



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

**Case #:** ZBA 2016-127  
**Date:** December 7, 2016

**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 483 Medford Street

**Applicant Name:** Mouhab Rizkallah  
**Applicant Address:** 30 College Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144  
**Owner Name:** 62 College Ave. Trust, LLC  
**Owner Address:** 30 College Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144  
**Alderman:** Mark Niedergang

**Legal Notice:** Applicant, Mouhab Rizkallah, and Owner, 62 College Ave Trust, LLC, seek a Special Permit under SZO Section 4.4.1 to alter the exterior of the single-story portion of the property. RC zone. Ward 5.

**Dates of Public Hearings:** December 7, 2016



**Top:** Front façade of single story portion of structure from Medford Street. **Bottom:** Left elevation of single story portion viewed from Partridge Avenue.

## I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

**1. Subject Property:** The subject property is a 4,432 square foot building on a 3,485 square foot lot. The original building on the property is a 2 ½-story residential structure onto which a single-story, stone-veneered commercial space has been attached. The property is located on the corner of Partridge Avenue and Medford Street.

**2. Proposal:** The Applicant proposes to alter the exterior of the single-story portion of the building by replacing the existing applied façade with a bluestone and stucco veneer. Existing windows will be enlarged and the Partridge Avenue entrance re-opened. Downcast lighting, a new sign band and under-window seasonal plantings are proposed.

**3. Green Building Practices:** None indicated.

**4. Comments:**

Ward Alderman: Mark Niedergang is aware of this project.

## II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 & SZO §8.5, SZO §9.13 ):

*In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §4.4.1 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §4.4.1 in detail.*

**1. Information Supplied:**

Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §4.4.1 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permit.

**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."***

*Section 4.4.1 states that "[l]awfully existing non-conforming structures other than one- and two-family dwellings may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered only by special permit authorized by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5. The SPGA must find that such extension, enlargement, renovation or alteration is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming building. In making the finding that the enlargement, extension, renovation or alteration will not be substantially more detrimental, 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."*

Staff finds that the proposed façade changes will have no negative impact on the items noted above (traffic volumes, traffic congestion, adequacy of municipal water supply and sewer capacity, noise, odor, scale, on-street parking, shading, visual effects and neighborhood character) and is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the conditions currently extant on the building. Conversely, Staff finds that the proposed alterations – to remove the existing

veneer and replace it with a bluestone and stucco veneer – will visually improve the streetscape and have a positive impact on the neighborhood character.

Staff also finds that the enlargement of the windows, re-opening of the Partridge elevation door along with the installation of a new sign band and downcast lighting along the same elevation will further enhance the visual experience that the structure provides the neighborhood. In-season plantings under the Medford Avenue windows (see plans) will further refresh the building's exterior.

**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."***

Staff finds that the Applicant's proposal is consistent with the purposes of the RC district which, in addition to allowing for residential use, is "to establish and reserve 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."

Staff finds that the exterior improvements to the single-story portion of this property will have a positive effect on the neighborhood by upgrading the visual appearance of a structure whose façade has been in need of an upgrade for some time. The proposed exterior modifications should also prove appealing to a future small business that might be interested in occupying this space.

**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."***

Staff finds that the proposed façade upgrades are compatible with the existing general characteristics of the surrounding residential and small commercial spaces in this immediate area. The proposed façade changes have no impact on land use in the surrounding area.

**7. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.***

This façade proposal has no impact on the stock of affordable housing in the city.

**8. 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 areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.***

- This proposal contributes to SomerVision by visually enhancing the character of the surrounding neighborhood. The proposed changes will also hopefully help to attract a new, small business tenant to this currently inactive commercial space.

### III. RECOMMENDATION

#### **Special Permit under §4.4.1**

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	Approval is for façade upgrades to the single-story portion of 483 Medford Street.	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.					
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>October 27, 2016</td><td>Application and plans submitted to City Clerk’s office.</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	October 27, 2016	Application and plans submitted to City Clerk’s office.
	Date (Stamp Date)				Submission			
October 27, 2016	Application and plans submitted to City Clerk’s office.							
Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval. Whether or not a change is <i>de minimis</i> in nature must be determined by the Planning Office.								
Pre-Construction								
2	ALL materials including, but not limited to, lighting, signage, windows, doors, veneers, stuccos, etc., must be submitted to the Planning Department for their review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	Eng.					
Design								
3	Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, and doors to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to construction.	BP	PIng.					
4	Any signage that is ever added to the building shall not be interior lit and shall be first reviewed and approved by Planning Staff unless SPGA approval is needed.	CO/Perpetua 1	PIng.					
Construction Impacts								
5	The Applicant shall, at his expense, replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	CO	DPW					

6	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor and sub-contractors at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.	
7	Approval is subject to the Applicant's and/or successor's right, title and interest in the property.	Perpetual	Plng.	Deed submitted & application form signed
8	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P	
<b>Site</b>				
9	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Perpetual	ISD	
<b>Public Safety</b>				
10	All exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	Perpetual	Plng.	
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>				
11	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.	