



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2016-18
Date: November 10th, 2016
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: NorthPoint – Parcel JK

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 Parcel J/K: (Case # PB 2016-18) Applicant/Owner DW NP Property LLC requests a Special Permit under §6.10.G for four loading docks on the secondary front lot line as part of a Commercial Office, R&D/Laboratory, or Other Use on Parcel JK within the overall NorthPoint development site. North Point Special District (NPSD). Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: November 17th, 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 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 -- one parcel (now referred to as EF) is almost entirely in Somerville and five other parcels are partially located in Somerville. The previous application had approximately 5.36 acres including the crossover parcel transferred to the MBTA. The Site is uniquely well served by transit, specifically, the MBTA's Orange Line Community College Station and Green Line Lechmere Station. The extensive Charles River Park system, including the nine-acre North Point Park, is adjacent to the NorthPoint Site and features a convenient pedestrian/bicycle connection to Charlestown via the North Bank Bridge. Recent improvements to the area's public amenities include the Lynch Family Skatepark, a new bicycle/Hubway station, Brian P. Murphy Memorial Staircase, and an extensive community path network, which will ultimately connect to the Somerville Community Path through NorthPoint.

The Site is currently undeveloped vacant former railroad land. The surrounding roadway network is currently undergoing preliminary construction preparation.

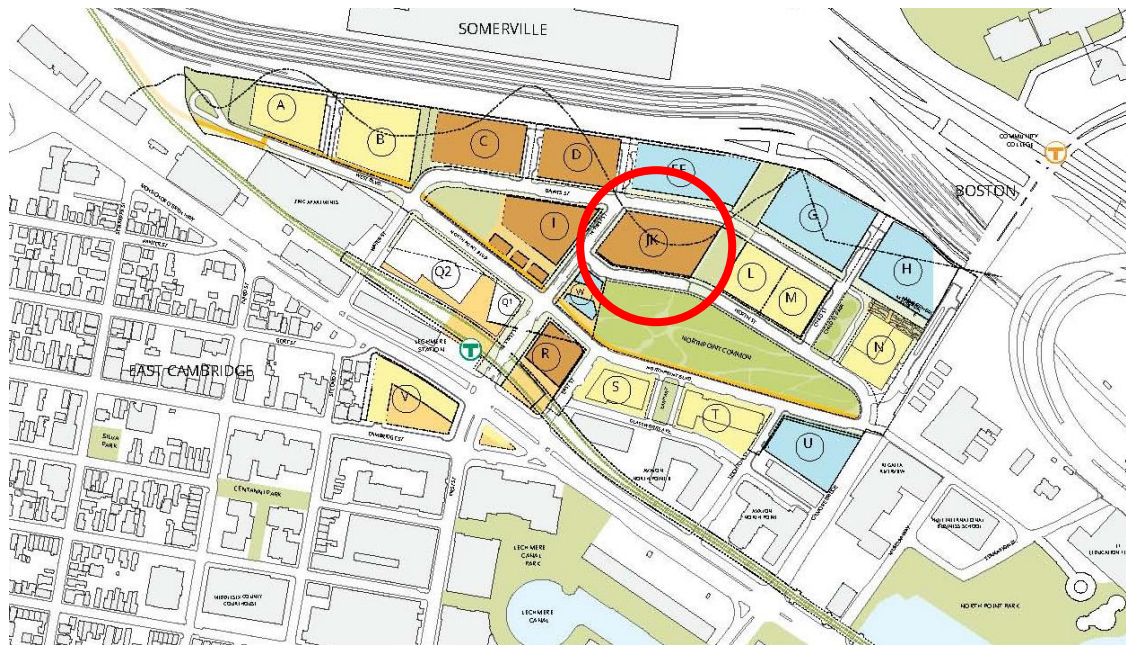


Aerial photograph of the North Point area as it exists today

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.

Parcel JK (the Site) is approximately 62,502 square feet, proposed to be located on the south side of Dawes Street, as part of the larger NorthPoint development site. The uses proposed on the site are Commercial Office, R&D and/or Laboratory, Retail and Consumer Services, or a combination of those uses. The anticipated approximate gross floor area is approximately 362,746 square feet. The proposed site is anticipated to have a ground coverage ratio of 79.9% building coverage and 20.1% open space.



The proposed use for the Site is Commercial Office, R&D and/or Laboratory, Retail and Consumer Services, or a combination of these uses. This application for Special Permit pertains to loading docks proposed along one of the secondary front lot lines on Parcel JK. The anticipated loading docks will be located along Dawes Street. Three sides of the property front on thoroughfares, with the fourth side fronting on Baldwin Park. As such, the required loading docks need to be located along a lot line fronting on a thoroughfare.

The new Parcel JK building will have a total of four loading dock bays, all of which are accessed from Dawes Street. Both the Somerville and Cambridge Zoning Ordinances require a minimum of four loading dock bays based on the size and intended use of the building. All four loading bays are enclosed behind roll up doors, which when closed; screen the loading operations from view. The doors are constructed of sectional glass and metal panels, integrated into the architectural vocabulary of the Dawes Street façade.

The westernmost loading dock bay serves the ground level retail and restaurant tenants, and is accessed via one 14'-0" (tall) x 12'-0" (wide) roll-up door. This loading bay will remain clear for active loading for the retail and restaurant tenants.

The other three central loading dock bays serve the upper floor lab and office tenants, and are combined into a common loading area, which is accessed via one 14'-0" (tall) x 12'-0" (wide) roll up door and one larger 14'-0" (tall) x 24'-0" (wide) roll up door. Two of these three bays will remain clear for active loading for the tenants, and the third will be for a waste dumpster.

There is no building mounted exterior lighting planned for the loading dock door opening. Signage pertaining to the loading docks and for the entire site will be provided as part of the Site Plan and Design Review process to be submitted for approval at a later time.

3. Green Building Practices:

Given the conceptual nature of this application request, it is difficult to determine the details of any green building practices. However, the Applicant has said that as the design work is underway, the building is on track to receive a LEED Gold rating.

4. Comments:

Given the conceptual nature of this application request, the application was not shared with other City Departments at this time. The full Design and Site Plan submission will be shared once the package is received by Staff.

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 SPECIAL PERMIT REVIEW (SZO §6.6.3.C & §6.6.10.G.1):

Based on review of the submitted Special Permit 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.C and D in detail.

1. Compliance with the submittal requirements of Section 5.1 Special Permits;

All applicable required documentation has been submitted with this application.

2. 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;

The proposed use conforms to the recently Amended Neighborhood Development Plan (NDP). The NDP is the overall guiding document for the design of the NorthPoint neighborhood in Somerville.

3. Consistency with purpose of the NPSD and of this Ordinance in general; and

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the NPSD and the SZO. Section 6.6.2 of the SZO states that the purpose of the NPSD is “to establish regulations supporting the development of a comprehensively planned neighborhood of mixed-use, moderate to high-density development within easy walking distance to transit...” The SZO lists additional characteristics, many of which apply to the NDP rather than the building parcels, with which the proposed use complies.

4. Compliance with the provisions set forth in Section 6.6.7 Lots, Section 6.6.8 Permitted Uses, Section 6.6.9 Building Types, Section 6.6.10 Parking and Loading, and Section 6.6.11 Environmental Performance, as applicable.

The application complies with the listed sections with the exception of Section 6.6.10 Parking and Loading, the requirements of which make this Special Permit application necessary - to allow the proposed loading docks on a secondary front lot line.

III. RECOMMENDATION**Special Permit Application 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**.

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 Parcel JK Special Permit application allowing four loading docks to be located on the Dawes Street building frontage line. 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>September 28, 2016</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	September 28, 2016	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office including all appendices
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September 28, 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	All four loading bays must be behind roll up doors, which remain closed most of the time, to screen the loading operations from street view. The material and color of the doors must be integrated into the architectural vocabulary of the Dawes Street façade.	In perpetuity	Planning/Engineering					