



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

***DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE***

**STAFF PRESENT**

GEROGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*  
LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*  
ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

DEBORAH FENNICK  
JAMES KIRYLO  
MATTHEW RICE  
CHERILYN RUANE  
FRANK VALDES

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES**

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, March 24, 2011, 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:

**50 Middlesex Avenue**

Review of illustrated design guidelines and building design.

**Legal Advertisement:** Applicant has not submitted an application for Special Permit with Site Plan Review-A at this time. Applicant has been approved for a Planned Unit Development (PUD) Preliminary Master Plan (PMP) to construct an approximately 135,295 square foot six-story building for self-storage use, café or retail use, bicycle storage, community meeting space, and usable open space at this site. ASMD zone. Ward 1.

**SPGA:** Planning Board

**Hearing Date:** TBD

This was the second time this project had been presented to the DRC for review. The project site is currently a trucking depot that is entirely paved. The proposed structure would be a six story, 70 to 80 foot high, self-storage facility with café/retail space, a bike storage room, and a community room on the first floor and self-storage space on all the upper floors. There would be a small, outdoor plaza on the north side of the structure as well.

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

- Why are you opposed to the siding option that is dipped? – (r) It will give the building an industrial appearance that is not very desirable.



- Can you please explain the finishing on the façade materials? – (r) The finishing of the materials is factory added and cannot be painted, therefore graphics will not be able to be painted onto the siding. Additionally, with this type of siding, the road grime and dirt from I-93 will wash right off in the rain.
- What is happening in the tower element behind the glass on the upper levels? – (r) We hope that this can be a beacon and an area that can have some depth to it. We would like to have something inside the tower here, perhaps a shadow box with some type of fixed or rotating art. We are hoping to light this space up in a special way with a unique punch to it.
- Will the façade be lit at night? – (r) We are not sure yet.
- If there were images projected onto the façade, from where would they be projected? – (r) We are still working on that, but we are looking at using the canopy in the design for this element.

The DRC felt that the applicants had done very well with many elements of the design, but they also felt that the design of the tower element fell short. The Committee would like to see the use of super graphics, lighting, and perhaps glass to improve the design of the tower. The tower seemed to look very shallow in the current design, but a beautiful solid wall could “make” the design as well. The current depth of the tower that the design is showing will not succeed at this large of a scale. The DRC also felt it was strange the tower had a cornice, as there is not good rationale for mimicking something historic in its design. The upper portion of the tower is an opportunity to incorporate something else into the design of the tower, perhaps something with lighting.

There might be a way to work the canopy into the overall design of the building better instead of having it hanging off the façade.

There needs to be an articulation of the tower and the storefront windows.

Richness at the street level is needed in the design.

If the applicants decide to project images onto the façade, the DRC would like to know about the logistics of how this is going to work. From where and how the images would be projected onto the façade of the building are questions that need to be answered. Additionally, the Committee felt the building needs to be beautiful without artificial lighting or images projected upon it. It needs to look good during the day when nothing can be projected onto the façade.

The applicant should focus on how to deal with the design of the top portion of the tower element, the design of the canopy over the storefronts, the division between the storefronts and the upper levels, and how the window details and depth are going to work on the facades.

### **378, 380, 384, 388 and 390 Somerville Ave (Case #PB 2010-23)**

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

**Legal Advertisement:** Applicant W. James Herbert & Jean Herbert and owners W. James Herbert, Sr., & Jean L. Herbert, and The William James Herbert Family Trust & the Jean L. Schultz Herbert Family Trust seek a special permit with site plan review under SZO §6.1.22.D.1 to construct a new five story building and a special permit to establish 30 residential units in the building (§7.13.E). The building would also include approx. 6,500 sf of retail and 36 parking spaces, 30 of which would be underground. The applicant proposes to retain the façade of the historic structure at 378-384 Somerville Avenue and



incorporate it into the new building. The structures at 388 and 390 Somerville Avenue would be demolished. CCD-55 zone. Ward 2.

**SPGA:** Planning Board

**Hearing Date:** Anticipated to be April 7, 2011

This case was not reviewed at this meeting.

**343 – 351 Summer Street (Case #ZBA 2011-21)**

Review of design changes since the last DRC meeting.

**Legal Advertisement:** Applicant, Strategic Capital Group, LLC and owners George Dilboy VFW Post #529 and The Dakota Partners, LLC, seek a Special Permit with Site Plan Review under SZO §7.11.1.c to establish a 31 unit residential use, a Special Permit under §7.11.5.B.6.a to establish an approximately 8,400 gross square foot private, non-profit club, and a Special Permit under §9.13.b to modify parking requirements. CBD and RA zones. Ward 6.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** Anticipated to be April 20, 2011

This was the second time the project had been presented to the DRC for review for this particular design. The new design of the project includes a three story residential building with 31 units and the two story Dilboy Post situated right up against Summer Street, located between the residential building and the abutting neighbors. There is a 16 foot deep planting buffer at the rear of the property, including a proposed eight foot fence on the rear property line, and the project's surface parking adds additional buffering to the abutting residences. The residential parking for the units on the site is underground and there is surface parking for the commercial component of the project.

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

- How far back on the façade does the clapboard go on the residential building? – (r) The backside of the building returns to clapboard.
- What is happening behind the blank panels on the first floor of the front façade of the residential building? – (r) There are one bedroom units and studios on the first floor and two bedroom units on the second floor. The small windows just above the blank panels look into bathrooms and kitchens, above the cabinetry, on the first floor.
- Is there a way to get the mechanical equipment in the Dilboy Post back off the street front? – (r) There is no where to move it unfortunately due to the interior layout of the building. We are trying to get the mechanical equipment as far away from the rear abutters as possible.
- Have the landscape plans for the rear buffer been updated to show plantings that are denser? – (r) No, not yet. That is something that we need to do.

The panels on the front façade of the residential building seem extremely flat. Some sort of detail or treatment is needed there. The DRC would like to see the same type of screening or lattice from the Dilboy Post front façade be used on either side of the entryway to the residential building.

Under the front façade windows of the Dilboy Post it feels very horizontal. Connecting the front elements below the windows would be a better design.



The DRC would like to see a stronger material for the proposed trellis on the front facades of each of the buildings. Perhaps a metal material could be used instead of wood for the trellis.

**65 Beacon Street (Case #ZBA 2011-06)**

Review of front entryway per Zoning Board of Appeals condition.

**Legal Advertisement:** Applicant & Owner Beacon Court Realty Trust seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review under §7.11.1.(c) and §13.5 for density bonus for affordable housing to convert an office building into 15 units of two-bedroom housing with two commercial units on the first floor. The Applicant & Owner also seek a special permit under §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure. RC zone. Ward 2.

**SPGA:** Zoning Board of Appeals

**Hearing Date:** April 6, 2011

The Committee thought the proposed final design of the front entryway to the building was a vast improvement over its current design.

