**Saint Mark’s Area Civic Association**

**Principles for Neighborhood Development**

 **Overview**

The residents of the Saint Mark’s Area Civic Association (SMACA) take great pride in being an urban community close to downtown Boston.  Located on the MBTA's Red Line between the Fields Corner and Ashmont Stations, SMACA is a neighborhood whose residents take pride in living here, making and maintaining this area as a neighborhood open to all walks of life.  The Saint Mark’s Area is a diverse neighborhood.  Our residents are a reflection of different racial and ethnic backgrounds, economic, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation and multi-generational families and we look for development that will help our neighborhood maintain this diversity of people and households.  The neighborhood is composed of mostly one, two, and three-family houses, some of which are condos in addition to a few multiunit apartment buildings. Vibrant and dynamic businesses line Dorchester Avenue from Melville Avenue to Ashmont Square.

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide a clear and fair process for the developers, the abutters, and the neighborhood at large. Listed below are guidelines that the Saint Mark’s Area Civic Association follows for all development proposals, building variances and zoning variances in our community.

 **Principles of Development and Planning**

The Saint Mark’s Area Civic Association places a premium on abutters' concerns and desires. We recognize that development impacts the entire community and reserve the right to take positions for the entire community. The positions of the SMACA usually agree with abutters, but on occasion may differ.

 1.  The SMACA recognizes the zoning and planning rules and regulations as currently mandated by the City of Boston and will work with all respective departments, developers, contractors and individuals in an effort to maintain that any actions, permits or variances given by those departments are enforced to better the quality of life including affordable housing in the Saint Mark’s area community.

 2.  The SMACA desires to work with the City of Boston and its offices regarding any changes to the current, existing zoning and planning efforts.  Should the City of Boston support any large scale planning and/or development in Dorchester and especially within the boundaries of the Saint Mark’s area, the SMACA requires and expects that its officers and constituents be involved.

3. The SMACA expects to be informed in a timely manner by the appropriate city official or department representative, particularly the designated Dorchester Liaison of the Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services as well as the City Council Liaison or State Representative regarding all plans and requests to build or alter any property in the neighborhood by expansion, height, density, change of footprint or demolition.

 4.  The SMACA will review and discuss any proposed change to property with its abutters and members and if necessary, the Inspectional Services Department, the Zoning Board of Appeals, the Department of Neighborhood Development and any qualified organization or person who shows capability in demonstrating positive negotiation skills that will result in a positive outcome for all involved. SMACA’s Development Committee will provide a summary at its next regularly scheduled meeting. During the summer when there are no scheduled meetings, the Development Committee may act on its own authority to determine SMACA’s position on the proposed project.

 5.  The SMACA expects that the Inspectional Services Department and the Zoning Board of Appeals will take into account all facts and evidence presented to them from the abutters and SMACA members as part of the decision making process.

 6. The SMACA, its officers and the abutters of any property in question, will review and verify any requests in a fair, consistent, and timely manner. The SMACA maintains its right to pursue, protect and preserve the integrity, character and quality of life for those who live here, while simultaneously welcoming newcomers and recognizing that no community is static.

7. The SMACA is not opposed to the idea of density that is in compliance with the appropriate plot size and its surroundings. This would be a welcome exercise adding to the density of the neighborhood without losing the character of the original design or footprint.  Proposals will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account all relevant factors.  The height of the building should be consistent with neighboring properties. We understand that exceptions may need to be made and the SMACA, its officers and abutters will work with developers, contractors and individuals to find the right fit.

8   There may be a few lots in the neighborhood that provide the opportunity for sub-division.  Green space is highly valued in our neighborhood. We encourage developers to maintain existing green space or enhance it, where possible. Development proposals that reduce or eliminate green space will be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis, weighing the potential benefits of the project.

 9. The proposed demolition of any structure on any property in the Saint Mark’s neighborhood is of great concern, especially if density is increased or if the building is of historic nature that can be rehabilitated and will be reviewed carefully.  As with all presentations to ISD and the ZBA, any such transformation must be fully reviewed by the Saint Mark’s Area Civic Association and the abutters to ensure that the character of the community is protected.

 10.  The SMACA values the current pattern of property usage where most of the community is residential with a mixture of mostly single, two, and three family houses with exceptions in appropriate locations.  The SMACA expects to continue the pattern that the neighborhood has established.

 11. In areas that are desirable for transit oriented development such as Shawmut Station, the SMACA along with the abutters would like to remind those who are seeking variances that Shawmut Station is unique in that it is one of the many stations in the MBTA network that empties commuters directly into a neighborhood.  Shawmut Station is not part of a main street or artery; consequently, any ideas for development must be sensitive to that.

 12. Parking is a major factor in the quality of life in the community.  Any increase in residential units must have an acceptable parking plan based on the City of Boston’s .75 to 1.50 parking spaces per residential unit, depending on the distance from an MBTA station. Proponents of any increase in residential units must justify the number of off-street parking per unit.

 13. The SMACA recognizes the value of businesses that are within walking distance and how they benefit the neighborhood.  Most of these businesses are on Dorchester Avenue in an area known as Saint Mark’s Village, running from Melville Avenue to Ashmont Square. We categorically oppose billboards, and commercial signs must be scaled to existing city signage code and permitted by ISD and Greater Ashmont Main Streets.

Guidelines by the Boston Transportation Department for use by the Zoning Board of Appeal

 5. Parking Ratios

 Allston/Brighton, Charlestown, Dorchester, East Boston, Jamaica Plain, Mattapan, Roxbury, South Boston (residential neighborhood)

Distant from MBTA Station (3) 1.0 – 1.5 Residential spaces per unit

Near MBTA Station (4) 0.75 – 1.25 Residential spaces per unit

3. “Distant from MBTA Station” is defined as greater than 10 minute walking distance from an MBTA Station.

4. “Near MBTA Station” is defined as within 10 minute walking distance from an MBTA Station.

Reference:

https://www.cityofboston.gov/Images\_Documents/guidelines\_tcm3-12612.pdf