



**Somerville Housing Authority**

**30 Memorial Road**

**Somerville MA 02145**

**Somerville Housing Authority**

**“Waterworks Development”**

**Response to Irvington Road Petition**

**TO: Zoning Board of Appeals (records)**  
**Somerville City Hall, 93 Highland Ave**  
**Somerville, MA 02143**

- 1) The historic Mystic River Pump Station, 485 Mystic Valley Parkway, has suffered a significant amount of deterioration due to a lack of ongoing maintenance and general neglect. Further neglect will not only continue the cycle of deterioration, but potentially jeopardize the National Register listed building. The proposed adaptive re-use of the Pump Station will be undertaken using the Secretary of Interior's *Standard for Rehabilitation* as a guide and will be reviewed by three agencies versed in the Standards, the Somerville Historic Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission and the National Park Service.

SHA believes that the best and most feasible reuse for the building is as affordable senior housing, which will not only provide the appropriate amount of revenue necessary to upgrade and renovate the historic integrity of the building, but will also provide a unique home for 25 seniors. The conversion of buildings of this type into housing is a very common adaptive re-use. A case in point is the Chestnut Hill Waterworks -<http://liveatwaterworks.com/history.php>. This complex of buildings is a designated Boston Landmark and listed on the National Register. Due to significant deferred maintenance under government stewardship, the integrity of the buildings, the High Service and Low Service Pump Stations, had been compromised.

An extensive study of the site revealed two things, the highest and best use of the historic buildings was housing and in order to make the project financially feasible, a non-contributing building was demolished and a new larger structure was built in its place. Additionally, like the Mystic Pump House, the complex is adjacent to a National Register landscape feature in the form of the Chestnut Hill Reservoir. (*Please see attached images of the Chestnut Hill Waterworks and its modern addition.*) The concerns of the petitioners are understood, but the views being claimed to be negatively impacted are only those from the Capen Court as the three historic agencies reviewing the project will require that the scale, massing and materials of the new construction does not negatively impact the existing historic structure, requiring a sight -line study to show that the new building will not be seen above the old from the Parkways.

The proposed housing project relates well to the adjacent Capen Court. Additionally, the concept of a senior center would have a greater traffic impact on the site and the adjacent parkways as shown in the traffic study and analysis. The report states that according to Land Code 252 of The Institute of Transportation Engineers, the 60 units would in fact only add about 3.5 trips from the complex every hour to the already existing 26,000 daily trips on the parkway. A Senior Center would most increase traffic issues as well as parking demands.

- 2) Though the surrounding context of the neighborhood is partially composed of two and three family houses, there are also other larger buildings that contribute to the urban fabric of this neighborhood, as it's the case with the 5-story U-Haul building on 600 Mystic Valley Parkway, as well as the office building complex on 196 Boston Avenue, and two gas stations adjacent to Capen Court on Mystic Valley Parkway. The change in use does not alter the characteristic of the neighborhood, but in fact is in keeping with its diverse surrounding mix-use characteristics.

Will the new building clash with the WaterWorks building? As noted above, the reviewing agencies will look at the scale, massing and material of the new construction as well as the surrounding landscape to assure that it is not negatively impacting the historic building. Guidance related to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards notes that new construction should be distinguished from the existing historic fabric and does not recommend historic interpretations as it would be difficult to distinguish new from old.

- 3) The new 4-story building is approximately 300 feet away from its closest neighbor on Irvington Road, too far a distance to loom over or cast shadows on any existing structure. The claim that a building of such nature would negatively impact property values is unsubstantiated. The project is also not adding more black top or reducing green pervious areas, but in fact reduces the amount of existing black top on site by 2% and adds more enhanced and planted green pervious areas – see chart below from the Storm water analysis.

The change in impervious coverage for the site is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Area Summary Table

Cover	Existing (SF)	Proposed (SF)	Difference (SF)	Impervious Area (%)
Impervious	42,148	40,916	-1,232	-2.01%
Pervious	19,031	20,263	+1,232	+2.01%
Total	61,179	61,179		

- 4) As stated previously on item 1, and in the traffic report, this project is only contributing 3.5 trips per hour to the Mystic Valley Parkway traffic – furthermore any traffic or safety issues creating a hazardous impacts fall outside of the jurisdiction and control of this project and the SHA. Mystic Valley Parkway is a state road and any changes/alterations /modifications fall under state jurisdiction.
- 5) Though the abutters on Irvington Road feel that there are already too many residential units on the Capen Court/VNA site, there is a crucial demand in the city for elderly housing. SHA currently has a waitlist for Capen Court alone of more than 420 Somerville Elderly and/or disabled residents. Overall the SHA has a waitlist of more 2,364 Elderly and/or disabled applicants. The project is not providing a surplus of units, but in fact fulfilling a necessity for the aging population of Somerville that wishes to stay in the city as they have their whole lives, in comfortable, adequate and affordable housing.



Chestnut  
Hill  
WaterWork  
s residences  
- project  
precedent





**Views from Irvington abutters:**

As you can see the majority of the views seemed to be blocked by the existing large single family house and the evergreen trees located on its site – which inevitably also block views towards the new building.



