



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

STAFF PRESENT

LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*
ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

MEMBERS PRESENT

DEBORAH FENNICK
JAMES KIRYLO
TANYA PAGLIA

RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, October 27, 2011, 6:30 p.m.** in City Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

The purpose of the meeting was to review and make recommendations on the following proposals:

485 Mystic Valley Parkway (Case #ZBA 2011-79)

Description: Applicant and Owner Somerville Housing Authority seeks a Comprehensive Permit under MGL Chapter 40B for an Inclusionary Housing Development. The proposal would create 60 affordable one-bedroom residential dwelling units for seniors and person with disabilities in two buildings. The project would consist of the redevelopment and conversion of the existing Mystic Water Works into a 25 affordable housing unit rental apartment building and the demolition of the existing office and garage outbuilding to be replaced with a newly constructed 35 affordable housing unit rental apartment building. RA zone. Ward 7.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: Anticipated to be November 30, 2011

This was the first time this case had come before the DRC. The site is 1.4 acres in size located near the Mystic Valley Parkway rotary. There are existing former Mystic Water Works buildings on the site including the pump house and a parking garage/office building. The proposal would convert the existing pump house into a two story, 25 unit affordable housing complex. The parking garage/office building would be torn down and the new building that would be constructed would be a four story assisted living facility, with the first floor cut into the slope at the back of the lot. The new building would have 35 units of affordable housing and would use a cementitious fiberboard for siding. This is the third phase of development at this project site which includes the independent and assisted living buildings behind the subject property.

The DRC asked about the following aspects of the project and the Agent/Architect provided the following responses.



- The ground level of the new building that faces the space between the two buildings, do those windows look out of bedrooms or a hallway? – (r) They are actually apartments.
- What are the dimensions of the panels that will be used on the new building? – (r) The panels will be four foot by eight foot sheets or smaller.
- Will the grand entrance that faces Mystic Valley Parkway be used? (r) No, it will not be usable. That former entrance would actually be part of a dwelling unit. There will be no entrances that face onto the Mystic Valley Parkway.
- Is there any reason why there cannot be more greenspace on the southern side of the parking area? – (r) Unfortunately there is a retaining wall there and there is no room for additional plantings.
- Is there a way to connect the project across the Mystic Valley Parkway to the park? – (r) Unfortunately not. A resident would have to walk down the Parkway one direction or the other to a traffic light and cross the parkway at those intersections. The State will never allow any kind of access directly across the Parkway. The walkway around the entire compound (including the buildings behind the property on Capen Court) is about a half mile loop and there is already a walking group that takes advantage of this pedestrian network.
- Have you given any thought to sustainable design or green roof initiatives? – (r) We have. In one sense of this we are reusing one of the existing buildings on the site. We are also in the process of assessing different mechanical systems to select ones that are energy efficient. The big roof on the new building is definitely a possibility for a green roof and we will also have to comply with the stretch code when constructing the project. Part of the Somerville Housing directive is that we also assess energy efficient and stormwater efficient systems for the project.
- What type of pavement material will be used for the walkway? – (r) A stamped concrete will be used for the walkway and a pervious material will be used along the edges of the walkway that will be able to support emergency vehicles if they need to get access to that area.
- What is the material of the roof on the historic building? – (r) It is actually asphalt shingles, which is not the original roofing material.

The windows on the first floor, the ground floor, of the new building could be redesigned with regard to their size. These windows might work better if they were larger, perhaps even larger than the windows on the upper stories.

The stair tower on the new building is a concern. It is going to be a very strong element and could be distracting from the historic structure that is in front of it. Perhaps it could be pushed back towards the rear of the building, lowered, or altered in some manner to make it less prominent.

The red color on the new building seems to be picking up or even mimicking the red color of the historic building. Perhaps a gray palette with greens or a burgundy would work better on the new building. Even using a copper theme might be better so that the colors of the new building do not relate so directly to the color of the historic building. The brick material and red color palette may not be the best combination to make the new building distinct but compatible to the historic building. The space between the buildings may also benefit from a lighter color in thinking about sun exposure on the buildings.

