



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

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

STAFF PRESENT

GEROGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

MEMBERS PRESENT

JULIE BRADY
DEBORAH FENNICK
JAMES KIRYLO
MATTHEW RICE
CHERILYN RUANE
FRANK VALDES

RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, February 24, 2011, 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:

378, 380, 384, 388 and 390 Somerville Ave: (Case #PB 2010-23) Applicant W. James Herbert & Jean Herbert and owners W. James Herbert, Sr., & Jean L. Herbert, and The William James Herbert Family Trust & the Jean L. Schultz Herbert Family 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 30 residential units in the building (§7.13.E). The building would also include approximately 6,500 sf of retail and 36 parking spaces, 30 of which would be underground. The applicant proposes to retain the façade of the historic structure at 378-384 Somerville Avenue and incorporate it into the new building. The structures at 388 and 390 Somerville Avenue would be demolished. CCD-55 zone. Ward 2.

This case was not reviewed at this meeting.

65 Beacon Street: (Case #ZBA 2011-06) Applicant and owner Beacon Court Realty Trust seek Special Permits with Site Plan Review pursuant to Somerville Zoning Ordinance Section 7.11.1.c, and Section 13.5 to establish fourteen (14) residential units, including affordable housing incentive units, in an existing structure that is currently used for medical offices. The project also includes two ground-floor commercial suites (totaling approximately 1,760 square feet) and associated parking and landscaping. RC zone. Ward 2.

This was the second time the Applicant had come before the DRC and the Committee was supportive of the changes that had been made from the previous meeting, but they still wanted to see additional improvements. The Applicant presented four proposed design options that would alter the residential



entryway. The DRC felt that the third design option was the best. This design separated the doorways from the windows on the proposed new storefronts and added a curbing to the pediments on either side of the residential entryway. These additions to the design greatly improved the parallel connection between the cornices. The Committee still, however, did not approve of the gable front entrance to the residential units.

The Committee would like the applicant to update the residential entryway in some additional way, shape, or form. The arched portion of the entryway was the biggest concern to the Committee and suggestions were made to perhaps replace or even remove entirely that portion of the entrance to square off this segment of the façade. The existing vinyl siding portions of the building were also discussed as another area of the structure that could potentially be improved, but it was unclear as to what material could replace the vinyl to improve the current situation.

50 Middlesex Avenue: (Case # PB 2011-04) Applicant SSG Development, LLC and Owner DiSilva Truck Service Corp. seek Planning Unit Development Preliminary Master Plan approval under SZO Article 16 & § 6.4.15 to construct an approximately 135,295 sf six-story building for self-storage use, café/retail use, bicycle storage, community meeting space, and a site with usable open space and 18 parking spaces. ASMD zone. Ward 1.

This was the first time this project had been presented to the DRC for review. The project site is currently a trucking depot that is entirely paved. The proposed structure would be a six story, 70 foot high, self-storage facility with café/retail space, a bike storage room, and a community room on the first floor and self-storage space on all the upper floors. There would be a small, outdoor plaza on the north side of the structure as well.

The DRC asked about the following aspects of the project and the Agent's/Architect's response is after the (r).

- What items are in place to ensure that the Foley Street connection will be able to occur? – (r) There are significant “no build” areas on this site. Additionally, MassHighway needs to move the I-93 ramp and a covenant will be established to ensure this.
- Can you please explain the bike storage component? – (r) This will be a community resource but the specific logistics of it are still being worked out.
- How many bicycle parking spaces are there going to be? – (r) There will be 46 total spaces with 16 outdoor spaces and 30 within the indoor room.
- Are the windows on the structure functional? – (r) We are not sure yet. There are a range of options that we are looking at such as clear, opaque, semi-transparent, but they will not open.

The DRC would like to see more windows on the structure, especially on the western façade. The Committee would also like to know what type of glass the windows will consist of (clear, opaque, semi-transparent, etc.).

There was extensive discussion about the color, material, and size of the paneling that will be used for the siding on the structure. The Committee feels it is important to use a variety of sizes of blocks or panels on the façade. Perhaps masonry blocks, 6 to 8 feet in height, something larger than a standard size brick, would be more appropriate for the façade. The Committee would also like to see samples of the materials and colors that are being proposed for the siding at the next meeting. Concerns were raised about the



material that was going to be used on the building with regard to its ability to remain clean with so much traffic on the highway passing by every day.

On the left side of the east elevation, the roof line break needs to be accentuated or made smooth.

On the south façade, the plantings could be different and more landscaping in general would be stronger.

The Committee would like to know what the intent of the signage is on the structure for the next meeting.

A green roof would probably be more beneficial than putting photovoltaic panels on the roof.

The look of the building needs to be timeless.

Comments were also made by the Committee regarding the disparity of the design between the first floor and the upper levels. Logic could be incorporated into the design of the upper levels as one example of a stronger driver of the design than randomness.

Additionally, the DRC spent a substantial amount of time discussing the west façade of the structure, aside from the fact that they would like to see more windows on this facade. The Committee felt that this façade should not be ignored or activated as much as the other facades merely because it is adjacent to the highway. The glass from the community room could be extended on this elevation to include the back stairwell.

16 Butler Drive / 100 Temple Street: (Case # ZBA 2007-03-R4 (2/2011)) Applicant, Somerville Community Corporation, & Owner, St. Polycarp Redevelopment, LLC, seek a revision to Special Permit ZBA 2007-03 (SZO §5.3.8). The revision is to modify the site and building design for Phase 3 of the development consisting of 31 residential units. The Applicant & Owner also seek a variance from parking requirements. NB zone. Ward 4.

This is the DRC's first time reviewing Phase 3 of the project which is proposing a three story, 31 unit structure in which all of the units would be affordable rental housing.

The DRC asked about the following aspects of the project and the Architect's response is after the (r).

- Did your firm design Phases 1 and 2 as well? – (r) Yes.
- Is Phase 3 going to be of similar color and construction as the previous developments there? – (r) Yes.
- What is the color of the building going to be? – (r) We have not decided yet and we are actually still working on the colors for the Phase 2 of this project.
- What is the parking situation for this new building? – (r) There will be 20 spaces underneath the building and some addition parking behind the building.

The left side of the Memorial Road Elevation seems awkward and confusing as the façade elements in this portion of the building have a strange relationship to one another. The Committee felt there are ways this façade could be improved.



On left side of the structure in the Sha Elevation, the Committee felt the cladding of the garage and the fiber cement paneling were a strange transition. The elements on this portion of the façade need to be addressed as well.

Additionally, if there is a way for the Applicant to address the visual impact of the compactor/dumpster area that was put in place in Phase 1, this would be hugely helpful to the overall project as the Committee felt this area is a large eyesore on the project site.

The Committee had concerns about the small slivers of landscaped area around the building and their ability to sustain vegetation of any kind. The DRC suggested that the smaller planting beds should be connected and that the plantings themselves be larger. The Committee also indicated they would like to see the planting pallet for the project once it has been developed.

The DRC stated they would be interested in being involved with or knowing what color scheme will be used for Phase 3 of the project.

The Committee also had an extensive discussion about the proposed depth of the balconies for the project. The current depth of the balconies is only three feet and there were concerns that the balconies at this depth would be entirely uninhabited or only be used for storage space. The Committee recommended that the applicant also think about what the balconies would be overlooking as part of factoring in whether or not the balconies are appropriate for the project. If the balconies were removed, the DRC was comfortable with this, but if that was the case, the Committee would like to see some sort of articulation in the facade where they would have been located. This could be in the form of a design element, a Juliette balcony, an awning, or something of that nature.

343 – 351 Summer Street: (Case # ZBA 2009-67) 31 residential units, a commercial parking lot, and a private non-profit club. CBD/RA zones. Ward 6.

This project had come before the DRC about a year ago. The new design of the project includes a three story residential building with 31 units and the two story Dilboy Post situated right up against Summer Street, located between the residential building and the abutting neighbors. There is a 16 foot deep planting buffer at the rear of the property, including a proposed eight foot fence on the rear property line, and the project's surface parking adds additional buffering to the abutting residences. The residential parking for the units on the site is underground and there is surface parking for the commercial component of the project. The DRC felt that this new design was a vast improvement from when the project came before the Committee last year.

The Committee would like to see something simple that can give them a sense of the scale of the structures in the immediate surrounding area.

The DRC had concerns about the small windows on the Summer Street façade of the Dilboy Post. They would like to see those windows be larger or, if that is not convenient due to the programming inside the building, perhaps some on-wall landscaping, a seat wall, an architectural planter, or something else that mitigates the distance between the windows and the sidewalk could be implemented.

On the front façade of the residential building, there is an awkward interaction between the stairs, the ramp, the sidewalk, and the planter. Some type of design alteration or total redesign needs to occur here to improve the relationship of these elements to one another.

The right elevation along the Dilboy Post and the residential building is very ominous and some type design treatment is needed here.

The front façade of the residential building where the center panel is located with the circular window and rectangular window below it could be improved from a façade perspective.

The façade that overlooks the bank parking lot could be improved as well because this is a very visible location from Cutter Avenue.

The current location of the mechanical room and louvers in the Dilboy Post are not very desirable. The Committee suggested that perhaps a better spot within the Dilboy Post would be a corner of the building next to the underground garage driveway.

The overall design of the structures could be a little less formal.

The plantings in the rear buffer could be denser and consist of more columnar type plant species to create a stronger vegetative buffer.

The Dilboy Post roof could be used for some type of green roof, whether this is the entire roof or even simply a green roof at the perimeter of the building.

The Committee was also curious if there was any way to set back the top story of the residential building to allow more light to penetrate to the neighboring properties. Additionally, the Committee felt that the decks that face onto the bank parking lot seem like an odd location for these outdoor spaces and debated whether they should be removed.

The DRC would like to see another iteration of the plans.