



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2016-20
Date: December 1st, 2016
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: NorthPoint – Dawes Street

Applicant Name: DW NP Property, LLC
Applicant Address: One Kendall Square, Suite B3201, Cambridge, MA 02139
Owner Name: DW NP Property, LLC
Owner Address: One Kendall Square, Suite B3201, Cambridge, MA 02139
Agent: Thomas N. O'Brien
Agent Address: One Congress Street, 10th Floor, Boston, MA 02114
Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: NorthPoint Dawes Street - Design & Site Plan Review: (Case # PB 2016-20)
Applicant/Owner DW NP Property LLC requests an Design & Site Plan Review under §6.6.5 for a section of Dawes Street within Somerville city limits of the overall project area. North Point Special District (NPSD). Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: December 8th, 2016

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property:

“NorthPoint” refers to an area of land along the north bank of the Charles River, over sixty acres in total, inclusive of the area north of Msgr. O'Brien Highway from the MBTA's Fitchburg line right-of-way to the Charles River, on both sides of the Charlestown Avenue (Gilmore) Bridge. The Site is currently undeveloped vacant former railroad land. The surrounding roadway network is currently undergoing preliminary construction preparation.

The NorthPoint project (the “Project”) consists of a total of a 5,245,854 square foot (“sf”) gross floor area (“GFA”) mixed-use campus (3,060,792 sf residential; 2,185,062 sf commercial). The Site consists of approximately 45 acres, comprised of land in Somerville, Boston, and Cambridge. Approximately 4.688 acres of the Site is located within Somerville.

2. Proposal:

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

Dawes Street is a thoroughfare completely internal to the NorthPoint Development. The alignment is primarily in Cambridge with only a short section passing through Somerville. This proposal continues the street section design and details of the Cambridge portions through Somerville for streetscape consistency along the full length of the street.



3. Green Building Practices:

This application is solely for a section of thoroughfare. The section will include a planting area for street trees which will absorb some stormwater run-off but the majority of green practices will be incorporated into the civic spaces and building design.

4. Comments:

Comments from additional City Departments have been incorporated in to the body of this report.

The Design Review Committee did discuss the proposal at the November 10th, 2016 meeting. A quorum was present and the committee was supportive of the Neighborhood Development Plan Amendment, the Special Permit application for the loading docks on Dawes Street, and the conceptual building design. They requested that the project’s elevations, and/or renderings, be presented to the committee at the time of Building Permit application for initial review of material specifications. The project will be reviewed a

one final time for color and texture palette, via an on-site mock-up panel or sample materials board, prior to material installation. These conditions will be added to the Design and Site Plan submission.

II. FINDINGS FOR DESIGN & SITE PLAN REVIEW (SZO §6.6.3.B & 6.6.9):

Based on review of the submitted Design & Site Plan Review Application, Staff finds that the proposal meets all of the requirements outlined in §6.6.3 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through the findings required by §6.6.3.B in detail.

1. Submittal and Review.

The submission includes all the required elements for a complete application. The alignment, connectivity, and/or lane geometry of the thoroughfares are consistent with the previously approved Amendment to the Neighborhood Development Plan (NDP). A Design & Site Plan application for building types has been submitted simultaneously but will be reviewed separately.

2. Scope.

This application is for the Somerville portion of Dawes Street only but the submission includes the length of the thoroughfare, regardless of municipal boundaries, as required

3. Findings and Compliance.

a. Thoroughfares.

Staff finds that the proposal is;

- In conformance to the adopted master plan of the City of Somerville, existing policy plans and standards established by the City, or to other plans deemed to be appropriate by the Planning Board;
- Exhibits consistency with the purpose of the NPSD and of this Ordinance in general;
- Meets the alignment, connectivity, and lane geometry of thoroughfares approved as part of a neighborhood development plan for the development site; and
- Is in compliance with the provisions set forth in Section 6.6.5 Thoroughfares.

b. Civic Spaces.

This section is not applicable to this application.

c. Lots.

This section is not applicable to this application.

This section of the report goes through the findings required by other sections of the NPSD in detail.

6.6.4. Urban Design.

A. Thoroughfare Network.

Dawes Street intersects with other thoroughfares forming a network throughout the NDP and aligns wherever possible to those on adjacent sites. The Somerville length is consistent with the alignment of the Cambridge lengths on either side.

B. Block Structure.

This particular length of Dawes Street does not intersect with other thoroughfares. However, the design of the overall thoroughfare network meets the requirements for block structure to the extent possible.

C. Lots.

As with comments above, this particular length of Dawes Street is only forms a partial frontage of Parcel JK. However, this application also provides the full frontage of future Parcel EF which does meet the lot width requirement.

6.6.5. Thoroughfares.

A. & B. Thoroughfares shall be designed and constructed in accordance with the City of Somerville's adopted thoroughfare design standards and coordinated with the thoroughfare section at the Cambridge portions at either end.

C. Vehicular lanes and sidewalks

1. Motor Vehicle Travel Lanes.

Motor vehicle travel lanes are the minimum width of ten (10) feet with one lane in each direction.

2. Motor Vehicle Parking Lanes.

Motor vehicle parallel parking lanes are shown at 7' wide including the gutter pan which meets the requirement of eight (8) feet wide or narrower. Gutter seams, drainage inlets, and utility covers shall be flush with the pavement surface and catch basins will have cascade grates to prevent conflicts with bicycle tires.

3. Bike Lanes.

The bike lanes shown on the Pavement Marking and Signage Plan meet the minimum requirements specified by the NPSD. However, there are some recommended adjustments to the information shown on the drawing package:

- The westbound bike lane could potentially be widened from 5.5' to 6' and the eastbound bike lane could be narrowed from 5.5' to 5' along this section, which could help mitigate the dooring hazard for westbound cyclists.
- Shared lane markings could be added within the two decision point zones going North to South across the Dawes/North First Street intersection (adjacent to crosswalks crossing Dawes)

4. Sidewalks.

All new sidewalks are shown in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rules and Regulations of the Massachusetts Access Board (521 CMR). Sidewalks include a walkway and furnishing zone, and meet the minimum combined dimension of 10'. In areas with on-street loading or drop-off, the furnishing zone is eliminated and the walkway remains a width of 7', which is still over the 6' minimum.

Street trees planted within the furnishing zone in a regularly-spaced pattern no greater than thirty (30) feet on center and will be a minimum height of ten (10) feet and/or two (2) inches in caliper when planted. A waiver was recently granted with the Amendment to the Approved NorthPoint Neighborhood Development Plan (case # PB 2014-29-MA-0916) for the street tree grating and fencing requirements contained in Section 6.6.5.C.4.e to allow the planting condition to remain consistent along Dawes Street through both Somerville and Cambridge.

The Urban Forester reviewed the landscape layout. In Somerville, there are currently only 2 *Gymnocladus dioicus* trees indicating that the species may not be hardy in an urban environment in this planting zone. Staff recommends, and will add a condition to this approval, that the species not be included along the Somerville portion of Dawes Street and should be replaced with one of the other listed species on the Planting Schedule of Sheet L1.01.

5. Sidewalk Extensions.

Somerville requires that sidewalk extensions occupy the full width of the parking lane they extend into and when a bike lane is present, sidewalk extensions shall be set back so that the gutter does not extend into the bike lane. This is a different detail than the standard section used by the City of Cambridge.

As shown on Sheet 4.0 “Pavement Marking and Signage”, the western connection of the Somerville portion of Dawes Street (at the end of North First Street) shows a 2.5’ offset occurring at the apron for a future driveway access. This condition will appear as a construction mistake and may create drainage problems due to awkward geometry. Staff recommends that the alignment to the west (in the City of Cambridge) be maintained across the concrete driveway apron and the pedestrian crosswalk to match the condition at the east end of the Somerville portion of Dawes Street. Staff recommends conditioning this minor change as part of the approval.

6. Pedestrian Crosswalks.

The crosswalk design should be consistent throughout the intersections for streetscape consistency. The application shows the pedestrian crosswalks on Dawes Street as meeting the Somerville pavement marking standards. However, the details of the crosswalks in Somerville should be changed to match the other crosswalks throughout the neighborhood and meet the standards specified by the City of Cambridge. Staff recommends including a condition for matching crosswalks to any approval.

7. Driveway and Alley Crossings.

The wide driveway at the four loading docks cross the sidewalk on the southside of Dawes Street. The grade and clear width of the walkway area will be maintained, along any with any walkway scoring pattern or special paving. It is difficult to determine from the information supplied if sloped flares will be provided on either side of the driveway apron as shown in Figure 6.5: Driveway and Alley Crossings. Staff recommends conditioning any approval to include the flared detail and retaining the sidewalk design details across the vehicular drive.

D. This length of Dawes Street does not include any thoroughfare designed as a close.

E. All water and sewer utilities, storm water management infrastructure, public lighting, and public furniture will be consistent in design and constructed according to criteria established by the City of Cambridge for Dawes Street.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit with Design & Site Plan Review under §6.6.3.C & §6.6.10.G.1

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the submitted **SPECIAL PERMIT with DESIGN & SITE PLAN REVIEW**.

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

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes				
1	Approval is for the NorthPoint Dawes Street Design & Site Plan application. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	DSP/BP/CO	Planning/ISD					
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>November 3, 2016</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	November 3, 2016	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices
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November 3, 2016	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices							
Any changes to the approved special permit that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive approval from the Planning Board.								
Design								
2	The details of the crosswalks shall match other crosswalks throughout the neighborhood and, therefore, meet the standards specified by the City of Cambridge.	BP	Planning/Engineering					
3	Sloped flares shall be provided on either side of the driveway apron as shown in Figure 6.3: Driveway and Alley Crossings.	BP	Planning/Engineering					
4	Sheet 4.0 “Pavement Marking and Signage”, and subsequent detailed engineering drawings, shall be changed to eliminate a 2.5’ offset occurring at the apron for a future driveway access at the western connection of the Somerville portion of Dawes Street (at the end of North First Street). The alignment to the west (in the City of Cambridge) shall be maintained across the concrete driveway apron and the pedestrian crosswalk - similar to the condition at the east end of the Somerville portion of Dawes Street.	BP	Planning/Engineering					
5	The 4 <i>Gymnocladus dioicus</i> trees listed species on the Planting Schedule of Sheet L1.01 shall be changed to one of the other 4 listed species.	BP/perpetual	Planning/Engineering					