



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2010-11
Date: May 28, 2010
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 145-147 Broadway

Applicant Name: Befekadu Defar

Applicant Address: 145 Broadway, Somerville MA

Property Owner Name: same

Agent Name: none

Alderman: William Roche

Legal Notice: Applicant/Owner, Befekadu Defar, seeks a special permit under SZO §6.1.22.5 to alter signage on the building.

Zoning District/Ward: CCD45 / 1

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit §5.1

Date of Application: May 10, 2010

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board 6/3/10

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The property is a one-story commercial structure on Broadway between Wisconsin and Minnesota Avenue. Fasika, an Ethiopian restaurant, occupies the building. The signage consists of three bubble awnings and two large blade signs. There are two entrances into the building from Broadway. One entrance leads to the bar and the other to the restaurant.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to add signage and awnings and alter the fenestration of the building for the existing restaurant. The owner of the building is applying for funding through the City's Storefront Improvement Program. The signage will consist of a one-inch aluminum icon, one-inch aluminum channel letters pinned to the façade, a painted metal blade sign with raised letters, and three



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sunbrella-fabric awnings. Lighting will project on the channel letters from above. The entrance on the left will be in-filled with operable windows and the existing windows will be replaced with consistent operable windows. The small square windows will be replaced with custom vinyl graphics. The door to the entry on the right will be replaced with either one door to access the bar and restaurant or two doors that would provide separate entrances to the bar and restaurant.



3. Nature of Application: In the CCD, the SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a states that alterations to an existing façade shall require a special permit and §6.1.22.D.5.b states that any change in signage, other than a one-for-one replacement of an existing sign, shall require a Special Permit.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: There are various businesses in the immediate area of the subject property. The types of signs in the area vary greatly. Mudflat Studio occupies space on either side of the restaurant and the signage for the pottery school is painted on the building.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The signage would be an improvement to the outdated bubble awnings and blade signs that currently exist on the building. The signage would help the business to improve its visibility and better represent the type of restaurant that is located there.

6. Green Building Practices: None.

7. Comments:

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

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.1):

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 sign design complies with the design guideline for signage in the CCD (§6.1.22.H). The sign respects the buildings' context. The icon will be centered on the building and placed within a projection in the parapet. The channel pinned letters will be located within a band that is created by the brickwork. The awnings will start below this band and be spaced evenly over the entrance and windows. The existing small square windows are not proportional to the building's size and will add an interesting element when covered with an Ethiopian inspired graphic. The blade sign located at the entrance will direct patrons to the entrance. Lighting will be placed within the parapet at a consistent height to light the channel letters. The signage and awnings do not conceal important façade details such as the brick patterns or parapet. The blade sign and awnings will be oriented to pedestrians. The signs will create a "signage line" that other businesses on the block could follow. The pottery school on either side of the restaurant is relocating and the school's painted signs will be replaced when the buildings are re-tenanted. The sign's material would be aluminum and the awnings would be fabric with tasteful lighting. These characteristics comply with the list of materials and sign technologies that are recommended in the guidelines. The sign is legible and does not have excessive wording.

The pedestrian oriented requirements of this district will be improved by the proposal. The new, large, bi-fold windows will provide more pedestrian interaction between the building and the sidewalk than the existing recessed entrance and small windows.

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 proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to providing for and maintaining the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City and the purpose of the CCD by promoting an active mix of uses with structures that complement the historic structures in the area.

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 sign will be compatible with the building's design and create signage design that could be mimicked for other businesses on the block or in the area. The change to the fenestration will not disrupt the bays or symmetry of the building. Having a single recessed entrance will reduce confusion as to which entrance to use and improve the interior configuration of the restaurant. If two doors are placed within the recessed entrance to separate the bar and restaurant entrance, the doors would be marked to distinguish them.

III. RECOMMENDATION**Special Permit under §5.1 & §6.1.22.D**

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 for new signage, awnings, replacement of a door with windows and changes to existing windows. 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>5/10/10</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>4/22/10</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Scheme 3a: façade changes with one door in single recessed entrance, Scheme 3b: façade changes with two doors in single recessed entrance)</td></tr><tr><td>5/24/10</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (SKD-0-1: elevation, SKD-2: storefront sections)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	5/10/10	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	4/22/10	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Scheme 3a: façade changes with one door in single recessed entrance, Scheme 3b: façade changes with two doors in single recessed entrance)	5/24/10	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (SKD-0-1: elevation, SKD-2: storefront sections)
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Any changes to the approved plans that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval. Sign replacement of the same size within the same sign footprint and using the same sign technology shall be permitted by right.												
2	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.									

