



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*
AMIE HAYES, *PLANNER*
MELISSA WOODS, *PLANNER*
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: ZBA 2014-86
Date: September 25, 2014
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 355 Medford Street

Applicant & Owner Name: Gerald Amazu

Applicant & Owner Address: 355 Medford Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Agent: Cynthia Snow

Agent Address: 403 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144

Alderman: Tony Lafuente

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Gerald Amazu, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §9.13.a for two spaces of parking relief due to a by-right third dwelling unit. BA zone. Ward 4.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals - October 1, 2014

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject parcel is 3,555 square feet and composed of a two-family dwelling. There is currently no parking on-site. There is 46% landscaping onsite, the FAR is 1.00. The dwelling is located along Medford Street, near the corner of School Street, north of City Hall. Surrounding mix of uses include auto-service and residential while a vacant industrial building is located directly across Medford Street. There has been no prior zoning relief.



355 Medford Street with adjacent auto-service use

2. Proposal: The Applicant seeks parking relief for two spaces due to the addition of a by-right third dwelling unit to be located in the basement of the existing building. The resulting floor area ratio would remain the same as the basement area is currently finished space.

3. Green Building Practices: None are indicated on the application.

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has not yet submitted comments.

Traffic & Parking: Has been contacted and has requested a parking study due to the request for two spaces of parking relief.

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted but has not yet submitted comments.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §9.13.a):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied:

The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

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."*

Under SZO §9.13, the SPGA may grant a special permit to modify certain parking standards. Due to the existing non-conforming parking status, parking relief for a third unit requires Special Permit approval under §9.13.a.

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.

The current two-family dwelling operates without any on-site parking. The addition of one dwelling unit without parking will most likely lead to an occupant without a vehicle. This location is directly across from the future Gilman Square Green Line Station and has easy access to public transit and nearby amenities.

3. Consistency with Purposes: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and*

specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles.”

The proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to promoting “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; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.”

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the Business A district, §6.1.6, which is, “To establish and preserve business areas bordering main thoroughfares that are attractive to a wide range of uses, including retail business and services, housing, government, professional and medical offices, and places of amusement. While it is anticipated that most users will arrive by motor vehicle, it is intended that the area should be safe for and conducive to pedestrian traffic.”

The requested parking relief for one dwelling unit in an area that is soon to be served by rapid transit is consistent with the district as the residential will support nearby services. The location of this parcel is directly adjacent to the future transit station which has been identified in SomerVision as an area to enhance.

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.

The current two-family dwelling operates without any on-site parking. The addition of one dwelling unit without parking will most likely lead to an occupant without a vehicle. This location is directly across from the future Gilman Square Green Line Station and has easy access to public transit and nearby amenities.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project “(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses.”*

This location is within a close proximity to the new Gilman Square Green Line Station and has been identified as an area to enhance. Surrounding current mix of uses include auto-service and residential while a vacant industrial building is located directly across Medford Street. The future of this square is to become a pedestrian-centered with a mix of amenities and services.

The proposal is consistent with the Gilman Square Station Area Plan as this reduces parking, enhances the pedestrian quality of the square and maintains the existing building, including footprint.

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

The circulation patterns for vehicles and pedestrians would not result in traffic congestion, a decrease in pedestrian safety, or have the potential to cause traffic accidents.

7. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

This proposal will not directly affect the number of affordable housing units; however, increasing the number of residential units within an area that is directly served by rapid transit will serve the overall increase in housing demand.

8. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*

<i>SomerVision Summary</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	2	3
<i>Parking Spaces:</i>	0	0

The proposal complies with SomerVision, in that this is an area to enhance, which is accomplished by preserving the character of the area. This proposal does not increase the area devoted to parking within a location served by rapid transit and balances the mix of uses as this additional unit without parking will support the services and amenities of Gilman Square.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §9.13.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**.

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
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1	Approval is for a Special Permit under SZO §9.13.a for two spaces of parking relief due to a by-right third dwelling unit. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/ Plng.	
	Date (Stamp Date) Submission			
	(August 28, 2014) Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office			
	December 29, 2002 Plot plan submitted to OSPCD (September 24, 2014)			
	November 21, 2007 Floor plan submitted to OSPCD (September 24, 2014)			
	Any changes to the approved that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.			
Public Safety				
2	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
Final Sign-Off				
3	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.	

