



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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PLANNING DIVISION

STAFF PRESENT
ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

MEMBERS PRESENT
JIM KIRYLO
DEBORAH FENNICK
TANYA PAGLIA
FRANK VALDES

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Monday, November 26, 2012, at 6:30 p.m.** in City Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

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

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 was the project team's third time coming before the Design Review Committee for Phase III of this project. This particular trip to the Committee was to seek their approval for the proposed material and color samples for the project to unlock a Building Permit. The material palette for this phase of the project is very similar to the palettes for Phases I and II. The siding for this phase of the project would be fiber cement lap siding with different exposures. There would also be fiber cement paneling with a batten treatment used and the windows would be vinyl. The roofed entries would be a prefinished standing seam metal. The balconies would be very similar to what was constructed in Phase I of the project. The Phase III building would have green and light gray coloring and the battens on the panel treatment would have a golden color.

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



- Does the hardi-board come prefinished or will the siding be painted on site once it is applied to the building? – (r) The cementitious board would be painted in the field once the siding has been attached to the building.
- Did Phase I use trek for the decking on the balconies? – (r) Phase I did use trek on the balconies or another type of composite.
- What will the colors and materials be for the railings on the balconies? – (r) A hot-dipped galvanized rail for extreme durability will be used and then we will affix to it a rich stained wood. Therefore, most of what will be seen will be the rich stained wood. Sometimes we have had the galvanized rail painted but it scrapes off very easily.

It would have been better to have seen a piece of the hardi-board that was painted the proposed colors you are discussing to give the Committee a better idea of what the coloring will look like when applied to the cementitious panel.

One concern the Committee has is about the materials that will make up the balconies. The underside of the balconies in the other phases of the project seems to use a pressure treated wood which does not look good. It would be preferable to have the underside of the balconies painted to give that view of the balconies a more finished look.

It is appreciated that Phase III is not using a stock hardi-board but instead you are proposing to use a cementitious panel for the siding.

The Committee would like to be able to go out and view the initial application of the paint to the hardi-board in the field during the mock-up period to be able to provide their comments before the entire building is painted.

117-119 Heath Street / 34 Edgar Avenue (Case # ZBA 2012-81)

Description: Review of the Applicant's proposal to construct five units. RB zone. Ward 4.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: Anticipated to be December 12, 2012

This was the second time the Applicant had come before the Design Review Committee to discuss their proposed project. At the last Historic Preservation Commission meeting the building at 34 Edgar Avenue was deemed to be "significant." The Applicant presented a site plan layout that retained the existing structure at 34 Edgar Avenue and proposed constructing four new structures, in a row, situated parallel to Edgar Avenue. The two car garages for each of these structures would be accessed off of the alleyway and a new common greenspace would be created between the new buildings and the backs of the buildings that front onto Heath Street.

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

- How much separation do you have between each of the four single-family residences? – (r) There is nine feet of separation between each building. The minimum required by the Building Code is five and a half feet.
- Did you consider having two duplex buildings instead of four single-family residences? – (r) We did not. We had proposed a duplex where 34 Edgar Avenue is currently located but we may now have to retain that building as part of this project.

- Is it possible to turn the building at the end of the proposed row of buildings so that it is facing the pathway on the common greenspace? – (r) It could work but we would have to remove one of the existing large trees on the site and the grade change in this area would make it difficult to orient one of the buildings in this manner.
- Why are you considering this particular type of vinyl siding? – (r) The hardi-plank, from a construction standpoint, has a lot of faults to it. It seems to deteriorate over the years and there are issues with the spacing that needs to be done where it meets roof lines to meet the requirements of the hardi-plank.

The biggest issue that the Applicant has is an urban planning master plan one. The greenspace area is a common greenspace that all of the project's residents will have access to, but there is also the alleyway where the two car garages are accessed. Each of these is important elements and therefore the proposed buildings essentially do not have distinguishable fronts and backs. These buildings really have two fronts or two sides of them that need to be treated as the front of a structure.

The location and massing of the buildings on the project site seems to work well, but the success of this site plan will rest on the landscape plan. The sides of the buildings that face the greenspace area need to be developed well, but the sides of the buildings that face the alleyway should also contain a good amount of landscaping and detailing.

The manner in which the alleyway area is treated is another critical component. This area cannot be the continuation of the asphalt from the Edgar Avenue streetscape. This space should be inviting and should contain elements such as pavers, light components, landscaping, etc. to make the vehicle feel secondary in this space.

Please take a look at doing large, elegant garage doors that face the alleyway. This may force the proposed pedestrian doors on alleyway side of the buildings around to the side of each building, but it might allow you to have more appropriate garage doors in this area.

You should determine where the "front" door of each building will be located and then ensure that the landscaping at the project site supports that entrance.

The "front" of each building could be located on either end of the proposed dwellings, but it is preferable to have the garage doors access the alleyway area.

Please provide a nicely developed site plan/landscape plan, an elevation of what the project would look like from Edgar Avenue, and some 3D perspectives of the project the next time you come before the Committee.

Please take another look at the Building Code to ensure that you are able to use vinyl siding on the proposed dwellings. There may or may not be enough separation between the proposed buildings to use vinyl siding.

70 Prospect Street (Case # PB 2012-21)

Description: Applicant Douglas Beaudet and Owner Emily 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 14 residential units in the building under SZO §7.13.E. The building would also include approx. 1,500 square feet of retail and 14 at-grade parking spaces. The Applicant and Owner are also seeking a Variance from the side yard setback requirements under SZO §8.5.H, SZO §6.1.22.G.5, and SZO §5.5.3 and a Special Permit under SZO §9.17.2.B for the modification of parking space dimensions and for shared parking between the required residential and commercial parking spaces. CCD 55 zone. Ward 2.

SPGA: Planning Board
Hearing Date: TBD

This was the first time the Applicant had come before the Design Review Committee to discuss the project. The Applicant is proposing to construct a five story mixed use building with approximately 1,500 square feet of ground floor retail and 14 residential units on the upper floors. The property would also have 14 on-site parking spaces. It should also be noted that this property has been identified as a takings parcel in the Union Square Revitalization Plan.

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

- Will the parking garage be mechanically ventilated? – (r) Yes, it will be a mechanically ventilated garage.
- Will there be individual condensing units for each dwelling unit? – (r) Yes, that is correct.

It seems that more could be done with the Webster Avenue façade of the building and there is especially a lost design opportunity at the corner of the building at the Webster Avenue-Prospect Street intersection. The articulation in this area of the building is very subtle and too residential. This is a very unique flatiron lot and this building should embrace the iconic corner design potential for this property. Please take a look at completely opening up the corner of the building where the retail space is located. Perhaps matching the scale of a vertically more generous base to the building would be helpful here. Even using some type of patterning on the building would be helpful to fully embrace the unique corner aspect of the structure.

There could also be a more elaborate development of the retail base for the building. The whole retail condition of the first floor could feel as if it was more part of the public realm and taller. One way to do this would be to extend the cornice line on the first floor up to the sills on the second floor to add visual height.

The window boxes do not seem to be working that well for the Webster Avenue façade design. These window boxes should be better articulated to help give this portion of the façade a much more pedestrian friendly feeling. Please take a look at the articulation and increasing the amount of glazing in this area.

Please take a look at creating some sort of banding across the façade of the building to help connect the two retail spaces to one another.

The residential entrance in the back of the building should be elaborated more and be made grander through some type of banding, canopy, or additional glazing.

Please be cautious in using materials such as hardi-plank or Nichiha siding at the ground level. The high quality construction materials of the project should be introduced at the pedestrian level of the design to establish prominence and create interest. Glazing, metal, Trespa, or porcelain paneling might work well in this area.

Please give consideration as to where the mechanical units and meters, gas and electrical, for the building will be located.

Please provide a roof plan showing the location of the mechanical units, projections, or enclosures on the roof the next time the project is presented to the Committee.

8 & 11 Fairview Terrace

Description: Review of a project design which proposes constructing a 2½ story, six unit building on a site that already contains a three-family dwelling before the Applicant files for Special Permit approval from the Zoning Board of Appeals. The project site will have 15 total parking spaces for the 9 total dwelling units at the property. RA zone. Ward 4.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: TBD

This was the first time the Applicant had come before the Design Review Committee to discuss the project. There is an existing one story ranch structure and a three-family dwelling currently located at the property. The Applicant is proposing to take down the existing ranch building to construct a 2½ story, six unit residential building in its place. The first floor of this building would be adaptable to be handicap accessible. This would then create nine total dwelling units at the property, including one affordable unit, and 15 parking spaces would be provided to maintain zoning ordinance compliance.

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

- Is there the possibility of putting more landscaping or a few parking spaces at the end of Fairview Terrace to add some more greenspace to the overall project site? – (r) This is something that we are looking into but we would have to discontinue the roadway to be able to include that area back into the project site. We are not sure if this is possible but we are exploring this option.

The proposed six unit building has no depth, shadowing, or layering to it. Please take a look at adding some physical contrast to the façade of the building, perhaps through recessing portions of the façade or through the addition of balconies or decks to the building. This is especially true on the public side of the structure where balconies could be implemented to overlook the parking area.

The entryway door to the new six unit building is vastly under scaled and should be enlarged and accentuated more. The entrance to the building should be grander and this can potentially be achieved through some sort of treatment, detailing, or articulation on the exterior of the building, or through the use of additional fenestration.

Please take a look at using some different types of pavers or treatments in the parking areas to distinguish them from the Fairview Terrace right-of-way.

Please also take a look at creating a walkway in front of the six unit building to capture some of the space in front of the building to create a buffer between the residences and the parking area. This could also be done by implementing balconies or decks on the exterior of the upper floors of the structure. Please note that the balconies or decks should be large enough for people to use them and to sit out on them.

Adding some bicycle parking near each of the buildings on the site would be beneficial to the overall project design. If the number of parking spaces on the site is reduced for this project you could easily pick up some space for bicycle parking.

Please take a look at slightly rotating the new building so that it is parallel with the property line as this may give the structure a little bit better exposure to the sun.

It would be helpful to have some 3D perspective drawings for the structures as well as the landscaping at the site the next time you present this project to the Committee.

77-83 North Street (Case ZBA # 2012-68)

Description: Applicant and Owner Peter Stefanou, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure that is currently a convenience store into a three-story, two-family dwelling. Parking relief to provide 4 parking spaces in a tandem arrangement will be required. RB zone. Ward 7.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: Anticipated to be December 12, 2012

This was the second time the Applicant had presented the project to the Design Review Committee. The Applicant is still seeking a Special Permit to alter an existing nonconforming structure to create a three story, two unit building. A small piece of the front foundation wall would be retained to allow for the alteration of this structure via a Special Permit. In this rendition the Applicant is proposing to create a centrally located curb cut in the parking area to eliminate the need for tandem parking spaces through the creation of a T-shaped parking area. This would require moving a street tree slightly down the roadway.

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

- What will be used for siding on the exterior of the building? – (r) We are proposing to use Hardi-panel for the siding and PVC for the trim.
- What type of fencing will be used around the parking area? – (r) We are proposing to use a prefabricated black metal fence.
- Do you have any flexibility to reduce the size of the parking area to add additional greenspace? – (r) We are actually at the minimum dimensions for the drive isle and the parking spaces as specified in the zoning ordinance so we cannot reduce the size of the parking area any further.

The Committee was comfortable with the rendition of the design presented by the Applicant at this meeting.