



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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STAFF

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FREDERICK J. LUND, *SENIOR DRAFTSMAN*

Case #: ZBA 2008-06
Site: 2 Main Street
Date: March 6, 2008
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Applicant Name: Maria Grasso
Applicant Address: 41 John Street, Chelsea, MA 02150
Property Owner Name: Diana Arenella
Property Owner Address: 5 Main Street Realty Trust, P.O. Box 398068, Cambridge, MA 02139
Alderman: Walter F. Pero

Legal Notice: The applicant seeks Special Permit approval under SZO §4.4.1 for the alteration of a non-conforming structure in order to open a new front entrance in the existing structure, which would allow for the expansion of the existing beauty salon.

Zoning District/Ward: NB / 4
Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO§4.4.1
Date of Application: January 28, 2008
Date(s) of Public Hearing: ZBA: March 19, 2008
Date of Decision: N/A
Vote: N/A

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a 4700 square foot lot on which sits a 3132 net square foot flat-roofed masonry building which is used as a commercial building. This structure is divided into five storefronts of various sizes to serve several commercial operations. The property contains a dry cleaner, a convenience store, a pizza parlor, a vacant section and the applicant's beauty salon business. The applicant currently rents a 312 square foot store with an eight (8) foot wide frontage. The property is located within a Neighborhood Business (NB) district.

2. **Proposal:** The Applicant is proposing to expand their business into the adjoining vacant store which is almost identical in size and shape. This action would increase the total square footage of the business to 624 square feet. The expansion would require the reopening of the closed storefront directly adjacent to the existing beauty salon. The applicant is proposing to improve the storefront with a glass door and window that mirrors the existing storefront of the salon. The reopening will provide two separate entrances to the salon, while separation of the stores on the interior would remain.



Existing storefront and adjacent vacant store



Subject building from Broadway

3. Nature of Application: The Applicant is requesting a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to allow the alteration of a nonconforming single-story commercial structure. The Applicant is proposing to expand their salon operation into the adjoining store and combine the storefronts. The site and structure are nonconforming with respect to parking, landscaping, and sideyard 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 an NB district and borders on a Residence C (RC) district. The property lies at the intersection of Main Street and Broadway, which features some commercial, but primarily medium and large scale residential uses.

5. Green Building Practices: None

6. Parking: Due to the nature of the proposal additional parking spaces would not be required. The alteration does not increase the net floor area of the building.

7. Landscaping: The property is nonconforming with respect to requirements for 10% landscaping in the NB district. The unbuilt portion of the site in the rear does not provide any landscaping and the applicant is not proposing to provide any landscaping.

8. Comments:

Fire Prevention: “At minimum the expanded space will require fire detection and/or fire suppression devices to be installed that are tied in to the current fire alarm system at this location. I believe that the fire alarm panel that monitors 2 Main Street is located in the building at 379-383 Braoadway.”

“This project will require the following: manual fire alarm pull stations at the entrance and exit doors, fire alarm horn/strobe warning devices, fire alarm strobe warning lights in the bathrooms, smoke detectors.”

Ward Alderman: Alderman Pero is in favor of the permit.

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.

The Applicant has submitted the necessary information.

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. It appears that at one time these two storefronts combined to form the front of a single store. This proposal would reconnect the storefronts and reestablish the original design of the building while maintaining the physical separation of the stores on the interior. The owner of the building does not want the applicant to remove any of the interior walls.

This proposal would also provide the applicant the ability to expand and improve their beauty salon business.

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 Neighborhood Business (NB) zoning district. The NB district seeks to establish and preserve areas for small-scale retail stores, services and offices which are located in close proximity to residential areas and which do not have undesirable impacts on the surrounding neighborhoods.

Allowing the proposed change to the existing structure would help preserve a small-scale service oriented business in the area. 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. The applicant has stated that within the year they would like to enlarge and redesign the awning to cover the new window and doorway they are proposing to create. At this time financial considerations are limiting the applicants' ability to do so.

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. Staff recommends that the applicant follow through with plans to redesign and extend the awning the entire length of the new storefront when finances allow. Alternatively, wood above the doors and windows could be replaced with transom windows. Air conditioning units should not be exposed.

III. RECOMMENDATION

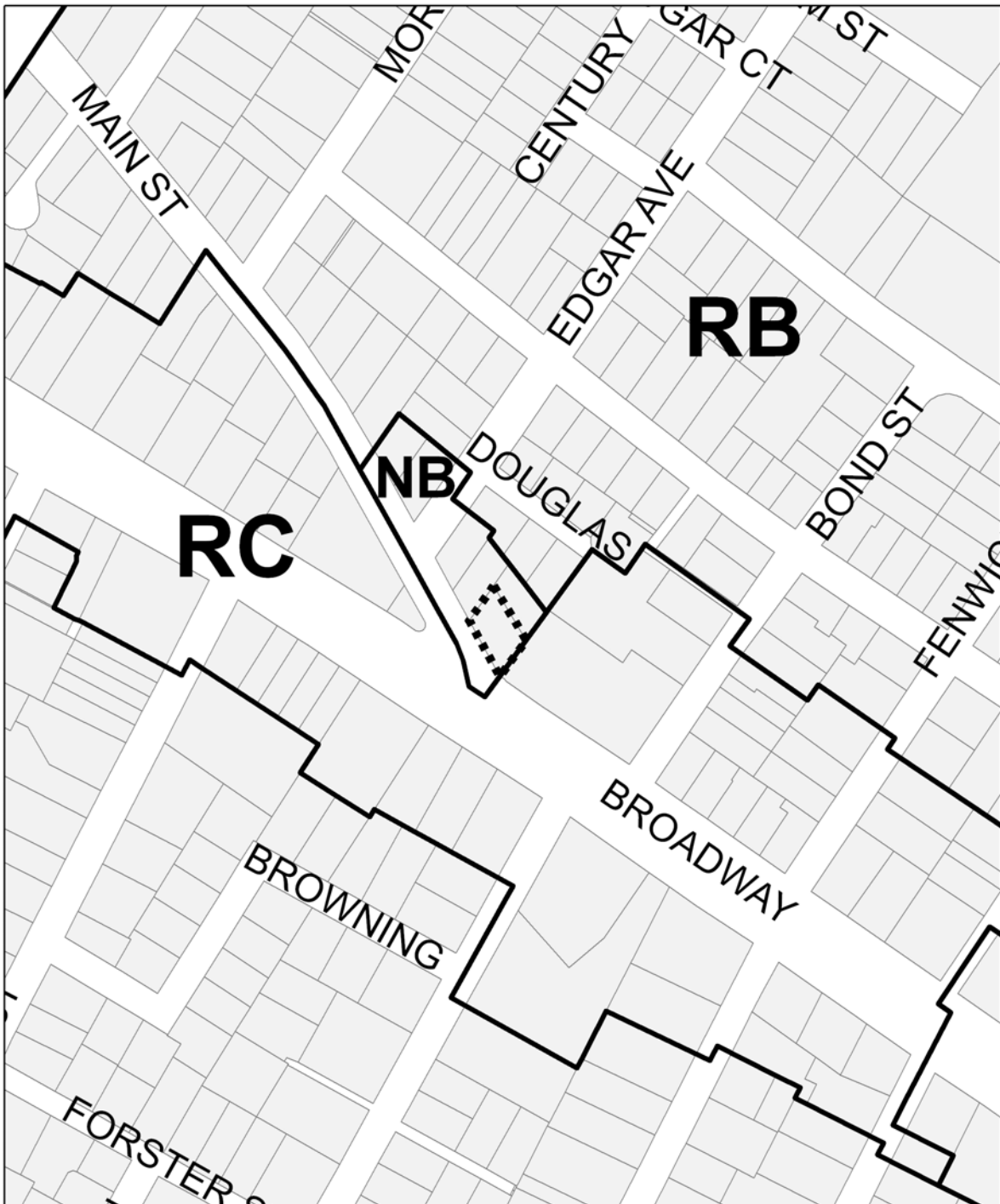
Special Permit under §4.4.1

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	<p>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:</p> <table><tr><th>Date</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>January 28, 2007</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>February 5, 2008</td><td>Plot plan submitted to OSPCD</td></tr><tr><td>February 28, 2008</td><td>Renderings depicting the storefront change</td></tr></table> <p>Any changes to the approved renderings must receive ZBA approval.</p>	Date	Submission	January 28, 2007	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	February 5, 2008	Plot plan submitted to OSPCD	February 28, 2008	Renderings depicting the storefront change	Building Permit	PIng.	
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January 28, 2007	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office											
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2	<p>Fire detection and fire suppression devices shall be installed that are tied in to the current fire alarm system at this location. Fire Prevention believes the fire alarm panel that monitors 2 Main Street is located in the building at 379-383 Broadway.</p> <p>Manual fire alarm pull stations at the entrances and exit doors, fire alarm horn/strobe warning devices, fire alarm strobe warning lights in the bathrooms, and smoke detectors shall also be installed.</p>	CO	Fire									
3	<p>The new glass window and door should mimic the existing glass window and door on the existing structure to provide a uniform appearance. Staff recommends a new awing to extend the width of the storefront or a transom to replace wood above the windows and doors.</p>	CO	PIng.									
4	<p>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.</p>	Final Building Permit Signoff	PIng. / ISD									



2 Main Street