



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

***DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE***

**STAFF PRESENT**

CHRIS DI IORIO, *PLANNING DIRECTOR*  
LORI MASSA, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

PETER WIEDERSPAHN, *CHAIR*  
CHERYLYN RUANE  
FRANK VALDES

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES**

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee will hold a public meeting on **Thursday, May 14, 2009, 6:30 p.m.** at the Visiting Nurses Association, 259 Lowell St, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor community room, Somerville, MA.

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

**28-30 Newberne St: (Case #ZBA 2009-15)** Applicant & Owner 128 Willow Ave, LLC seeks approval to expand and alter an existing building and establish new uses therein: special permit with site plan review (§7.11.1.c) to establish a seven residential units; special permit (§4.4.1) to expand a non-conforming structure by constructing a two-story addition above an existing one-story structure; and special permit (§4.5.1) to change from one non-conforming use (workshop) to another (office) within an existing structure. RC & OS zones. Ward 6.

The Agent and Architects introduced the proposed plans to the DRC. The proposal is for seven residential units with two non-residential studios. There would be three large residential units (~2700sf) and four smaller units. The studios would be in the existing structure that is renovated, which is in an Open Space District. The site has a six foot grade change and the building would be built into its slope. The façade and landscaped area along the bike path would be activated with patios, roof decks, garden space for residents, and a shaded pergola. There would be a transparent fence along the bike path and gate to access the path.

The DRC asked about the following aspects of the project and the architect's response is after the (r).

- Who are the parking spaces off of Willow Ave intended serve and how will they exit the site? – (r) These parking spaces are not required spaces - they are intended for visitors. They would back out onto Willow Ave, which is an existing condition.
- How does the landscaping and the staircase down to Newberne Street work? – (r) The landscaping would be sloped with this staircase.



- Does unit 2 have additional outdoor space because their patio is smaller than the others– (r) Yes it also has a balcony. All of the units have balconies or outdoor space.
- Is there a bike rack on the plans – (r) No, although there will be one onsite.
- What are the paving materials? – (r) Stone dust path, concrete brick pavers, cast stone retaining wall, and brick or stone with wrought iron for the fence.
- Will the leaching chambers collect runoff from the roof? – (r) Yes.
- Where will be rooftop units and bathroom exhaust be located? – (r) They will be hidden on the roof behind a parapet.
- Would the gate to the bike path be open? – (r) There could be a buzzer at the gate for residents.

The DRC made the following comments and recommendations (underlined):

- The building works well – it has an appropriate scale, reasonable materials, a sense of frontality along the bike path, and an entrance to the parking at the street. The massing diminishes the height of the building.
- The DRC appreciates the transparency in the fence.
- The design of the studio space is incongruous but it fits in with the first floor base of the building. Merge the materials of the studio and the base of the building so it does not look detached.
- The stairs on the southern side of the building are out of scale, appear ornamental, and the curve is awkward. It is a sculptural element but it should be more substantial like the staircase from Newberne Street façade.
- One member thought that the windows along the west elevation should be the same size to keep the symmetry and another member liked the break from the symmetry.
- On the west elevation, the two faces of the one-story portions of the building, shown in green, should be recessed from the main façade.
- They discussed the curved form of the gardens as opposed to a rectilinear form, which may look better. Although, the curved form is easier to grade and it works experientially. The landscaping is attractive.
- The gardens for the residents are a great amenity and should be kept in the plans.
- Ensure that there is a bike rack onsite.

### Other Business:

The DRC adopted the newly created Rules and Regulations.

