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MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2014-02
Date: February 13, 2014
Recommendation: Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 197 & 205 Washington St

Applicant Name: CPI-SCC, LCC

Applicant Address: 337 Somerville Ave 2nd Floor Somerville, MA 02143

Property Owner Name: A&M Realty Trust & The Union Terrace Condominiums

Agent Name: Adam Dash

Agent Address: 48 Grove Street, Suite 304 Somerville, MA 02144

Alderman: Thomas Taylor

Legal Notice: Applicant, CPI-SCC, LLC and Owners A&M Realty Trust & The Union Terrace Condominiums seek a Site Plan Approval for a subdivision under SZO §5.4 to take 1,403 sf of a 24,063 sf lot at 197 Washington St. and transfer it to the 4,104 sf lot at 205 Washington St. CCD55 Zone. Ward 3.

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board – February 20, 2013

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject properties are 197 Washington Street and 205 Washington Street. 197 Washington Street is a 24,063 square foot lot with the Cota-Struzziero Funeral Home. 205 Washington Street is a 4,104 square foot lot with a 7 unit condominium building. There is a small commercial space on the first floor.

The condominium building received a Special Permit in 2005 to alter a nonconforming structure, essentially it went under a substantial rehab after approval. There was no parking relief required because of the existing nonconformity. Only 3 parking spaces were part of the approval. 205 Washington Street has a long term lease to use the paved area owned by 197 Washington Street accessed off of Washington Terrace. The parking area at the back of 205 Washington Street, holds 6 spaces (per the SZO). It appears,



and is also striped, to hold cars in tandem, in this arrangement the lot holds 12 vehicles. There is also a shared right of way between the two properties.



Lot A (as described below)



Lot B (as described below)

2. Proposal: The proposal is to take 1,403 square feet of the 24,063 square foot lot at 197 Washington St. and transfer it to the 4,104 square foot lot at 205 Washington Street. The new lots would be 22,660 square feet and 5,507 square feet respectively.

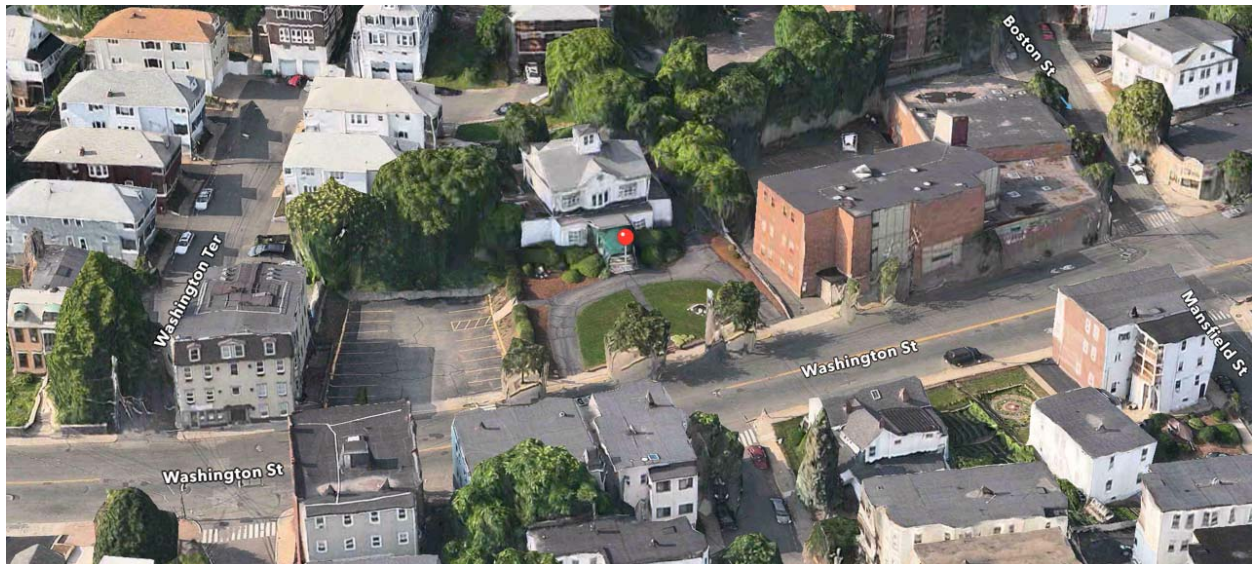
After the Planning Board approved the 181 & 197 Washington Street project (PB 2013-08) in July 2013, the project was appealed by Soren Harrison (formerly of 14 Boston St), Zack Zasloff (205 Washington Street), and other aggrieved parties. This subdivision is part of a settlement agreed upon by the appellants, developers, and property owners but needs Planning Board approval. In addition, the redevelopment of 181 & 197 Washington Street has a new proposal (PB 2014-01).

There are two areas of land being removed from the 197 Washington Street property and allocated to the 205 Washington Street property. However, both pieces are already being used in entirety by 205 Washington Street. Lot A, a 300 sf area labeled as a shared right of way between 197 and 205 Washington has a fence dividing the rest of the 197 Washington Street property from the shared right of way. Lot B, a 1,103 square foot area accessed from Washington Terrace, is a surface parking lot that has a long term lease agreement for the tenants of the 205 Washington Condo building to use. This would dissolve the lease and right of way and give 205 Washington Street Condos ownership of their parking area.

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 reallocates land area between two existing lots 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 development plans at 181 & 197 Washington Street, it will go before the full Board at a public hearing for a vote.

If the land is reallocated as proposed, the 197 Washington Street parcel will continue to meet the dimensional requirements for the Commercial Corridor District (CCD-55) district in SZO §8.5. The 205 Washington Street property will become more conforming. For instance, they will now meet the lot area per dwelling unit calculation. However, they still do not have the required landscaped area (4% provided versus 10% required) which is of concern in the flood prone area of Union Square.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood holds a mix of uses and structures. The Washington Street corridor was re-zoned in 2009 to a CCD-55 district as part of the Union Square Rezoning process. To the north is the Prospect Hill neighborhood with two- and three-story houses, several triple deckers are across Washington Street. There are some auto-oriented uses along Washington Street and the Somerville Police Station is nearby. The future Green Line Station at Washington Street will be located approximately a quart of a mile east of the site.



5. Impacts of Proposal: The subdivision of land will allow for the redevelopment of the site as proposed by Case #PB 2014-01. Without said proposal, the reallocation of land will not impede future development. If anything, it makes the 205 Washington Street property more conforming to the SZO.

The former boys and girls club has been vacant since 2010 and the Cota-Struzziero Funeral Home is underutilized. New buildings and a redesigned site has the potential to create a streetwall and will start to create a pedestrian friendly block in accordance with the CCD-55 zoning requirements. Additionally, a redeveloped site has the potential to increase the supply of housing in the City near the future Green Line Station at Washington Street.

6. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.

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 located within the Arts Overlay District. There are no dimensional requirements for lot sizes in Arts Overlay Districts.

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 or floodplains on this site. The site is at the base of Prospect Hill, back of the properties are at a higher level than street grade. The current open space at 197 Washington Street is not utilized, most likely, because of the hill and the use present on the site (funeral home). There are no natural features of the 205 Washington Street site. Future development will be evaluated to determine if the plan has sufficient screening of objectionable features from neighboring properties and roadways as well as soil removal and grade changes.

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 Applicants will have to outline how the sanitary sewer requirements meet the stormwater policy when the application for the new development at 181 & 197 Washington Street is before the Board.

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.”*

The Applicants will have to submit a stormwater management plan that complies with the City’s stormwater policy with the proposed redevelopment.

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 Applicants will submit a site plan and traffic and parking study to satisfy that new developments will have safe vehicular and pedestrian access.

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.”*

The development at 181 & 197 Washington Street requires a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to be constructed and the character, scale, building materials, screening and other architectural techniques 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 developments will be subject to all applicable requirements and will be conditioned to have underground electric, telephone, cable TV and other such utilities.

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.”*

The proposed development at 181 & 197 Washington Street will require a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to be constructed and if there is utility space that is deemed to be unsightly it 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.”*

Assessment of the shadow impact of the proposed building will be evaluated during the Special Permit with Site Plan Review process.

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.”

Assessment of the glare onto public roads and other public ways into the night sky or neighboring properties from any proposed development will be evaluated during the Special Permit with Site Plan Review process.

13. “The site plan shall comply with all zoning requirements.”

No new zoning violations related to lot size, density, ground coverage, landscaped area, floor area ratio, setbacks, and frontage would be created by reallocating the area of the parcels site.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Site Plan Approval under §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 submitted as part of the application, drawing dated May 2, 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.

