



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

**MICHAEL F. GLAVIN**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

**STAFF PRESENT**

AMIE HAYES, PLANNER  
KRISTI CHASE, PRESERVATION PLANNER

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

JILLIAN ADAMS  
ABBY FREEDMAN (ARRIVE 2:50)  
ERIC PARKES

**Minutes for 5/30/13 Public Meeting**

The Somerville Historic Preservation Commission held a public meeting on **Thursday, May 30, 2013, at 2:00 p.m.** in City Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss design components to incorporate into a Memorandum of Agreement regarding the proposed project at 92-96 Prospect Street.

Three dimensional renderings and a memo from Staff regarding design components of the proposal were distributed prior to the start of the meeting. The Applicant and Architect gave an overview of the proposal and Staff explained that this project would also be reviewed by the Design Review Committee prior to being heard by the Zoning Board of Appeals.

The Applicant explained that, currently, there are two parking stalls located in front of the Prospect Street façade. However, the plan is not to utilize these spaces, but to close the curb cuts on both Prospect and Tremont streets. Closing up these two curb cuts would create two additional spaces on Prospect Street and one additional space on Tremont Street.

The Applicant then discussed how alternative proposals were dismissed. The cost between retaining the entire existing building versus demolishing a large portion of the existing structure and building the proposed interior structure were compared. This exercise illustrated that the present proposal was most viable. Retention of the entire existing building also presents issues regarding light access due to the location of the structure on three of four lot lines. Creating townhouses that face into the lot also presented issues with regard to fire access and direct views into each unit.

The Commissioners first focused on the transition between the old and new buildings, specifically the relationship between the front façade and the remaining two side façades. The Applicant stated that 16-19 feet of depth, of the original structure, would remain for both street façades. One suggestion was to continue the wall at a higher height for a longer length or mimic the stepped parapet to create a similar “step” component between the street and side façades. The use of a “stepped” approach was further encouraged by the Commissioners as this would be consistent with the architectural detail on the Prospect Street façade.



The Commissioners inquired if more depth of each façade could be retained. The Applicant and Architect explained that the location of the steel trusses (15-20 feet behind each façade) hinder the ability to extend this component further. Not only will the facade itself be structurally affected, but the trusses will be physically limiting with regard to head room on the second floor.

Looking over the three dimensional renderings, the Applicant explained that less of the interior building will be visible than what is illustrated in the renderings as the perspectives do not account for nearby buildings. However, residents within the adjacent buildings will have clear views of the interior building. For the next meeting, the Architect has been asked to provide perspectives from the sidewalk in front of the building and from directly across the street.

The Commissioners appreciated the industrial nature of the interior structure as this is consistent with the original use, but thought the interior building could relate better to the historic façades. The Applicant also explained that there are essentially three aesthetics happening with this proposal: the historic brick façades; the industrial interior façade with colored panels and divided lights; and the remaining industrial facades with colored panels but without divided lights.

Regarding the proposed modifications to the historic façades, the Commissioners noted that the arched openings were likely double-hung windows with an arched upper sash. The Commissioners pointed out that the glass block on the first story façades explain the evolution of the building as well as possibly infilling (with brick) the door openings that will no longer be used. The Commissioners thought the aesthetic of the glass in the top portion of the center arch mimics a historic glass transom, but thought the bottom paneling should be brought up to a height that relates more to the façade, such as the height of the window and door lintels. In addition, the Commissioners did not support altering a window into a door on the right portion of the Prospect Street façade. This design choice was made due to the awkward location of the adjacent transformer. The Commissioners inquired if the transformer on the Prospect Street façade would remain since the location of the transformer blocks use of a door. The Applicant hopes to work with the utility company to determine if the location and/or size of this transformer could be altered; however, the Architect explained that past experiences do not demonstrate that the transformer will likely be altered or buried underground. Commissioners then inquired to see if Planning Staff could pursue moving, burying or reducing the size of this transformer; Staff said they would look into this.

Other suggestions, such as providing interior views of the steel trusses, would be appropriate, but the suggestion to imitate the roof line of the historic building on the new building was dismissed. The Commissioners appreciated the industrial nature of the interior structure, as this is consistent with the original use of the building; therefore, certain solutions and choices make sense for this particular situation. The Commissioners discussed attaching the buildings to help establish a better relationship between the two structures, but decided that retaining these buildings as separate and unattached is more appropriate. The suggestion of an arched entryway, between the parking lot and the courtyard, was examined. This arch could be of the same or similar proportions as the arch on the Prospect Street façade and composed of an industrial material, such as steel. This arch could serve as a transition between the new and old spaces.

Last, the discussion focused around the interior wall of the new structure that faces Prospect Street and the transition between the Prospect Street façade and this interior façade. The Commissioners thought this interior wall was rather plain and did not relate well to the immediate surroundings. Since the Commissioners thought this interior façade should be addressed further, suggestions included the use of arch windows, windows grouped in threes, and/or the use of panels to simulate a consistent rhythm between the two Prospect Street façades. Comments on the wall material of this façade thought that incorporating the texture of cedar clapboards or Hardiplank into the new structure could help enhance the historic brick façades as well as the use of metal framing in black or dark bronze.

The discussion concluded at approximately 3:30 p.m. with an understanding that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday, June 11, 2013 at 2 p.m.

