



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

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

STAFF PRESENT

GEORGE PROAKIS, *PLANNING DIRECTOR*
CHRIS DIORIO, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*
LORI MASSA, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*

MEMBERS PRESENT

JULIE BRADY
DEBORAH FENNICK
MATTHEW RICE
FRANK VALDES
PETER WIEDERSPAHN

RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, January 14, 2010, 6:30 p.m.** in the High School Library, 81 Highland Ave, Somerville, MA.

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

343-351 Summer St: The Applicants seek a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to construct a 35,800 sf building for 32 dwelling units and a 8,400 sf private non-profit club (VFW Hall). The residential building would include below-grade parking.

OVERALL PROPOSAL

The Design Review Committee (DRC) is supportive of the residential density on the site, which is very close to transit. The effort to break up the scale of the building works well. The architects should show the relationships of the buildings in a street elevation along Summer St with the Winter Hill Bank building and the residential neighbors.

DRC would suggest that sustainable water management strategies, such as green roofs, native vegetation, a water retentions system and pervious surfaces, be considered.

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

The DRC questioned the quality of the materials for a historically referential building. Nichiha fiber cement would appear to be brick on the front portion of the building. They asked the architect to bring samples of the materials proposed. The committee is concerned that a 'faux-brick panel system' for the exterior street facade surface would not have the detailed integrity of a real brick wall, and we would like to see alternative material and architectural-expression options for the street facade. The rear of the building has a simple mill building appearance that has roots in New England. The Committee had varying opinions about the success of the rear of the building but they would like to see how clapboard works on the front of the building as well.

The Committee discussed showing an alternative where the 4th story was moved away from the residential district. Asymmetry may add interest to the building.



The formal, emphasized entrance takes away from the effort to reduce the scale of the building. A visible main entrance for the building is necessary but it could take a different form. The arched entry does not work with the brick-clad design.

The first floor still appears to be commercial. It may be difficult to rent first floor units because of the lack of privacy with the large windows. The Applicant should reconsider the windows on the ground floor.

The DRC discuss the outdoor patio space in front of the first floor units. They felt that the space may not be utilized since they are very open and suggested buffering the yards in a way that would separate them from the public space but not create a visual barrier. The buffers should be pedestrian friendly. The DRC suggested adding a low wall that could be used as a bench, an open low fence or shrubs.

VFW BUILDING

The proportion of the stories of the VFW works well but the first story should be softened. One idea was to have inoperable windows along the Summer St side of the building. The DRC is interested in learning more about the materials proposed for this building so that the DRC has a solid understanding of its dialogue with the residential building.

The applicant should review the area of the site immediately surrounding the vent shaft with regards to its landscape design. While the MBTA's access criteria need to be maintained, this area should be as hospitable to the surrounding community as possible.

