



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*PLANNING DIVISION*

**STAFF PRESENT**

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

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

JULIE BRADY  
JIM KIRYLO  
MATTHEW RICE  
FRANK VALDES

**DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES**

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, September 27, 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:

**47 Hunting Street**

**Description:** Review of a project design which proposes a three story, 6 unit building with 14 associated parking spaces before the Applicant files for Special Permit Approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals. BA zone. Ward 2.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** TBD

This was the first time the project came before the Design Review Committee. The project architect described the proposal. There is a two-family structure currently on the site now, which is composed of three different lots. The project team is now proposing a four story, 8 unit apartment building with 12 on-site parking spaces underneath the building at grade. A central stairway in the building would provide access to the two units on each floor of the building. There would be two entrances to the property, one off of Hunting Street and one off of South Street. The proposal will require rear yard setback and parking space Variances.

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

- Do you need to have two means of egress for this building? – (r) We do not believe so because the building will have a sprinkler system but we will double check the building code to confirm.



- Will you need to have an elevator with a four story building? – (r) We do not think so but we can double check the elevator code.
- Are you required to have a handicap accessible unit by the requirements of the Fair Housing Act or the Architectural Access Board? – (r) Our initial research has shown that, yes, we would, if there are dwelling units on the ground floor. However, since we do not have any units on the ground floor, an accessible unit is not required.
- What material is being proposed for the exterior of the building? – (r) We were going use a cementitious clapboard with a brick veneer on the outside of the concrete piers.
- Is the front of the building setback at all from the street edge? – (r) No, we are proposing to have a zero setback along the front lot line.
- What is the surface articulation that is to the right of the porches? – (r) It is a panel system with some lattice work as well.
- Are there required setbacks that are defining each side or each vertical edge of the building? Why do you simply have an extruded pair of boxes essentially, that are forming the building? – (r) The building has been pushed to each of the setback maximums on most sides and the design of the structure was also dictated by the amount of required parking we need to provide on the ground level.
- What would be the finishing for the balcony railings? – (r) We were most likely going to propose some type of cable but we need to think that through a bit more.

The next time you come before the Committee, it would be helpful to have material and paint samples for what you are proposing on the exterior of the building.

It appears that there is some potential to cantilever the first, second, and third floors of the design to get a little more square footage and to step back the fourth floor of the building. Varying the massing of the upper stories, adding some porches, and pulling back the top story away from the street would help to soften the flat, vertical wall feeling of the building from the streetscape level. Being aware of what the perception of the building is for a pedestrian at the street level is important.

The front elevation appears as if it is floating and seems like it is simply a block sitting on four pillars. There is a missed opportunity to relate the first floor of the structure to the rest of the building. We would suggest that you consider the articulation of the base of the building more and how it could relate to the upper stories. Creating some type of architectural break with some vertical or horizontal element using a change in material or a design element would help to visually connect the upper floors to the ground one.

Using some type of screening for the parking area on the ground floor under the building, something in the five to six foot height variety, would be helpful to limit visibility into the parking area and to help eliminate the appearance of the building being on stilts. This would be especially helpful down the South Street elevation. This screening element for the parking area would also benefit from some type of planter element in front of it.

There is a missed design opportunity with regard to the entrance of the building and its design language does not seem to relate to the rest of the structure.

Using a fake window on the façade is confusing and is not a desirable element for the building.

Please also take into consideration what the other properties in the area will end up looking like with the new CCD zoning that was recently implemented in the surrounding area.

From a marketing standpoint, you may want to consider putting an elevator into the building. Please think about how implementing this would impact the design of the structure.

Please give some thought as to where the trash bins will be located/stored and how the pickup/removal of the trash will function at the site.

Simply removing one window from the façade is not enough in terms of creating interest and we encourage you to look at other treatments that can be used to add interest to the building while still retaining windows in each of the units.

Implementing some type of bicycle parking at the site would be appreciated as well.

Please also give thought as to where the mechanical equipment and condensing units will be located on the site or on the building.

**563 & 565 Broadway (Somerville) / 42 Alfred Street (Medford)**

**Description:** Review, for the second time, of a project design which proposes a three story, 10 unit building with a lodge/club on the first floor and 21 associated parking spaces before the case goes to the Zoning Board of Appeals. NB zone. Ward 5.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** TBD

This was the second time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The project is still proposing to have the Sons of Italy lodge on the first floor, with 10 residential units above, and 21 on-site parking spaces. The project team attempted to address some of the items of concern that the Committee raised at the last meeting including the buffer area along Broadway (a trellis was added) and the balconies on the building (two were eliminated). Natural stone was added to the façade of the building and the project team tried to create separation between the first level and the second and third levels of the building. The team also added some pervious surface materials to the parking area for the site. There was also a comment from the Committee at the previous meeting about the delineation of signage for the Sons of Italy lodge and the Applicant has added a Sons of Italy emblem in one of the windows along Broadway.

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

- Do you have all of your required parking provided for on-site? – (r) We do not have all of our required parking because the City of Medford requires 2.1 parking spaces per dwelling unit, so we will need to request parking relief from the City of Medford.
- How many dwelling units will there be above the lodge? – (r) There will be ten units, most likely rental units, above the Sons of Italy lodge which will occupy the entire first floor of the building. The lodge will only be a lodge and not have a function hall component in this proposed design.
- Is this going to be a fully sprinkled building? – (r) Yes, that is correct.
- Who is constructing this building? – (r) Legacy Construction will be constructing the building.

The trellis along Broadway is very interesting, but in using it you may want to create a piece of it near the entrance to the lodge and carry the trellis further down the front façade of the building. Implementing

another piece of trellis near the portal where you enter the building would be helpful to draw more attention to the entrance where the Sons of Italy sign is located.

The wall mounted trellis needs to be refined a bit more in terms of how it is an applied piece that goes onto the building. Potentially the scale of this trellis could be reworked. The next time you come before the Committee please bring a sample piece of this trellis to help the Committee better understand what will be installed in that location.

The next time you present the project to the Committee it would also be helpful to have material and paint samples for what you are proposing on the exterior of the building.

The design of the solid canopy piece that is over the trellis could be reworked. Perhaps just using a solid canopy here and doing something that would accentuate the entrance would be helpful.

If you could provide a developed Site Plan the next time you come before the Committee, that would be helpful.

Please consider using a durable edger along the sidewalk edge between the Broadway sidewalk and the landscaping on the project site. A granite, cobblestone, or other type of cementitious material edging would work well here.

#### **77-83 North Street (Case ZBA # 2012-68)**

**Description:** Applicant and Owner Peter Stefanou, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure that is currently a convenience store into a three-story, two-family dwelling. Parking relief to provide 4 parking spaces in a tandem arrangement will be required. RB zone. Ward 7.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** Anticipated to be October 17, 2012

This was the first time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The building on the subject property was formally a retail convenient store. The Applicant is proposing to alter the nonconforming structure to build two, three-story dwelling units and will be providing four, tandem on-site parking spaces. The third floor of each unit will contain balcony/patio spaces that front onto North Street.

Retaining a portion of the existing front wall as you are proposing will be very difficult, if not impossible, to achieve as part of this project. Please take a look at attempting to reuse or preserve another portion of the structure to maintain the existing nonconforming status of the building.

Please make another attempt to tie the parking space area into the project a bit more as the tandem parking space set up seems a bit odd. This parking area could potentially be linked to the rest of the site with a low wall and/or fence. Specifically, implementing two trees along the Conwell Avenue edge of the parking area would help to soften this corner of the site.

Please investigate moving the street tree on North Street to open up the possibility of different parking options and design scenarios.

The front façade of the building is a missed design opportunity and something else could be done here to make this side of the building more pedestrian friendly. Please look into adding more fenestration to the front façade to make the structure more interactive with the North Street streetscape.

The location and relationship of the front porches to the streetscape could be improved by having the entry door or the footprint of each porch extend off of the building towards the street. Using a zero setback along North Street is a bit odd for a residential structure and creating any type of small setback or separation from the street would be helpful to the overall design of the building.

Please clarify and identify where any easements are located on the project site that might be restricting the project's design.

**146 Hudson Street (Case ZBA # 2012-76)**

**Description:** Applicant and Owner Hudson Street, LLC, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter an existing nonconforming single-family structure to convert it into three, two bedroom dwelling units with six on site parking spaces. RB zone. Ward 5.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** Anticipated to be October 17, 2012

This was the first time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The property currently contains a single-family dwelling and the front half of the lot slopes towards Hudson Street. The Historic Preservation Commission has declared the existing structure on the lot preferably preserved. The Applicant is proposing to alter the nonconforming structure to build a three unit dwelling at the property. The design is an attempt to create a transitional building between the 2½ story buildings that are found in the neighborhood and the tall structure at 140 Hudson Street. The proposal calls for a tall, narrow structure with a varied roof line that steps down at its rear and has six on-site parking spaces at the back of the property.

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

- Is this building proposed to be fully sprinkled? – (r) Yes, that is correct.
- Is there are garden level unit? – (r) There is a walkout to the front at the basement level of the building, but the walkout only leads into the storage spaces for the units above. There is no living space being proposed in the basement level of the building.
- What is being proposed for the exposed foundation material at the front of the building? – (r) A parched concrete is being proposed, which is concrete with a smooth plaster finish.

It is difficult for the Committee to comment on this project and unfair to the Applicant because the project team has already gone through so many compromises with the Historic Preservation Commission regarding the design of the building. The design of the project fits well into the existing neighborhood context, but as part of looking at the overall fabric of Somerville we are trying to get a mix of building types into the City.

The Committee would like to see material samples for the building to gain a better understanding of the project's design.

Please give some thought as to where the trash containers will be stored on the site and how the trash removal process will function at the property.

Please look at moving the walkout basement door from the front of the building around to the side. This would be preferable to recessing the walkout door at the front of the building.