



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2011-24
Date: April 20, 2011
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 200 Inner Belt Road

Applicant Name: Fine Arts Storage Partners (Somerville), LLC
Applicant Address: 9600 Blackwell Road, Suite 200, Rockville, MD 20850
Property Owner Name: same
Agent Name: Lawrence E. Kaplan
Agent Address: Goodwin Procter, LLP, Exchange Place, Boston, MA 02109
Alderman: William Roche

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner Fine Arts Storage Partners (Somerville), LLC seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to establish an approx 25,000 nsf office use (SZO §7.11.7.1.c) in an existing building that is also occupied by approx 135,000 nsf wholesale business or storage use (§7.11.13.1.1.b).

Zoning District/Ward: IA / 1

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit with Site Plan Review §7.11.7.1.c

Date of Application: March 22, 2011

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals 4/20/11

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject parcel is a 368,392 square foot parcel on which sits a four-story building and 183 parking spaces.

In March of 2000 (appeal # 2000-06) the Zoning Board of Appeals issued a Special Permit with Site Plan Review and a variance for height for two buildings, each totaling approximately 190,000 sf



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and 64 ft. in height. The use was projected to be telecommunication businesses in 75% of the space. The remaining 25% of the buildings would be devoted to general office use with the build-out to be done by the tenants. Site improvements included surface parking for approximately 335-400 cars, landscaping and an underground storm water drainage system. The plan referenced were stamped in at the City Clerk's Office on January 14, 2000 as well as supplemental materials submitted on January 26, 2000, except for the layout plan. The layout plan is dated February 15, 2000. Only one of the buildings has been constructed and the remainder of the site that was a parking garage in the final plans is a grassy field.

In September of 2001 (appeal #2001-63) the site was granted a variance to construct a ten foot high masonry block wall to screen an electrical switchgear area. In November 2001 (appeal #2001-66) the site was granted permission to change the use to a biotechnology manufacturing and laboratory use. Plans are from 2000-06 approval and additional plans are dated September 27, 2001.

Later permits (# 2005-76) allowed 200 Inner Belt to become wholesale storage to use the existing building as an arts storage facility. A few revisions to the originally approved plans were granted to enclose a loading dock, reduce the number of parking spaces, erect a mechanical penthouse on the roof and replace tinted glass with clear glass. At this time, the approved use of the entire building is for an arts storage use.

2. Proposal: The current proposal is to convert 21,000 nsf of the unused storage space within the existing building into office space. The tenant of the building will be Triumvirate Environmental, an environmental consulting and services firm that specializes in hazardous waste management for biotechnology companies. Triumvirate has approximately 270 employees in five states on the East Coast. The Inner Belt has served as their corporate headquarters. Triumvirate recently received a special permit at the site across the street at 191 Inner Belt Road for their storage and yard facilities. The corporate management technical staff would be located in the new office space at 200 Inner Belt Road. The office space would occupy half of the 4th floor. The rest of the building would remain as wholesale storage for arts storage. The office space would include approximately 93 cubicles and 17 private offices, as well as other rooms such as training rooms, a gym, a lunch room, a board room and storage space. The room listed as a chemist room is actually a computer room that the chemists use to process information. There will be no chemical testing in the office.

No exterior changes to the building are proposed. Twenty-six parking spaces would be added to existing paved areas in the parking lot to bring the number of parking spaces up to 209. Parallel parking spaces would be added along the northern edge of the property along the lot line that abuts Triumvirate's site at 191 Inner Belt Road. Parallel parking space would also be added in the southern corner of the site along the lot line that abuts the MBTA train tracks.

3. Nature of Application: An office use (SZO §7.11.7.1.c) of greater than 10,000 requires a Special Permit with Site Plan Review to establish in the Industrial A district.

The parking requirement for the office use is different than the requirement for storage. With the additional parking spaces, the parking requirement for the existing and proposed uses would be met.

Office area = 21,000 nsf / 500 = 42 parking spaces required
Arts storage = 133,666 nsf / 800 = 167 parking spaces required

Total Parking Spaces Required = 42 + 167 = 247 Parking Spaces
Total Parking Spaces Provided = 209

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding area primarily consists of industrial and office uses. The closest residential building to the property is the Brickbottom Artist complex, which is located a considerable distance away, on the opposite side of the railroad tracks that run along the rear of the building.

5. Impacts of Proposal: There are no anticipated negative impacts from the proposal. The building was constructed as an office building and therefore the use is appropriate for the building and the neighborhood that is comprised of office and industrial uses. Since the arts storage space does not require many staff people the generation of traffic and parking demand is currently low. The office space for Triumvirate is currently located at 61 Inner Belt Road and so the impact of the employees on the neighborhood will be similar to the current situation.

6. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Traffic & Parking: Traffic and Parking has reviewed the revised parking space arrangement for 200 Inner Belt. The number of parking spaces complies with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO). The vehicle circulation pattern in the various parking areas is acceptable except for spaces marked 18 and 26. These two spaces shall be relocated by restriping the existing parking lot where needed to add compact parking spaces. Provided this is accomplished, Traffic and Parking has no objections to this application.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.2 & 7.11.7.1.c):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.2.5 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.2.5 in detail.

The following findings are not applicable to the application because the structure will not change as a result of this request: function design, environmental impacts, preservation of land and open space, relation of buildings to environment, stormwater drainage, historic or architectural significance, enhancement of appearance, lighting, emergency access, location of access, utility service, prevention of adverse impacts, signage, screening of facilities and screening of parking.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.2.3 of the SZO.

2. Compliance with Standards: The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit with site plan review."

An office of greater than 10,000 nsf requires a special permit with site plan review. The building meets the standards of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance and the special permit conditions and variance allowances issued by the Zoning Board of Appeals. The office use meets the parking requirements of the Ordinance. No changes to the structure are planned. The parking layout changes are minimal and are consistent with the standards.

3. Purpose of District: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with the intent of the specific zoning district as specified in Article 6."

The offices space proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district as specified in Article 6. The office is a commercial use and it is providing space for staff for Triumvirate Environmental, who has an industrial service operation in the adjacent property. The office use is compatible with industrial uses and in this case the tenants will have the benefit of having an office space that is close to their industrial service operations.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the existing natural features of the site and is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area, and that the scale, massing, and detailing of buildings are compatible with those prevalent in the surrounding area."

The existing building is compatible with the surrounding area and will not change as a result of this application. The additional parking spaces have been located on the existing paved area so that additional impervious surface is not required. The areas for parking spaces have been found that do not interfere with a 30 foot-long truck access to the building and the loading dock as shown on the site plan.

5. Impact on public systems: The proposal will not create adverse impacts on the public services and facilities serving the development, such as the sanitary sewer system, the storm drainage system, the public water supply, the recreational system, the street system for vehicular traffic, and the sidewalks and footpaths for pedestrian traffic.

The demand on the public services and facilities is currently low because the arts storage space does not require many employees or services. The building was designed to be an office building with the appropriate facilities to function as such. The office use will continue to bring office workers, jobs, and tax revenue to the City. The office space for Triumvirate is currently located at 61 Inner Belt Road and so the impact of the employees on the City services will be similar to the current situation. If the use of the building in the future causes an increased demand for parking spaces, Inner Belt Road appears wide enough so that on-street permit parking spaces may be able to be designated by the City. Future office demand will require the development of a second structure on the grass lot along with structured parking.

6. Consistency with purpose: The proposal is consistent with the purposes of the Ordinance, particularly those set forth in Article 1 and Article 5; and the purposes, provisions, and specifically objectives applicable to the requested special permit with site plan review which may be set forth elsewhere in the Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those at the beginning of the various sections.

The proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the City. The building was intended to be an office building when it was constructed and the use fits with the goal for the Inner Belt is to provide jobs and a commercial tax base for the City. The proposal is also consistent with the purposes of the other sections of the Ordinance.

III. RECOMMENDATION**Special Permit under §5.2 & 7.11.7.1.c**

Based on the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes								
1	Approval is to establish an approx 25,000 nsf office use (SZO §7.11.7.1.c) in an existing building that is also occupied by approx 135,000 nsf wholesale business or storage use (§7.11.13.1.1.b). This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	Plng.									
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>Mar 22, 2011</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>Oct 15, 2010</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (A101 floor plan)</td></tr><tr><td>Apr 28, 2010 (Apr 28, 2010)</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (site plan)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Mar 22, 2011	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	Oct 15, 2010	Plans submitted to OSPCD (A101 floor plan)	Apr 28, 2010 (Apr 28, 2010)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (site plan)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or use that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
2	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP									
3	The signage for the office shall be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff. The signage shall conform to the requirements in SZO Article 12.	CO	Plng.									
4	All mechanicals located outside the building must be baffled to be in conformance the City’s Noise Ordinance.	CO	Plng									
5	Parking spaces marked 18 and 26 shall be relocated by restriping the existing parking lot where needed to add compact parking spaces. The revised parking plan shall be submitted to Traffic and Parking and Planning Staff for review and approval.	BP	Plng									
6	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.									

