



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

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

STAFF PRESENT

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*

MEMBERS PRESENT

DEBORAH FENNICK
MATTHEW RICE
PETER WIEDERSPAHN

RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, Oct 14, 2010, 6:30 p.m.** on the 3rd floor of City Hall, 93 Highland Ave, Somerville, MA.

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

152 Albion St – change of a nonconforming structure to construct a two family dwelling

The Applicant explained the proposed dwelling and site plan. The previous use of the site was an office and warehouse for a floor installation and refinishing business. The original design of the dwelling included garage doors on the front of the house but due to aesthetic, pervious surface and safety concerns, the garage was moved to the side of the house. A thirteen foot driveway was tested and allows sufficient maneuvering room to access the garage. The DRC thought that it was the right move to relocate the garage doors to the side of the house. They liked how the windows in the garage matched the rest of the house so that it does not appear as a garage on the first floor.

The Committee discussed how the parking requirement of two spaces for a three-bedroom dwelling is high and the parking drives the design of the project. To reduce the number of parking spaces, they discussed building a single family house on the site. The developer said it was not economically feasible and there are many two- and three-family houses on the street.

The overall composition of the house needs to be reconsidered. The two sections of the building do not necessarily talk to each other – the one in the back sticks out and there is an additive quality due to the placement of the cantilevers. The side rear cantilever should be brought in so that it is flush with the main wall. The square footage lost could be shifted to a cantilever in the back of the house.

The DRC noted that most neighboring houses have an elevated first floor with stoops and this proposal has a porch that is flush with the ground, which looks odd. They recommended raising the porch. Also the recessed front door should be shown with different depths to see what looks the most appropriate.



The area by the side entrances is not cohesive. The two entrances should be combined on the same plane. The distance between the egress doors should be checked to make sure it meets the building code. A vertical element at this entrance may help to mark it as an entrance. The vertical siding on the first floor should wrap around to the side entrance so that it does not just surround the garage. Another way to distinguish the side entrance would be to have a different pavement under the cantilever up the driveway to this entrance.

The DRC would like to see another iteration of the plans.

26 Weston Ave – 17 unit development

The style of the building is neo-Victorian. The mechanical equipment will be concealed in a cutout in the roof.

The building matches the scale of the building across the street. The turret at the corner is in keeping with the architectural style but the Committee would not advocate for it.

The DRC recommended flat roofs for the porches so that they are independent elements from the main roof.

Brackets under the cantilever that relate to the window below would improve their appearance and brackets are part of the vernacular.

Adding raised planting beds in the front yards along the northwest side of the building will help to reduce the scale of the building that has a lower elevation in this location.

The parking works well. The concrete wall next to the driveway that leads to the parking should be covered with stucco or a similar material. The plan to add landscaping along the edge of the driveway (not shown on the drawings) will help to soften this area. Also, the end unit near the driveway could be rearranged to be the mirror image of its neighbor. This would break the repetitiveness of the units, and the front yard shift would provide a buffer from the driveway and soften the area.

The balconies in the elbow of the building should be removed or reconfigured.

