



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2014-31

Date: October 9, 2014

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 144 Broadway

Applicant Name: Marcelino Alarcon

Applicant Address: 144 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145

Owner Name: Walter Valdivieso & Ana Margarita Alarcon

Owner Address: 144 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145

Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant, Marcelino Alarcon, and Owners, Walter Valdivieso and Ana Margarita Alarcon, seek a Special Permit under SZO §6.1.22.D.5 to alter the façade and signage on the building. CCD-55/Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: **Planning Board - Thursday, October 16, 2014**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 1,746 square foot parcel on the south side of East Broadway at the corner of Rush Street. This parcel encompasses half of a three-story mixed-use building with a small restaurant, Taqueria Montecristo, located on the first floor. There is no parking or landscaping on-site as the rear yard is paved and fenced in.

There is no prior zoning relief.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to rehabilitate the existing storefronts through the installation of new signage and lighting, windows, and a column. Signage will include a painted sign to the right of the entrance (unknown dimensions), a new blade sign (2'x 2'-6"), and belt sign (2' x 11'-4") will be located above the new folding window system. New can lighting will be installed beneath the cornice and three



gooseneck lights will illuminate the new belt sign. Staff has conditioned that dimensions of the painted sign on Rush Street be submitted to Staff, the signage shall not be plastic or vinyl, and that the lower windows are tinted to obscure low views when patrons sit at the counter inside and look out.

144 Broadway, right side of building



3. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application.

4. Comments:

Ward Alderman: Alderman McLaughlin has been contacted but has no comments at this time.

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has no comments at this time.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a):

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."*

Per SZO §6.1.22.D.5, alterations to an existing or approved façade other than a one-for-one replacement of signage within the same sign footprint and using the same sign technology shall require a new Special Permit.

In considering a special permit under §6.1.22.D.5 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure.

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 "promoting the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to provide adequate light and air; and to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City."

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the CCD, which is, "to establish and to promote appropriate infill development along heavily traveled transportation corridors, especially where those corridors meet at named Squares. The district recognizes that such corridors present opportunities for an active mix of uses while also addressing development challenges posed by smaller lots and nearby existing residential development and the need to be accessible by multiple modes of transportation. The major objectives of the districts are to:

1. Encourage active mid-rise commercial and residential uses that contribute to a multi-modal-friendly street;
2. Increase commercial investment in high-profile, accessible areas including retail that is largely neighborhood-serving in multi-tenant, mixed use buildings;
3. Preserve and complement historic structures;
4. Discourage inappropriate auto-oriented, significant trip-generating uses along transit corridors; and,
5. Promote pedestrian and bicycle activity.

Although this is not a new development, the design does promote the development standards of the CCD district where possible. It will increase the pedestrian focus of the district by engaging with the street activity. The folding window system will engage the pedestrian and enhance the streetscape; the signage and lighting will add to the rhythm created by the new storefront system creates to make a more desirable and engaging streetscape as a whole.

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 surrounding neighborhood is a mix of commercial and residential uses. The neighborhood behind the Broadway corridor is a mix of multi-family homes in a Residential B zoning district.

6.1.22.H. Design Guidelines for the CCDs. These guidelines are not intended to inhibit design creativity or discourage innovative architectural design solutions. Rather, they provide general standards for building massing, siting and articulation. It is understood that Buildings and Structures may not be able to comply with all of the following Guidelines.

1. Signage and awning design should respect buildings' context (e.g., scale, design, style, colors, materials), be oriented to pedestrians, and be subordinate to the overall building composition. Creative shapes must be carefully designed and coordinated with the overall appearance of the building. The design should also maintain an existing "signage line" and respect the character, scale,

and locations of adjacent signs and awnings. Large, interior-lit or back-lit signs or awnings, neon "open" signs, vinyl or plastic materials and overly bright colors are generally discouraged. To add interest and character to the retail environment signs or awnings may convey interesting elements or logos without excessive wording. They should be limited to advertising the business name and its main goods or services, with minimal or no national brand names or logos. Type styles should enhance readability of the sign and provide information simply and legibly. Use awnings to create pleasant shaded spaces in front of a building. Signs and awnings should enhance important architectural details and not conceal or obliterate them.

The signage, lighting and window system are pedestrian oriented, enhance the streetscape, and will serve to rehabilitate the quality of the storefront. The focus of the storefront would be the folding window system with signage above which will engage the pedestrian activity along the streetscape. The additional painted signage will provide additional visual interest along Rush Street.

5. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, Transform key opportunity areas, Preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.*

The proposal preserves and enhances the existing building along a prominent mixed-use corridor in the East Somerville neighborhood as well as engages with the public through the folding windows, orients signage to the pedestrian, and creates a consistent rhythm within the streetscape.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §6.1.22.D.5.a

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	<p>Approval is for Special Permit under SZO §6.1.22.D.5 to alter the façade and signage on the building. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>(September 11, 2014)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>October 2, 2014 (October 9, 2014)</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (A000, A100, & A101)</td></tr></table> <p>Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(September 11, 2014)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	October 2, 2014 (October 9, 2014)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (A000, A100, & A101)	BP/CO	ISD/ Plng.	
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2	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light on the signage/building and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Plng.							
3	New signage shall not be composed of plastic or vinyl.	BP	Plng							
4	The Applicant shall provide dimensions of the painted signage to Planning Staff for approval.	BP	Plng							
5	The lower windows shall be tinted to obscure lower views.	CO	Plng.							
Final Sign-Off										
6	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.							

