have to conform to the requirements of the City's Engineering Department for stormwater management.

6. *"To the extent feasible, development shall minimize demands placed on municipal services and infrastructure."*

The subdivision should not place any unforeseen demand on municipal services and infrastructure. However, any future development of either lot will be subject to all applicable requirements.

7. *"The development shall provide for safe vehicular and pedestrian movement within the site and to adjacent ways, including sidewalks, crosswalks and the like."*

The location of a curb cut and onsite pedestrian walkways have not yet been designed; however, there is sufficient street frontage so locating a curb cut in a location that is safe for vehicles and pedestrians should be achievable.

8. *"Building design and landscaping shall be in harmony with the prevailing character and scale of buildings in the neighborhood through the use of appropriate building materials, screening, and other architectural techniques."*

A new building is not yet designed for the site. If it requires a special permit to be built, the character and the scale of the building will be evaluated at that time.

9. *"Electric, telephone, cable TV and other such utilities shall be underground except where this cannot be accomplished because it is physically or environmentally infeasible, in which case such utilities shall be screened."*

Any future development of either lot will be subject to all applicable requirements.

10. *"Exposed storage areas, machinery, service areas, truck loading areas, utility buildings and structures and other unsightly uses shall be set back and/or screened to protect neighbors from objectionable features."*

A new building is not yet designed for the site. If it requires a special permit to be built, the character and the scale of the building will be evaluated at that time.

11. *"To the extent feasible, proposed projects shall be designed in such a way as to minimize shadows on neighboring properties."*

A new building is not yet designed for the site. If it requires a special permit to be built and there are concerns about the shadow of the building, a shadow study will be evaluated at that time.

12. *"There shall be no unreasonable glare onto public roads and other public ways into the night sky, or onto neighboring properties from lighting or reflection."*

A new building or site plan is not yet designed for the site. If it requires a special permit to be built, glare onto neighboring properties will be evaluated at that time.

13. *"The site plan shall comply with all zoning requirements."*

No new zoning violations would be created by the proposed subdivision. There are no minimum lot size and minimum frontage requirements set forth in Article 8 of the Ordinance; however, both sites would be over 4 acres and have large frontages which allows for substantial development that conform to the required dimensions and the neighborhood plan to have large-scale developments in this area. After subdivision, the existing structure continues to conform to the requirements for floor area ratio, ground coverage, landscaped area, building height (which was allowed by variance) and parking. When the structure on the new lot is designed, it will be subject to all applicable zoning.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Site Plan Approval under §8.8 & 5.4

Based upon the application submitted and the above findings, the Planning Staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the requested **SITE PLAN APPROVAL**.

Approval is based upon the Subdivision Plan prepared by Design Consultants, Inc. and dated January 23, 2013. The Applicant shall submit to the City of Somerville Assessing Department and Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development the certified copies of the recorded/registered documents.

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.

