



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE, MAYOR

STAFF PRESENT

CHRISTOPHER DI IORIO, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*
LORI MASSA, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*

MEMBERS PRESENT

BEATRIZ GOMEZ MOUAKAD
PETER WIEDERSPAHN
FRANK VALDES

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

The Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday May 22, 2008 at 6:30 pm** in the third floor conference room of City Hall, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

The DRC made the following comments and recommendations (underlined):

39 Endicott Avenue: (*Applicant/Owner: Endicott Partners, LLC; Agent: Richard Di Girolamo*) *The Applicant seeks Special Permit with Site Plan Review approval under SZO §7.3 in order to construct an eight unit apartment building (including one affordable unit) on a 12,504 s.f. parcel. Residence B (RB) / Ward 7.*

The DRC is reviewing this project for the fourth time. The Applicant explained the two new schemes, one of which has a slight variation with a piece of the mansard roof on the left side of the front porches. The original scheme had two parts to the building and there was an inclination to make the two sides different to address neighbors' concerns regarding the bulk of the building. The roof was changed to a mansard and gable to create horizontal and vertical differences in the building. The DRC suggested that the secondary elements of the building be removed to simplify the design. The Applicant met with Planning Staff and created two new schemes with the same language across the building. One has a mansard roof on both sections of the building and the other has a gable roof on both sides of the building. The siding would be hardiplank or fiber cement. The heights are eight feet under what is allowed in the Zoning Ordinance. The porches on the front of building are an important part of the living space.

The DRC discussed the following:

Both schemes reduce the scale of the building and the DRC appreciated the effort in incorporating feedback into the designs.

B. Gomez initially favored the gable scheme and said that the materials used in the building can make it not look boring. She felt that the porch and mansard do not speak to each other.

F. Valdes favored the mansard design. He felt that this design breaks up the building and it reads as more of a front to a residential building. The gables are trying to mimic the neighbors and they come together such that they can be perceived as one face.

The frontality of the building is reduced because the front door is recessed.

P. Wiederspahn felt that both schemes are successful with the consistency in their language and fit well into the street. The right gable matches the double gable on the left. The front porches are more integrated into the gable design. He could support either scheme.

There was some discussion about how the front porch in the mansard design could be better integrated into the design. The porch should stop where the top of the mansard becomes vertical. This is where the dormers stop and all elements should end at this breaking point. All of the members preferred the mansard scheme with the gable extending to the left of the porch.

The mansard has a higher sense of elegance and is the more challenging design to execute. The details of the mansard roof scheme need to be executed with the details in the drawing. The profiles in the elevations need to be articulated and not just appear as lines on the plans. The mansard roof is the shorter of the schemes.

The DRC asked about the mechanicals on roof. They would be located behind the façade in the middle portion in the building.

To help neighbors contextualize the plan, they suggested photographing mansards in the area and presenting a 3-dimensional drawing and street elevation.

All the members agreed that the mansard scheme executed with attention to detail would be the most sensitive to the neighborhood.

50 Inner Belt Road: (*Applicant: Internap Network Services, Inc., Owner: Penna Realty Trust, Agent: John McDonald*) *The Applicant seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review for the use as a data center over 25,000 square feet (SZO § 7.11.15.c). Industrial A / Ward 1.*

The Applicant discussed the history of the building. It was built in 1971 as a warehouse. The new use would be a data center. The exterior would need to be secure. The Applicant would like to incorporate green design elements. The lease would be for 15 years. The Applicant would like to reduce the size of the generator building if possible. The façade would be corrugated metal and painted concrete masonry units. Rooftop units are now on the elevations but are not in the renderings.

The DRC discussed the following:

There is no space for solar panels with the rooftop installations.

Landscaping: The proposed wildflowers would be attractive in the front of the building. The proposed grass is not an environmentally friendly landscaping material. The site could use more greenery to give it a friendlier appearance. The building could be covered in ivy. More landscaping is needed along Inner Belt. Provide more landscaping.

Façade: The façade is monolithic. The corrugated panels could change direction to break up the mass of the building. The use of color works well in this industrial area. Different colored panels could also

break up the mass but it should not be too arbitrary or willful. The building needs more modulation. The doors could creep up into the façade above. There could be lighting under the lip of the building so that the building floats at night. Break up the mass of the building with one or more of these techniques.

The area with the generator building works well because it creates a space.

This is a functional building, which is a forgotten piece of Somerville. The Inner Belt area will have more life in the future and this building could set a precedent for how to design the box-like buildings in the area.

The DRC appreciates the use of color and the improvement that this project would bring to the site.

191 Inner Belt Road: *Winebow Company requires a Special Permit with Site Plan Review for use as a warehouse over 25,000 s.f. Industrial A / Ward 1.*

The Applicants were not able to attend the meeting. They have not yet filed an application for a Special Permit with Site Plan Review.

126 Orchard Street: *The Applicant requires a Special Permit to expand a two-family dwelling. Residence B / Ward 6.*

The Applicant explained the project. Only the front of the building is visible. The sides mimic a neighboring property. The building currently has yellow vinyl siding. The two trees on the site will remain. The carports have entrances on both sides for security reasons.

The DRC discussed the following:

The design is an aggregate form with many objects on the sides. There are too many languages in play; there is a Dutch gable with a gambrel behind. The back design is curious and temple-like.

There is a more artful way of creating headroom. The gambrel roof could become a gable with dormers. The towers are odd – they are neither bays nor dormers. The framing members on bay windows should be substantial. The internal configuration is convoluted which is affecting the exterior of the building. The front of the building would be simple and the rest of the building should also be simple. If the style is Greek revival the columns should be more robust and have girth and scale. This will make the design sophisticated and not pretentious. Be more consistent and simple in the style of the building.

The third floor needs a second means of egress.

Even though the sides of the house would not be seen as a whole the DRC advised not to emulate a neighbor that does not have a consistent design. This building could set a precedent for another building in the neighborhood.

The Applicant had concerns that the building may be too massive if made simpler. Bays would help to modulate the building and it would not be seen as a whole because of the buildings on either side.

The DRC questioned the adequacy of the maneuvering area for the cars on the site. There was also concern with pedestrian access to the three entrances on the left side of the building with five cars also using this space. The site plan should show access ways, existing buildings and porches, and neighboring buildings. The Applicant could also show the elevation along the street with scaled pictures.

Redesign the building for another review by the Committee.

Other Business:

Peter Wiederspahn will chair the Committee.

The DRC will meet regularly on the fourth Thursday of the month unless there are no cases for them to review. The next meeting will take place on Thursday June 26, 2008 at 6:30pm.