



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

***DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE***

**STAFF PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

JIM KIRYLO  
TANYA PAGLIA  
MATT RICE  
CHERILYN RUANE

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES**

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, February 23, 2012**, at **6:30 p.m.** in City Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

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

**561 Windsor Street (Case # PB 2010-07)**

Review of revision to approved signage. TOD 135 zone. Ward 2.

**SPGA:** Planning Board

**Hearing Date:** TBD

This was the first time the project had come before the Design Review Committee and they were looking for comments about their proposed revision to their originally approved signage. The Applicant would like to improve the hardscape and landscape environment in front of their building by adding new pavers, low maintenance shrubs, substantial trees, bicycle parking, etc. to the front of the building. As part of this they would like to add two fairly large signs at two opposing diagonal corners of the building. One sign would be able to be seen from Webster Street and the other would be able to be seen from the South Street entrance. Due to the fact that paint would not last on the sides of the building, they were instructed to pursue fastening some type of banners to the building. The proposed signage would actually consist of a painted mesh/screening that would have a felt roll type appearance. The new signs would be 20 feet 4 inches wide by 26 feet high, which is slightly larger than the originally proposed signs.

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

- What are you proposing in the way of lighting? – (r) We are not proposing any lighting for this signage.
- You are not open in the evenings, correct? – (r) That is correct, our tours end around 5:00 or 6:00 PM.



- How will the banners be attached to the building? – (r) The perimeter of the signs will be grommited with heavy duty hardware and a steel angle channel frame will be installed on the building. A bungee technology will then be used to loop through the grommets and pull it tight to the surrounding frame.
- Will the originally approved awning system be installed on the building? – (r) No, the approved awning/large canopy is not really conducive to the events that we hold there and therefore we will be going with a smaller, five foot projection awning. Something that is more traditional.
- Would you consider putting a bench in the courtyard area in front of the building? – (r) The granite curbs in the courtyard will provide a dual function for this and we think that a bench may invite people to hang out in this area when we do not necessarily want them there.

The Committee is very supportive of the new proposed signage. It gives the feeling of an old paint on the side of the building and you can see the texture to it. If there is a reasonable panel size that is a bit smaller, it would help and work better to pull it away from the corners of the building. Doing this will house the banners a bit more and make them feel like they are more a part of the building

The signage crosses over the pilasters on each side of the elevations which makes it seem more like a billboard. If the Applicant can live with the banners being a little bit smaller this would make the signs feel more tied to the building and less projected.

It may be nice to have plantings that define the entry sequence in front of the building. In the renderings the plantings seemed to get diminished by the scale of the building and if there were an understory or lower level plantings, there would be a better vertical connection between the street and the entrance.

### **181 Cedar Street (Case # ZBA 2012-05)**

Review of project before it goes before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

**Description:** Applicant and Owner 181 Cedar Street, LLC, seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review under SZO §7.3 to construct six dwelling units and a Variance under SZO §5.5 from the parking requirements of SZO §9.5 for relief from four required off-street parking spaces. RB zone. Ward 5.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** March 14, 2012

This was the second time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. Around the front entry much of the glass was removed and wood panels were installed, the red canopy was removed, and asphalt shingles were installed. The material of the decks was also changed with all the surfaces of the decks now being white with the exception of the walking surfaces. The support columns for the deck are also now more articulated. The band on the siding of the front façade was also moved up to the middle of the top floor windows. The material of the ramp was also changed to a stack block.

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

- Will pressure treated wood still be used for the decks? – (r) On the inside of the posts, yes, but they will be covered.
- What type of materials will you be using for the stack block and the asphalt shingles? Do you have specific images of that or samples of those materials? – (r) We do not have specifications for these materials yet.



The suggestions at the last DRC meeting regarding the ramp pertained to the look of the railings and there were additional comments made of this second proposed design. A low masonry wall with hand rails on the inside of the brick wall would help this element of the design. A solid screen masonry wall on this corner would also help to delineate the street edge more and to provide a bit more privacy. It seems odd that the building does not address Warwick Street at all and something that gives the property a defined corner would help the design as well.

Implementing substantial plantings by the ramp would also be helpful.

The railings on the ramp currently look like a very standard detail and some treatment of the railings that does not have them stand out would be preferable. The plants should not be relied on to make this element successful. The object itself has to be well designed.

The Committee would like to see material samples of the masonry wall, the asphalt shingles, and for the lattice work around the bottom of the porches. It would be helpful to understand what the treatment will be of the vertical faces that touch the ground in some way.

Above the main door the blank solid panel seems awkward up to the start of the shed and including the asphalt shingles. This aspect of the design could be looked at more closely. Perhaps addressing the color or the quality of the asphalt shingles would help to improve this aspect.

The proportioning of the windows on the front façade still seems a bit strange. A single squarely proportioned window, or two that are separated, might work better for the windows that are located above the kitchen sinks.

Elaboration around the main entryway and establishing a stronger street presence for this entrance would be helpful. You may also want to consider a flat roof for the awning here.

Pushing back the first floor porch on the Warwick Street elevation to be at the same plane as the upper level porches would be preferable and would help to increase the landscaping in these areas.

Incorporating steps down from the first floor porch to Warwick Street would be helpful to create a more welcoming street presence for the structure.

Please make sure the landscape plan matches the vegetation layout in the elevations and perspectives. It would be preferable to have more larger trees closer towards Cedar Street (as in the perspectives) as opposed to them being located deeper into the lot. This type of a vegetation layout will help to mask the decks a bit on the side of the structure. A street tree treatment would also be helpful for the project.

The palette of exterior finish materials and colors for the project is identical to another project being built by the same owner/architect team on Cedar Street. It is requested that the Applicant propose a different material/color palette for this project so that the two buildings are unique in that regard. Fiber cement siding could be used at both projects, but not with such an identical aesthetic.

**1-2 Village Terrace (Case # ZBA 2011-77)**

Review of changes since the last DRC meeting where the Applicant presented.

**Description:** Applicant and Owner Douglas Beaudet seeks a Special Permit to construct approximately five dwelling units in two structures with associated parking. RC zone. Ward 2.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** TBD

This was the second time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The project site is very difficult to see from Village Street. The preferably preserved building and the new structure are now separated by 12 feet. A trellis feature was added in between the two buildings along with improved landscaping to help draw people to this area of the site. The patios on the back side of the rear building have been pulled back against the building to make them more private. The project will use clapboard siding with nine, six, and four inch exposures. There is also now a demarcation of the pedestrian walkway on the site using different pavers.

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

- Is there parking for the first unit, the preferably preserved unit, on the site? – (r) Yes, it is located at the back of the lot behind the new rear structure.
- Where will the trash receptacles be located? – (r) These could be located at the rear of the site or there is also some space within the garages where the barrels could be stored.

The Committee prefers the original upper level projections on the building as they were first shown to the DRC, as opposed to how they are displayed in this rendition of the design.

A bit more detail work could be done on the porches to make them feel a little less generic but the redesigned entry area works very well.

Please take a look at incorporating the pergola language into the decks/porches on the building because it is so successful in the entry area. This would help to tie the whole design of the building together.

The two windows on the prominent projection by the entry area could be composed a bit differently and perhaps be a bit more elaborate to improve this aspect of the design. Some type of a special window or windows could be used in this area which could also reinforce or relate to the trellis component in some way to help accent it.

The fencing for the patios in the back of the rear building could be looked at a bit more closely and perhaps even be a bit more modern and akin to the pergola at the entryway. This would help to knit together the design language at the back of the building with that at the entryway.

Please take a look at using mahogany panels for the garage doors instead of trying to blend the garage doors into the side of the building. Using the mahogany doors will help to break up the solid color band on this side of the building and will help to tie everything together.



**5 Tower Court**

Review of changes since the last DRC meeting where the Applicant presented.

**Description:** Applicant seeks Special Permits under SZO §7.11.1.c and §4.4.1 to convert an existing two-family dwelling to a four-family dwelling with associated parking. RC zone. Ward 2.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** TBD

This project was not heard at this meeting as the development team decided to meet with the Design Review Committee at a later date once they had refined their design further.

