



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

STAFF PRESENT

MADELEINE MASTERS, *PLANNING DIRECTOR*
LORI MASSA, *PLANNER*

MEMBERS PRESENT

BEATRIZ GOMEZ MOUAKAD
PETER WIEDERSPAHN
FRANK VALDES

Meeting Minutes & Recommendations

The Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday December 11, 2008** at **7:30 pm** in the Somerville High School Library, 81 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

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

56-61 CLYDE ST, “MAXPAK” SITE: *Application for Special Permit with Site Plan Review, Final level approval of a Planned Unit Development under PUD-B1 Preliminary Master Plan.*

The Applicant, 56 Clyde St Acquisition, LLC, and 61 Clyde St Acquisition, LLC, seek a Special Permit with Site Plan Review final level approval of a planned unit development under the Planned Unit Development Preliminary Master Plan approved by the Planning Board on April 3, 2008. Waivers from the Somerville Zoning Ordinance will be sought under §16.5.5 from the requirements of §9.5.1.a (number of parking spaces) and §9.11.a (dimensions of parking spaces). Waivers have already been granted under §16.5.4 for 16.5.1.g (setbacks). The Applicant is separately seeking a special permit from the Zoning Board of Appeals under §9.13.c for a shared driveway located outside the PUD boundary. Planned Unit Development Overlay District – B1 (PUD-B1).

The Applicants and Architects including Darin Samaraweera, Mike Binette, Stephen Smith, and Ted Tobin introduced the proposed plans to the DRC (issue date November 24, 2008 / SPCD stamp date December 8, 2008). S. Smith thanked Madeleine Masters and Peter Wiederspahn for their helpful comments through the planning process.

The presentation started with their original plan for the site which had more dwelling units and less green space than the current plan. Then they explained the rationale for the updated plan. The form of Building A has a more massive form which references the size of the existing International Paper building that it would be replacing. The development covenant limits this building's height to fifty-five feet from Lowell Street; however, it is shorter than this height. Building A has a simple design with a brick base that invokes an industrial feeling. The southern elevation borders the bike path and would have a planted green screen on its façade. Building C has a residential scale to blend with the existing residential neighborhood behind it. It has balconies and stoops. The design of the third story of the C building is a contemporary twist of the mansard roof and half-stories that are prominent in Somerville. Buildings A and C are strong vertically and buildings B and E are horizontally oriented. Buildings B and E use the glass material from the International Paper building. The stoops and balconies would enliven the green

space. The D buildings are single family townhouses with two bedrooms. There would be a pedestrian courtyard in the middle of these buildings. The green space here would be more intimate than the center green space.

The three pedestrian connections to the community path are important for the development and the community. The connections are all ADA accessible. The road off of Lowell Street has a five percent grade so it would not feel like a ramp off of a highway. The public green space in the middle of the site would be visible from Lowell Street through the archway in building A. One-third of the traffic would come from Warwick Street. The parking area at the Warwick Street entrance has been reconfigured so that there is a better terminus at the end of the street – a change from parking spaces to landscaping. The reconfiguration can be achieved with shared parking for the D buildings and the new development at the intersection of Warwick and Clyde Streets. The reconfigured parking would also create a greater buffer between the neighboring residential buildings and the D buildings than there was in the initial plan. The screening for the parking in this area would be bamboo.

The DRC discussed the following:

Generally the plans are positive. The large amount of green space as a central park has been preserved in this iteration of the plans and a newly proposed green space would create another amenity by the D buildings. The DRC supports the shared driveway – it is an interesting solution to reconfiguring this area of the site. The varying grades of land are manipulated well. The DRC respects the architectural merits of buildings C and D. Building A does not have an industrial feel but the townhouse units do achieve the industrial vernacular. The amount of glass as a reference to the industrial past works well. Similar materials throughout the development could create a common feel in the development without making all of the buildings look uniform. They liked the diversity of housing. The initial design had more of a separation of vehicles and pedestrians in the entrance under building A. They recommended creating this visual separation so that pedestrians feel welcome. The committee is not a fan of the historic mimicry of the sloping roof on buildings B and E and the archway entrance under building A. The roof on B and E is discontinuous and awkward at the corners. They asked if the sloping roof line of the D buildings satisfies the gable roof requirement in the Memorandum of Agreement with the Historic Preservation Commission. They recommended redesigning the roof of buildings B and E (the applicants submitted a new roof design the day after the DRC meeting). The DRC asked if the developers intended on applying for green certification and they are planning to achieve LEED certification for neighborhood developments. They discussed the changes to the connections to the community path. The paths at Warwick Street and between buildings B and C are meandering to ease the grade. The path at building A is more direct and monumental. The unique designs would create three different experiences to the community path. There was some concern that people would make their own paths of the most direct route and not follow the walkways; however, the ramps are inviting and create a natural entry.

Other Business:

- Assembly Square DRC / City-wide DRC relationship
 - Members of the Assembly Square DRC will be recommended to be appointed to the City-wide DRC to fill vacant positions.
 - Amendments to the Zoning Ordinance to combine the boards will be submitted to the Board of Aldermen in January.
- Permit Streamlining
 - The committee reviewed the current and proposed permit process flowchart.
 - They discussed receiving written public comments administered through staff before the meeting to address concerns that may change the design of projects. F. Valdes suggested reviewing the Boston Civic Design Commission to get ideas on how to incorporate public comments at this stage of the process.