



December 20, 2011

Christian Klein
Approach Architects
36 Bromfield Street, Suite 404
Boston, MA 02108

RE: Parking Memorandum for Proposed Re-development Project at 234 Elm Street, Somerville, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Klein:

We have reviewed the information related to the above referenced project and offer the following in support of your application.

Executive Summary

“The iYO Cafe” desires to re-occupy a space currently available at 234 Elm Street in the Davis Square neighborhood of Somerville. Per the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO), the proposed re-development requires seven (7) additional off-street parking spaces to be provided at the 234 Elm Street location; however, no off-street parking spaces are available at this new location.

Nevertheless, it is our professional opinion that the impact of your project on the Square’s parking supply is likely to be minimal. This opinion is based upon transportation practices and methodology such as pass-by trips, diverted link trips, and internal trips, the proximity to multiple modes of alternative transportation (Red Line, MBTA Bus Service, Taxis, Tufts Shuttle Bus, Community Path, etc) and the proximity to multiple public parking lots. That being said, we would strongly encourage you to consider offering discounted MBTA passes to your employees, to participate in the City’s employee parking program, and to make your customers fully aware of the public transportation options available to them, especially through the use of your website.

Existing Conditions and Project Understanding

An application has been filed with the Somerville Zoning Board of Appeals to redevelop an existing 2,400 square foot space with no change in floor area. The project involves the construction of a café (offering deserts such as ice cream, yogurt, pastries, and coffee/tea) and the removal of an existing retail store (food market). The re-development project is located at 234 Elm Street in Somerville, Massachusetts, which is situated within a Central Business District (CBD) known as Davis Square. Davis Square has multiple off-street municipal parking facilities as well as many on-street parking spaces.

You have indicated that the existing use had 5 employees and was open from 7:00am to 10:00pm, seven days a week. Your application materials indicate that the proposed use will have no more than four employees (4) on the premises at any time. The hours of operation are anticipated to be Sunday thru Saturday from 7:00am to midnight.

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Required Parking

The space currently provides no off-street vehicle parking, bicycle parking, or loading bays due to its constrained location; the foot print of the building completely occupies the lot short of a 4' paved access at the rear. The current use requires 3.8 off-street parking spaces. In addition the existing use is required one (1) off-street bicycle parking space and zero off-street loading bays.

The new use requires 17.4 parking spaces. However, since there is no change in floor area, the difference (13.6) is multiplied by 0.5 resulting in a requirement of seven (7) additional off-street vehicle parking spaces (SZO, Section 9.4.1d.2). In addition the proposed project is required one (1) off-street bicycle parking space (SZO, Section 9.4.1d.3 & 9.15.B.Table 1) and no off-street loading bays since the space is less than 5,000 square feet. The proposed project will provide no additional off-street parking spaces; therefore, the applicant is seeking a variance for the 7 required off-street parking spaces. The proposed project will be providing one (1) bicycle parking space.

The proposed project is located less than 900 feet from the Davis Square MBTA rapid transit station. This station also provides access to local bus service provided on Elm Street, Holland Street, College Avenue, and Highland Avenue. A proximity-to-transit discount of 20% has been included in the above parking requirement calculation, consistent with SZO Section 9.6.3.b.

Traffic Engineering Standard Practices

The ITE Transportation and Land Use Development Manual (2nd Edition) includes three engineering terms used in the reduction of traffic generation related to proposed uses: Pass-by Trips, Diverted Trips, and Internal Trips.

Pass-by Trips is a term used in traffic engineering, which refers to intermediate stops on the way from an origin to a primary destination. Pass-by trips are not new trips on the roadway network. Diverted Trips is another traffic engineering term which refers to trips that are to or from a site that have been diverted from a route other than the one associated with the subject site. Internal Trips is a third term which refers to trips that both begin and end within a site.

For instance, for mixed-use developments with uses such as office, residential, retail, restaurant and service uses, some of the trips being generated by one use may also be traveling to another use within the same site. It may be argued that Davis Square acts as a large mixed-use site with multiple shared trips within this Central Business District (CBD).

It is widely accepted that these factors help reduce the number of trips generated by a development. Instead of adding all of these discounts together, the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office has determined that for those projects within its jurisdiction a 25% reduction for pass-by trips is an acceptable standard for use in traffic studies. The ITE Trip Generation Handbook indicates that this number may actually approach 40-50% in some cases.

We would extend this methodology (pass-by trips, diverted link trips, and internal trips) to apply to the number of parking spaces required in a CBD as well. This particular CBD, Davis Square includes many types of uses that are indicative of shared trips. In all likelihood people visiting your business will also be visiting other businesses within Davis Square.

As stated above, it is expected that a large proportion of the proposed project at 234 Elm Street will likely be trips that have already visited another establishment in the Square. The trips associated with the proposed use are likely more closely related to trips associated with the existing dessert type establishments such as "J.P. Licks".

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Davis Square Parking

Field observations indicate that Davis Square has a total of approximately 561 off-street parking spaces including metered, business permit, short term parking spaces, and accessible parking spaces (Figure 1). This total does not include taxi stand parking spaces or zip car parking spaces since they are not available to the public. The total does not include on-street resident permit parking spaces either.



Figure 1 – Davis Square Parking

There are three (3) public parking lots located within 200 feet of the proposed project; the lot located behind Gargoyles Restaurant, the lot located behind McDonald's, and the Grove Street lot. In addition, there is one more public parking lot, the Cutter Square Lot, located within 300 feet of the proposed re-development and another within 500 feet, the Day Street Lot.

The project has already taken a 20% reduction in required parking for proximity to transit as mentioned above. Where a project is not within 1,000 feet of a transit station, a 20% reduction is allowed for projects within 650 feet of a public parking lot. However, it is worth mentioning where other projects may be located within 1,000 feet of a transit station **or** within 650 feet of a public parking lot; this project is located near both and in fact is located within 500 feet of five (5) public parking lots.

In addition to the Red Line and MBTA bus services, the project is located within close proximity to several other modes of transportation such as the Tufts University shuttle bus, two taxi stands, several zip car locations, and the Somerville Community Path.

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Similar Projects within Davis Square

It has been our experience that for those projects within the Square that fail to meet the parking requirements set forth in the SZO, and which can demonstrate negligible impacts on the Square's parking supply, potential impacts can be help offset by providing measures such as the following:

- installation of a bike ring(s);
- offering reduced rate MBTA passes to employees;
- helping provide for upgrades to the existing roadway and pedestrian network

Examples of other projects unable to provide parking in compliance with the Zoning Ordinance are listed below. All of these projects obtained special permits or variances when they were demonstrated to have negligible impacts on parking and were required to implement appropriate measures to improve multi-modal conditions within the Square.

- Chipotle's Mexican Grill;
- Anna's Taqueria;
- Antonia's (now occupied by a burger restaurant);
- Diesel Café Expansion;
- The Blue Shirt Café Expansion; and
- The former Martsa on Elm (235 Elm Street)

Conclusion

It is our professional opinion that the proposed re-development will likely have a minimal impact on the surrounding neighborhood's public parking supply. As described above, our opinion is based on transportation practices and methodology such as pass-by trips, diverted link trips, and internal trips. In addition, other factors include the proximity to alternate modes of transportation (Red Line, MBTA Bus Service, Taxis, Tufts Shuttle Bus, Community Path, etc), the amount of public parking lots located within 650 feet along with an established precedent of similar projects being approved to justify your project's approval.

Should the Zoning Board be hesitant to grant approval, you may wish to volunteer providing a monetary contribution to promote non-motorized travel for items such as additional bicycle racks or pedestrian/bicycle signage. Or you may wish to contribute toward new parking technologies to improve parking efficiency in Davis Square. Mitigating any potential impacts on the Square's parking supply will help support the overall efficiency and operations of the various transportation modes found in the Square. In addition, you should offer discounted MBTA passes to your employees and you inquire about utilizing the City's business permit parking program for your employees. This program is offered through the City's Traffic and Parking Department.

We hope that this parking memorandum meets your satisfaction. Should you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

Todd M. Blake

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