



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** PB 2015-11  
**Date:** October 15, 2015  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 197 Washington Street

**Applicant Name:** Nu Café Somerville, LLC & 197 Washington Street, LLC

**Applicant Address:** 377 Bunker Hill Street, #1, Charlestown, MA 02129

**Owner Name:** 197 Washington Street, LLC

**Owner Address:** 11 Beacon Street, Suite 1120, Boston, MA 02108

**Agent Name:** Adam Dash, Esq.

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

**Alderman:** Robert McWatters

**Legal Notice:** Applicant, Nu Café Somerville, LLC & 197 Washington Street LLC, and Owner, 197 Washington Street LLC, seek a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to establish the Eating and Drinking Use (SZO §7.13.D) of approx. 3,760, a Special Permit for reduction in parking spaces (§9.17.2.A) and a revision to the original approval, Case PB 2014-01, that permitted the construction of two mixed use buildings of approx 46,305 nsf and approx 38,040 nsf under §6.1.22.D.1 and §6.1.22.D.2. The uses included small and medium retail of approx 6,000 sf, 65 residential units per SZO §7.13.B, §7.13.C, & §7.13.E. The approval also included a reduction in the number of parking spaces SZO 9.13.F and 9.17.2.A and a shared driveway and access and shared parking per SZO §9.17.2.B.

Dates of Public Hearing: Thursday, October 22, 2015

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The Planning Board approved a redevelopment of the subject site on March 6, 2014. Two mix-use buildings were approved as part of a joint site plan for 181 & 197 Washington Street. The proposed building at 197 Washington Street, also referred to as the CPI building, is the site that is the



subject of this proposal. The building on this lot will be 38,040 gross square feet. It is four stories tall and 45' high. The approval include 3,502 square feet of commercial/retail on the first floor and 30 condominium units, of which 4 will be affordable, on floors 2-5. The commercial space was proposed to be small and medium retail uses and the parking requirement was satisfied.

The buildings will share a driveway and loading area off of Washington Street. There will be a total of 65 parking spaces. The Applicants obtained a special permit for shared parking and parking on a separate lot so that the required parking for each building can be located on the abutting parcel.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to operate a 3,760 square foot café on the first floor of the building in place of the 3,502 square feet of retail that was originally approved. Some minor interior changes will be necessary and there will be no exterior alterations from the approved plans.

The café is proposed to have 24 to 30 employees and 120 seats. The hours of operation will be Monday through Friday, 7am to 11pm, Saturdays from 8am to 11pm and Sundays from 8am to 8pm. The café will serve such items as sandwiches, coffee, baked goods, salads and smoothies.

4. Comments:

*Fire Prevention:* Fire Prevention reviewed the proposal and did not have comments at this time.

*Traffic & Parking:* The applicant for 181-197 Washington St is proposing to change the previously submitted proposal for the development from 65 residential units and approximately 6,000 sf of commercial retail space to 65 residential units, approximately 2,300 sf of commercial retail space and approximately 3,700 sf for a café.

Per the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO) based on these alterations 70 off street parking spaces will be required. The applicant is providing only 65 off street parking spaces.

The applicant has hired a professional Transportation Consultant, Design Consultants Inc. to prepare a Parking Study. This Consulting Firm has submitted a well prepared and professional Parking Study.

Based on empirical data available and occupied parking spaces during three distinct time periods, the Parking Study states that there is available on-street permit parking and metered parking spaces in the vicinity of 181-197 Washington St. The Parking Study was conducted within a reasonable walking distance of the proposed project. The area which was surveyed for the availability of the on street parking spaces was a reasonable area to conduct a survey.

This Parking Study concludes that there is available on street parking spaces in the vicinity of the proposed development for the five parking spaces not being provided. Based on the submitted Parking Memorandum, Traffic and Parking does not disagree with this assessment.

Traffic and Parking has no objection to the application.

*Ward Alderman:* Alderman McWatters has been contacted regarding the proposal.

**II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT with SITE PLAN REVIEW (SZO §7.13.D, §9.17.2.A & §5.2):**

In order to grant a Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR), the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.2.5 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.2.5 in detail.

The following findings relate to the proposal. There are no exterior alterations proposed. The rest of the findings for a SPSR do not change from those made in the original approval.

1. Information Supplied:

The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.2.3 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project.

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."*

The café falls under the Eating and Drinking Use Cluster (SZO §7.13.D) and an establishment of approximately 3,760 square feet requires a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to be established.

A Special Permit for a reduction in parking spaces under §9.17.2.A is also sought.

3. Nature of Application: Generally the buildings and uses capture the intentions of the CCD-55 district. The building provides adequate parking without developing excessive parking within this urban neighborhood, and creates a storefront that will engage the pedestrian while improving the appearance of the block. A cafe in this location will bring life to the block in the same way that the retail tenants that were originally proposed would have. Having multiple tenants along a building creates for an interesting pedestrian experience; however, for this building that has a narrow commercial space a restaurant tenant will need the entire 3,760 square feet to have a functional business. The square footage is not so excessive that the proposal will change the small scale nature of ground floor tenant and character of the building. It is likely that there will continue to be a draw of local people to the site as opposed to attracting people from the larger region.

Sixty-five parking spaces will be provided on site as originally proposed. The breakdown of the required parking spaces is as follows:

Parking for Previous Approval:

CPI Residential Units – 1 per unit, 30 units = 30 spaces

SCC Residential Units – .8 per unit, 35 units = 28 spaces

Use Cluster B – Medium Retail and Service, 1 per 800 nsf

6 establishments totaling 5,915 sf / 800 = 7.39 or 7 spaces

Project Total – 65 Spaces

Parking for Proposal:

Residential - does not change – 58

Use Cluster B – Medium Retail and Service, 1 per 800 nsf

Total 2,349 in SCC building = 3

Use Cluster D – Eating and Drinking, 1 per 400 nsf  
Total 3,760 = 9

Project total – 70 Spaces

Five more parking spaces are required as a result of the proposal.

4. Impacts of Proposal: A transportation demand management plan was submitted that promotes alternate forms of transportation to reduce the number of single-occupancy vehicle trips traveling to and from the site. The plan includes bicycle lockers, covered bike racks and racks on the sidewalk. The applicants are also making improvements to the sidewalk in front of the development to improve the pedestrian and bicycling environment.

The transportation report also includes data on modal splits, trip generation and projected future demand. The site is a three minute walk to the future Washington Street Green Line station and a six minute walk to the future Union Square station. The public transit mode share is expected to increase significantly in this area. Also, the project site has twice as much bike mode share as compared to the Somerville average and it is predicted to increase.

The trip generation will have a slight increase over the previously planned use of the space as retail; however, given the increase in mixed-use development in the area, the increase in transit and bike options, and the pedestrian nature of the café use and site design, the reduced number of parking spaces is not anticipated to have a negative impact on the neighborhood.

5. Functional Design: The project must meet “accepted standards and criteria for the functional design of facilities, structures, and site construction.”

The loading area that was previously approved between the two buildings will be functional for the proposed cafe.

**III. RECOMMENDATION****Special Permit with Site Plan Review under §7.13.D, §9.17.2.A & §5.2**

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 with 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 Eating and Drinking Use (SZO §7.13.D) of approx. 3,760 and for a reduction in parking spaces. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>Sept 17, 2015</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>Sept 14, 2015</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (floor plan)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Sept 17, 2015	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	Sept 14, 2015	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (floor plan)
	Date (Stamp Date)				Submission					
	Sept 17, 2015				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office					
Sept 14, 2015	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (floor plan)									
Any changes to the approved plan that is not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD							
3	There shall be at least 10 bike lockers and 10 covered bike racks for the 197 Washington site.	Cont.	ISD							
4	Signage will be limited to the signage band on the elevations. Signage plans shall be submitted to Planning Staff for review and approval when a tenant is secured. Signage lighting after 10pm facing residential property will be turned down or off.	Cont.	ISD / Plng.							
5	Each window on the ground floor should provide views into the building and should not be blocked by interior storage, nonartistic displays, or greater than thirty (30) percent internally mounted signage.	Cont.	ISD / Plng.							
6	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP							
Final Sign-Off										
7	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.							

