



# CITY OF SOMERVILLE

Inspectional Services • Planning Board • Zoning Board of Appeals

## PERMITTING QUICK START GUIDE

In the City of Somerville, the construction of new structures and modifications to existing structures is either permitted by-right or by Site Plan Approval. Similarly, the establishment, expansion, or change of use of land or a structure is permitted by right or by Special Permit. The construction or modification of any civic space or thoroughfare always requires Site Plan Approval.

Unless instructed otherwise by Planning & Zoning Division Staff, all permitting is now administered online. All permit applications will require a signed Property Owner Authorization form for all individuals or organizations with ownership interest in the property. A blank form can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/PropOwnAuth>; a signed form will be required as part of the initial application.

For projects proposing

- Normal maintenance (as defined by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance)
- Internal demolition (as defined by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance)
- Installation of roof mounted photovoltaic (PV) devices
- By-right development (as defined by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance) in the NR or UR districts

The permitting path begins with an application for a Building Permit via the Citizenserve portal, which can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/SomCitizenserve>. Please be advised that ISD Zoning Review Staff may determine, based on the specifics of a particular application, that additional development review is necessary. In that event, staff will provide guidance on how to revise the proposal, or will direct you to the appropriate Board Review application to begin the process.

For projects that require Board Review (all applications for Site Plan Approval, Special Permit, Revision to an existing permit, or Hardship Variance), the permitting path begins with an application using the forms found at <https://www.somervillezoning.com/developmentreview/>.

### To Prepare for your Application:

The first step to take in preparing for the application process is to consult the Somerville Zoning Atlas at <https://tinyurl.com/SomZoningAtlas>, where you can find details about the zoning district for the property you are seeking to develop, as well as other key information, such as whether the property is in an Overlay District, in a Transit Area Walkshed, or located on a Pedestrian Street, all of which will have an effect on what can be developed at that property. Additional information about overlays for floodplains and Affordable Housing can be found in Article 8 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance. All of this information will be necessary for your application.

Zoning District: \_\_\_\_\_

Overlay District: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 1/4 mile Walkshed to Transit

\_\_\_\_\_ 1/2 mile Walkshed to Transit

\_\_\_\_\_ Pedestrian Street

As you prepare to begin the process, it is also helpful to familiarize yourself with the standards and regulations of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, which can be found at <https://tinyurl.com/SomZoning> or [www.Somervillezoning.com](http://www.Somervillezoning.com). In the early phases of the application process, Article 2, which gives definitions for the key terms used in the Ordinance and details about how standards are applied, and Article 14, which offers details on how the Ordinance regulates nonconforming elements, can be particularly helpful, in addition to the particular chapter having to do with the particular zoning district where the property is located.

**Proposed Development Activity:**

Per the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, "development" is defined as "the construction or modification of any principal building type, accessory building type, or other structure; the excavation, fill, or grading of land; and the establishment, change, or expansion of any use of any structure or land."

Using the pull down menu to select all the development options proposed will help Planning & Zoning Division Staff to advise on the permits and approvals the proposal will require.

The intent of the Board Review process is to engage with an applicant earlier in the process of developing a property. It is expected that the details of a particular proposal have not been worked out at the point of an initial application, and that the proposal will change over the course of the Board Review process. As the project progresses through the stages of the Board Review process, the City's Permit Tracking System will deliver any required additional forms via email to the Primary Contact at the appropriate phase of the application process.

Once you submit your application, you will receive a confirmation email from the City's Permit Tracking System that will contain the Permit Tracking number assigned to your case. Please take note of that tracking number and include it on all correspondence with OSPCD.