



**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*

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

JIM KIRYLO  
MATTHEW RICE  
KELLY SPEAKMAN

**DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE**

**RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES**

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, November 15, 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:

**Assembly Square PUD – Blocks 1 and 4**

**Description:** Review and discussion of final materials and colors for siding, trim, windows, doors, and of the on-site mock-up for the buildings proposed for Blocks 1 and 4 at Assembly Square to unlock a vertical construction permit as part of a condition of the awarded Special Permits. ASMD zone. Ward 1.

This was the first time the Applicant had come before the Design Review Committee to discuss the mock-ups of the materials and colors that are being proposed for Blocks 1 and 4 in Assembly Square. The project team came before the Committee to discuss the materials that were being proposed for six different façades on the two different buildings. The mock-ups were built for visual comparison only and were not constructed as constructability mock-ups. The mock-ups were also not water tight nor did they reflect the accurate flashing conditions. They did show the composition of the materials and the juxtaposition of one another. The proposed facades for Block 1 were represented by Panels A, B, and C. Panel A is a flat brick wall with precast headers and aluminum window inserts. Panel B displays the two corner entry towers with a projecting bay over the primary entrances with precast and GFRC cornices. Panel C is a buff brick and the project team is having a debate about what type of mortar to use on this façade, a light buff mortar or a Portland and lime mortar. The proposed facades of Block 4 are represented by Panels D, E, and F. Panel D has iron spot brick with a silky appearance to it and the brick headers are recessed. In Panel E, the windows are popped with both a material and color contrast. Panel F has a dark brown brick with a modern cornice that cantilevers outward.



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

- Could you please explain how the efflorescence will be reduced or eliminated in this proposed project? – (r) Two factors will play into this reduction or elimination. First, our specification that we have for our mortar is a little unusual and it specifies a type of mortar that does not effloresce. There is an additive, or something they take out of the mortar, that prevents this efflorescence. Second, it is part of the construction process and keeping the cavity wall dry to prevent the efflorescence from occurring.
- Are the specifications for the mortar the same as those in the project at Station Landing? – (r) Yes, the same specification in the mortar was used in the Station Landing buildings.
- Are you planning on using the almond or the champagne colored windows, or are you proposing to use them both? – (r) We are actually not sure ourselves about what we will use and we are trying to use the mock-ups to figure out what we like best.
- On Block 4 will there be a varying color for the fascia cornice piece which is more brick metal? – (r) There is the intent to have color variation in the brick metal and while the colors are generally consistent, we would like to match them with the colors of the precast headers and sills on the building.

The masonry across all of the mock-ups has a nice quality, scale, coloration, and a good textural quality as well. This is especially true in Panel D in terms of how the precast matches the mortar and how it all sets with the brick. However, in Block 4, there was too much contrast between the mortar and the brick itself on Panel F. The mortar on this panel seems to be too buff and seems to pop too much. It would be preferable to take a little bit of the beige color out of the mortar and trend it towards a gray color.

Where the iron spot brick is used it is actually so close to the mortar it would be preferable to see the bricks more to prevent the façade from looking monotone and monolithic.

The Committee has a preference for the precast sill on the bottom of the windows on Panel D as it will help to add interest to the façade of the building.

In regards to the window frames in the mock-ups, the Committee would prefer to see frames that are on the lighter side of the color palette as opposed to the darker side.

The Committee would have preferred to see a mock-up for the precast garage portion of the building because there was a lot of discussion about that façade during the permitting approval process.

On the window surround with the lighter color on Panel E, there seemed to be a lot of open joints that seemed to be very susceptible to taking in water around the window and potentially becoming a maintenance issue. It would be preferable to do the surrounds with the composite panel material and tie them into the surrounding material for each window.

The way that the masonry turns back in to meet the window frames; in these areas there seems to be an open gap around the windows. This is also a waterproofing issue but more so an appearance issue because having a one inch sealant gap will not work well here and will take away from the quality and perception of the building. Perhaps bringing the window out a bit further might address this issue because returning the brick is a lot of effort and time.

The use of the GFRC material seems to be a bit false in terms of its scale and the Committee is not really supportive of this particular material choice because it is a somewhat false type of material. If there is a

way to make the profile of the arches which are constructed of this material slightly more modern, that would be preferable.

There is also some concern about the copper cornice and the potential for there to be runoff from the cornice that might stain the GFRC material. Please consider how the water runoff in this area can be handled and mitigated to prevent the copper from staining the GFRC.

The Committee also understands that the subject of signage will be the topic of conversation for a separate meeting with the Committee.

(Please also refer to the written comments that were submitted by Committee members which are attached to these minutes and recommendations)

**16 Butler Drive/100 Temple Street (Case # ZBA 2007-03-R5-4/2012)**

Review of proposed material and color samples in order to meet a condition of the Special Permit to unlock a Building Permit for the construction of Phase 3 for the project.

**Description:** Applicant, Somerville Community Corporation, and Owner, St. Polycarp Redevelopment, LLC, received a revision to Special Permit ZBA 2007-03 under SZO §5.3.8. The revision is to modify the site and building design for Phase 3 of the development consisting façade alterations, changes to the roof line, potential removal of balconies, and window alterations. NB zone. Ward 4.

This case was not presented or discussed by the Design Review Committee at this meeting.

## Adam Duchesneau

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**From:** Matthew Rice [Rice@arrowstreet.com]  
**Sent:** Monday, November 12, 2012 11:52 PM  
**To:** Adam Duchesneau  
**Subject:** RE: ASQ Mock-Up Viewing Instructions

Adam,

I assume I should be responding to you alone, versus the entire DRC - but please share my comments with the DRC at the appropriate juncture.

I did visit the mock-ups on site at 11 am on 11/11/12. In general I appreciated the scope and scale of the panels that had been created, as they offered a great opportunity to get a sense of the eventual built reality of the project. I will caveat most of the comments below with the fact that I understand that mock-up panels are laboratories for the design/build team to identify and resolve issues, and they do not necessarily have the ability to be completely finished products.

Even given the caveat above however, I feel there are several critical details in the mockup panels that need to be reviewed & addressed by the design/build team.

The first detail that needs to be corrected is the interaction of the masonry and window frames. The masonry at all of the mockup panel window jambs has not been returned to the exterior sheathing/insulation, leaving a rough/open gap in the wall cavity. While this gap could in theory be filled with a sealant joint - the joints would be large and irregular, and would likely lead to the premature deterioration of the exterior wall integrity.

The second detail involves the use of brake metal in lieu of composite metal panel at the light silver window surround on the "E" mock-up panel. The joinery details used for the brake metal appears very susceptible to water intrusion and premature degradation. It would be preferable to create the window surrounds out of a composite aluminum panel material to match the remainder of the metal panel on the mockup. The same light color and overall look of the panel could be achieved using a composite aluminum panel surround.

Beyond these relatively small-scale detail comments, I had two other macro-level issues to bring up. The one mock-up panel that is missing from those that have been created is a section of the pre-cast concrete parking garage exterior skin. Given that there was much discussion regarding the elevations of the parking garages when the design team came in front of the DRC, it seems to be a significant omission. I would like to request that a mockup section of the precast panel be constructed on site so that the DRC can evaluate it adjacent to its context. It is important that the DRC have the ability to comment on the mock-up panel once it has been built, and before the final spandrels are put into production and any suggested change would be met with extreme resistance.

The second larger scale comment I would make is regarding the integration of the sign band below all of the mockup panels. The mockups do not give a very good/accurate sense of how the storefronts may integrate with the various types of paneling that will form the sign band and/or the fascia above sign band. I realize an entire meeting will be dedicated to this particular subject in the near future, but the DRC will need to have an understanding of what the built reality will look like. I would suggest tabling this issue for discussion during the signage meeting - but beyond the various parameters of the signage standards that are being established, the detailing of the signage should be addressed.

Please let me know if there are any questions regarding the comments above.

Thank you,  
Matt

11/26/2012

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**From:** Adam Duchesneau [aduchesneau@somervillema.gov]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 08, 2012 5:57 PM  
**To:** Deborah Fennick; Frank Valdes; James Kirylo; Julie Brady; Kelly Speakman; Kelly Speakman (work); Matthew Rice; Tanya Paglia  
**Subject:** ASQ Mock-Up Viewing Instructions

DRC Members,  
Please find below and attached instructions on how to view the Mock-Up at Assembly Square which be available on Sunday, November 11<sup>th</sup> for viewing (if you contacted me about a time you would like to visit the site) or Monday through Thursday (Nov. 12-15) from 7:00 AM to 4:00 PM. The Mock-Up location will be fairly easy to access and no construction site attire is required to view it.

Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks.

Adam

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Dear DRC Members,

AvalonBay is pleased to present the building façade mock-ups for Blocks 1 and 4 of Assembly Row. Since our last meeting with the DRC, the AvalonBay design team has spent the better part of the year refining the elevations for each building in cooperation with the City of Somerville and the master developer, Federal Realty.

Working with the City of Somerville Planning Staff, six building façades, three for each building, were selected to be constructed for presentation to the DRC. The goal of these mock-ups is to provide a real-life sense of the design style and material selection for Blocks 1 and 4. Each mock-up represents a scaled version of a specific façade section and is oriented in the same direction as the future location on the given building. Please see the attached site plan and elevation renderings for locations of each façade. Each mock-up is labeled with a letter designation (A, B, C, etc.), corresponding to its presentation in the attached materials. The renderings reflect the most-recently approved elevations.

Building mock-ups are located directly adjacent to the AvalonBay Construction trailer just off Foley Street. To visit, take Foley Street across Assembly Square Drive. Take the third left on Foley Street after Assembly Square Drive, which is immediately after the AvalonBay Construction Trailer. See the attached map for more information.

You are welcome to visit the site to review the mock-ups at 11am on Sunday, 11/11, as well as during the week between 7am and 4pm (typical construction hours).

We look forward to discussing the material mock-ups at our meeting with you on November 15th.

Thank you,

-lars

**Lars Unhjem**  
Development Manager

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11/26/2012

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## Adam Duchesneau

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**From:** Deborah Fennick [dfennick@fmarchitecture.com]  
**Sent:** Thursday, November 29, 2012 12:16 AM  
**To:** George Proakis; Adam Duchesneau  
**Subject:** Assembly Sq, Blocks 1 and 4 Mockup Panels

Good evening gents,

George - the community visioning event tonight was excellent; kudos!

Regarding the mock-up review, and per our earlier discussion I offer the following:

Block 4, Panels D, E and F: the material selections - brick, mortar, sill and cornice, metal window frame, metal panels, etc - were very successful given the objective of a contemporary palette. My only suggestion here is to reconsider the warm colored mortar of Panel D that's somewhat incompatible with the panel's cool grey metal cornice as well as the cool colored materials of the rest of the building.

Block 1, Panels A, B and C: I am concerned that, in general, the material/color selections, and the ornamentation and detailing of elements such as the cornices of this block are ubiquitous to large scale developments found throughout the country, and are neither representative of the unique context of Somerville nor an inspired vision for the future of the City. Additionally, the use of synthetic materials made to look like real materials, such those employed at cornices / banding, and the imitation stone surfaces of Panel B should be discouraged for both aesthetic and durability/longevity reasons.

Parking Garage: would it be possible for Avalon to provide a small mock-up of the parking garage spandrel color and texture?

Please don't hesitate to contact me with questions.

Best,  
Deborah

**Deborah Fennick AIA LEED**

Principal

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This copper did not appear like this in the drawings either - the color seem different. Do they plan for this to patina over time? Because that would take 20 years in this location



This did not look like a bump out in the drawings but more like a recess - the elevations even seem to show a shadow line. It looks fine, but the drawings did not reflect this



bad construction details

bad construction details

bad construction details





bad construction details