



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE, MAYOR

STAFF PRESENT

MADELEINE MASTERS, *PLANNING DIRECTOR*
CHRISTOPHER DI IORIO, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*
LORI MASSA, *PLANNER/ZONING ADMINISTRATOR*

MEMBERS PRESENT

RICHARD GRAF
PETER WIEDERSPAHN
FRANK VALDES

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

The Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Wednesday April 24, 2008 at 6:30 pm** at the Visiting Nurses Association, 259 Lowell St., 3rd floor community room, Somerville, MA

The DRC made the following comments and recommendations (underlined):

39 Endicott Avenue: *(Applicant/Owner: Endicott Partners, LLC; Agent: Richard Di Girolamo) The Applicant seeks Special Permit with Site Plan Review approval under SZO §7.3 in order to construct an eight unit apartment building (including one affordable unit) on a 12,504 s.f. parcel. Residence B (RB) / Ward 7.*

The DRC is reviewing this project for the third time. The Architect explained the changes that include but are not limited to creating a larger window in the middle section of the building, incorporating the dormers into the mansard roof, and raising the pitch of the gable roof. The Applicant provided 3-dimensional views of the proposed building and surrounding neighborhood.

The DRC discussed the following issues.

There are three primary elements to the building: the mansard, recessed, and the gable roofs; however, the gable roof has other components including the smaller gable and flat portion. These elements should be minimized. The flat roof does relate to the mansard side of the structure and there was discussion regarding if it should remain or not. The larger gable could be the only element on this surface. The asymmetry of the building does not need the small gable in front of it. The design should be kept to strong basic shapes.

There is symmetry in the building on the side with the garages and it works well.

The mansard roof is well resolved with the revised design and materials.

Simplify the design for a final review by the Committee.

44 Park Street: *The Applicant seeks a Special Permit with Site Plan Review and variances to construct 89 units of Senior Citizens Housing. Residence C (RC).*

The Architect explained the site and building design and the Traffic Consultant explained the parking and circulation configuration. The building would be modular construction. Shadows will be cast on the site's parking. The building's massing is broken up for design and acoustical reasons. Traffic would be one-way under the covered drop-off area. There is a gated emergency entrance. There may be a basement with a meeting room; however, it may not be possible due to the high water table. The façade would be Nichiha fiber cement made out of recycled materials, the windows would be vinyl, the columns would be PVC, and the cornice is pre-formed. The floor-to-floor heights would be 9'6" and floor to ceiling would be 8'. The Applicants will hire a landscape architect to create a landscaping plan.

The DRC discussed the following issues.

Circulation

There was a question about the archway's height being adequate for vehicles. The Applicant stated it would be twelve feet high, which is sufficient. The approach into the complex is odd. Properzi Way is residential and narrow. Park Street can handle more traffic and provides better access. Members questioned the ability to use the emergency entrance for regular cars. The Applicant stated that this entrance is too close to the rail and cars could back up on the tracks. The Applicant also stated that there is a potential to create 3 lanes to provide a turning lane into the site.

Site Plan

R. Graf thought that the two skewed grids set up a successful plan and a good view from the park.

The DRC had varying opinions about the front door location. F. Valdes felt that the front door should be on Park Street. A person would have to walk across the driveway to get from the lobby to Park Street. This is a ceremonial entrance for cars and not pedestrians. R. Graf felt that the entrance location in the middle of the building is sophisticated. There was some discussion of creating a raised sidewalk at the level of the sidewalk for safety and ease of pedestrian crossing that cars could drive over. P. Wiederspahn suggested that the path to the front door could be pedestrian friendly with landscaping treatment. There is a church in Harvard Square that has a beautiful parking lot that is actually a landscaped parking lot. Having the lobby in the center portion of the building creates good internal configuration. The façade on the Park Street side could have the sense of a front door. The Applicant stated that the Somerville Housing Authority might have safety concerns with having two front entrances. The design should create a better entrance for pedestrians by creating a front door appearance on Park Street and improving the pavement and landscaping treatment of the path to the entrance.

There is an opportunity to provide an area for people to sit and watch the street life. The elderly housing project near Union Square has a large outdoor space for residents. There is also an opportunity to provide gardening space in a sunny area in the northeast section of the site. The Applicant said that they plan to use the paper road as a garden space.

Building Design

The 3-dimensional perspective is elegant. The DRC had positive comments with the massing of the building. Its scale is consistent with the neighborhood. The four-story building across the street provides a good context for the project. The design is an authentic architectural expression. The siding recalls the clapboard siding of many buildings in the area. There was some discussion about the cornice. P.

Wiederspahn felt that it was a lapsed historical reference but it responds to the rest of the building. The building needs an edge. R. Graf said it added a touch of elegance and created a non-institutional feel. He felt that it should not go away. Keep the cornice to provide an edge for the building.

It may not be safe to only provide one elevator in the building.

Other Business

Richard Graf resigned from the Design Review Committee because he is moving out of Somerville.

The next meeting will take place on May 22, 2008 at 6:30pm.