



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

PLANNING BOARD

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Case #: ZBA 2008-40

Site: 298 Beacon Street

Date: August 12, 2008

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Applicant Name: Excel Signs

Applicant Address: 259 Quincy Avenue, Quincy, MA

Property Owner Name: Emma Marker

Property Owner Address: 298 Beacon Street, Somerville, MA

Alderman: Heuston

Legal Notice: The applicant seeks Special Permit approval under SZO §4.4.1 for the alteration of a non-conforming structure in order to renovate the façade of the existing storefront.

Zoning District/Ward: RC / 2

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO§4.4.1

Date of Application: July 23, 2008

Date(s) of Public Hearing: [Planning Board: August 21, 2008 / ZBA: September 3, 2008]

Date of Decision: N/A

Vote: N/A

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 3,578 square foot lot on which sits a 2,468 gross square foot flat-roofed masonry building which is used as a commercial building. This structure is divided into two storefronts that include a diner with 17 feet of frontage and a vacant storefront with 33 feet of frontage.

2. Proposal: The Applicant is proposing to renovate the façade of the existing vacant storefront. The applicant is proposing to replace the existing storefront with new aluminum windows and doors and to incorporate granite tiles above and below the new windows. Original columns and masonry work on an existing parapet would be refurbished.

3. Nature of Application: The Applicant is requesting a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to allow a façade alteration of a nonconforming single-story commercial structure. The site and structure are nonconforming with respect to lot size, parking, landscaping, and setbacks. The alterations to the building façade will not affect the nonconforming aspects of the building.



4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located in a Residence C (RC) district at the intersection of Beacon Street and Eustis Street. In this area of Beacon Street there is a mix of residential commercial uses which includes the Star Market at the intersection of Beacon and Sacramento Streets approximately 100 feet away. The residential area contains primarily two and three unit buildings with some larger apartment buildings to the south on Beacon Street.

5. Green Building Practices: The applicant is proposing to install energy efficient one inch insulated tempered glass windows.

6. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Deputy Chief Steve Keenan has been contacted and has not provided comments.

Historic Preservation: Kristi Chase recommends decorative tile work to reference historic paneling through the use of color or texture beneath and above the windows to accentuate the art deco structure.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Heuston has been contacted and has not provided comments.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMITS (SZO §4.4.1, 7.11.1.c):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

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."

The Applicant requires a special permit under §4.4.1 of the SZO. Under §4.4.1, "The SPGA must find that such extension, enlargement, renovation or alteration is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming building ... the SPGA may consider, without limitation, impacts upon the following: traffic volumes, traffic congestion, adequacy of municipal water supply and sewer capacity, noise, odor, scale, on-street parking, shading, visual effects and neighborhood character."

Of those standards set forth under §4.4.1 of the SZO, the Planning Staff finds that the change would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood. This proposal will replace a deteriorated

storefront while renovating the decorative and architectural elements that provide visual interest to the structure. The storefront renovations will be an improvement to the character of the neighborhood visually and as a new business begins operations where a vacant store now exists.

3. Consistency with Purposes: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."

The project is located in a Residence C (RC) zoning district. The RC district seeks to establish and preserve a district for multi-family residential and other compatible uses which are of particular use and convenience to the residents of the district.

Allowing the proposed façade change to the existing structure would produce a visually improved storefront that could attract a small-scale business serving local residents. Staff finds the proposed structure to be more attractive with the proposed changes than the existing storefront and would be more aesthetically compatible with its commercial and residential neighbors.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."

The project as proposed would increase the site's compatibility with its surroundings, both visually and by eliminating a vacant store from the neighborhood. Original architectural elements that are significant to the character of the building would be refurbished. With changes to the proposed tile work, the project will be more consistent with the historic character of the building.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §4.4.1

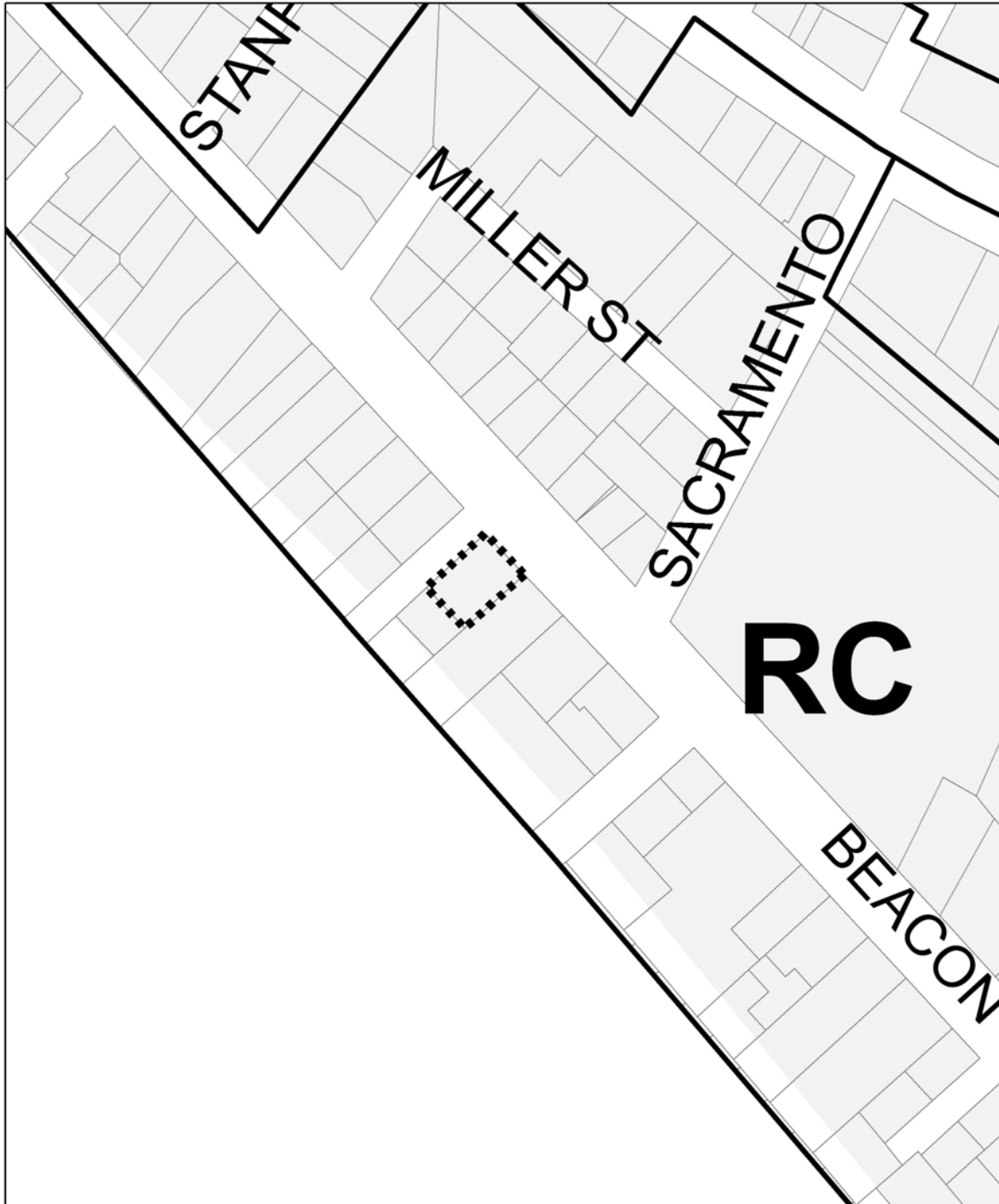
Based on the above findings, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

Staff finds that this application complies with the requirements for granting a special permit as set forth under §5.1.4 and that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure.

Although the Planning Staff is recommending approval of the requested Special Permit, the following conditions should be added to the permits:

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes		
1	Approval is to alter a storefront within a nonconforming commercial structure under SZO §4.4.1. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant and/or Agent: <table><tr><th>Date</th><th>Submission</th></tr></table>	Date	Submission	Building Permit	PIng.	
Date	Submission					

	July 23, 2008	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office			
	August 11, 2008	Plot plan and elevations submitted to OSPCD			
	Any changes to the approved renderings that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive ZBA approval.				
2	The applicant shall incorporate decorative tile work to reference historic paneling through the use of color or texture beneath and above the windows.		ZBA approval	Plng.	
3	Signage will be limited in size and location to that shown in the elevation diagrams and lighting after 10p.m. facing residential property will be turned down or off. No internally lit signs shall be allowed.		CO/Cont.	Plng.	
4	The Applicant must contact the Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final sign-off on the building permit to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.		Final Building Permit Signoff	Plng. / ISD	



298 BEACON STREET