



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*
DAN BARTMAN, *SENIOR PLANNER*
AMIE HAYES, *PLANNER*
MELISSA WOODS, *PLANNER*
DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: ZBA 2013-47

Date: July 3, 2013

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 498-500 Medford Street

Applicant Name: Ken W. Szeto

Applicant Address: 137 Florence Street, Melrose, MA, 02176

Property Owner Name: Rahul Katoch

Property Owner Address: 500 Medford Street, Somerville, MA 02145

Agent Name: Brian Lau

Agent Address: 51 Waterston Avenue, Quincy, MA 02170

Alderman: Courtney O'Keefe

Legal Notice: Applicant, Ken Szeto, and Owner, Rahul Katoch, seek a Special Permit with Design Review under SZO §7.11.10.2.1.a to establish a fast order food establishment and a Special Permit under §9.13 for approx 2 spaces of parking relief. NB Zone. Ward 5.

Zoning District/Ward: NB Zone / Ward 5

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit w/ Design Review under SZO §7.11.10.2.1.A & 9.13.e

Date of Application: May 29, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – July 10, 2013

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 5,348 square foot parcel with a one-story commercial structure. The building has a 1,738 square foot footprint and has 3,476 gross square feet (basement and first floor). The subject property was formerly the Daniel Maher Stained Glass showroom. The building is now divided into 2 different retail spaces. The other tenant is K-2 Mart and Accessories, a wine and beer store. The remaining 518 square feet are the subject of this proposal.





498-500 Medford Street Storefront

2. Proposal: The proposal is to establish a fast food use in a vacant storefront called Gaka's Asian Eatery. The restaurant will have an approximately 350 square foot kitchen, an ordering counter, and a 170 square foot waiting area. The hours of operation will be 11am to 10pm. The restaurant needs 2 spaces of parking relief, no parking is associated with the property.

3. Nature of Application: In the NB zoning district a Special Permit with Design Review is required to establish a fast order food establishment under SZO §7.11.10.2.1.A.

The applicant is seeking relief for the 2 parking spaces required. The fast food parking requirement is 0.75 per employee plus 1 space per 50 square feet of waiting area. There will be 3 employees. The waiting area is 170 square feet. This makes the parking requirement 5 spaces.

The last use, a retail business, required 1 space per 500 sf. The parking requirement was 1.

SZO Section 9.4.1.d states that when there is a nonconforming parking situation and a change in use with no change in floor area, only 50% of the additional parking spaces shall be provided. Since the old use required 1 space and the new use requires 5, 2 parking spaces are required. Under SZO section 9.13, where the total number of parking spaces required by the Ordinance is six or fewer, the requirements for lots or sites that are nonconforming with respect to parking may be modified by special permit.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The property is one of the first commercial properties approaching Magoun Square. There is a mix of restaurants, retail stores, and offices in the Square and a residential neighborhood directly behind the property. Some of the businesses include CVS Pharmacy, Olde Magoun's Saloon, Daddy Jones, Panificadora Model, Pini's Pizzeria, Wan's Chinese Cuisine, On the Hill Tavern, Dunkin Donuts, Caprese Pizzeria and K2 Market. Most recently, King of Wings and

Pennypackers (both at 514 Medford Street) have been through the Special Permit process to establish their use.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The fast food restaurant will fill a vacant storefront, which will improve the vitality of the Square which has been struggling since 2007. However, this will be another fast food use.

6. Green Building Practices: Low VOC paints will be used.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Traffic & Parking: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Ward Alderman: Alderman O'Keefe will not be able to make it to the hearing but is supportive of the proposal.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §5.1, 7.11.10.2.1.A, and 9.13):

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."

Section 6.1.4.b includes standards and guidelines for the Neighborhood Business Districts for all development that requires a special permit with design review. The standards are to step back the fourth story of a building and locate parking behind the building or below street level. Since the building is one-story and there is no parking on site, the standards do not apply. The signage design has not been finalized. A condition of this report is that the Applicant will submit the signage design to Planning Staff for approval. The signage will fit in the existing signband of the building (also shown in the photo above).

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO the Applicant must be able to demonstrate that granting the requested special permit would not cause detriment to the surrounding neighborhood through any of the criteria as set forth under SZO §9.13, which are as follows:

- 1) increase in traffic volumes;
- 2) increased traffic congestion or queuing of vehicles;
- 3) change in the type(s) of traffic;
- 4) change in traffic patterns and access to the site;
- 5) reduction in on-street parking;
- 6) unsafe conflict of motor vehicle and pedestrian traffic.

A parking memo was submitted as part of the application for relief of two parking spaces. The memorandum found that there is sufficient parking in the area to accommodate the relief. During weekday mid-day, weekday evening, and Saturday mid-day hours there were 40-58 parking spaces available within 500 feet of the project

site. The relief of 2 spaces will not cause detriment to the surrounding neighborhood because there's available parking in the area, there is no reduction in on-street parking, the site has access via the 89 and 80 bus routes, and it will not change traffic patterns.

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 conserving the value of land and buildings.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district. A small scale restaurant fits the goal of establishing and preserving 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.

In considering a special permit under §9.13 of the SZO the SPGA may grant such a special permit only when consistent with the purposes set forth in Section 9.1.

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."

For Special Permits with Design Review approval, the proposal needs to comply with the design guidelines for business zones in §5.1.5. This proposal as conditioned meets the applicable guidelines: the building maintains a strong building presence along the primary street edge, the store entrances are differentiated by being recessed from the rest of the street elevation that create modulations in the façade, the roof is flat, which is a typical type for commercial buildings in the area, the building is an encouraged material (brick and stucco), there is no parking on-site and therefore driveways do not break the street wall, and finally there are no transformers, heating or cooling systems or similar equipment or dumpsters that are visible from the right of way.

The appearance of the storefront will not change greatly from its current state. The sign will use the existing lighting and fit within the sign band on the building. A condition of this report is that the Applicant will submit the signage design to Planning Staff for approval. The signage will fit in the existing sign band on the building.

5. Fast food establishments: In special permit applications for fast-order, take-out or automobile oriented food service establishments, there shall be establishment of a need for such a facility in the neighborhood or in the City, and impacts on traffic circulation, parking and visual, physical, or historical characteristics of the particular location shall not be detrimental.

In the previous case, ZBA 2012-102 for King of Wings, a neighboring business had expressed concern that a fast food restaurant will hurt the other restaurants in the neighborhood. However, creating a cluster of similar uses can improve their success by creating a hub of activity. Pending this application, the case for the Bakery and Ice Cream Shop (ZBA 2013-45), and the previously approved Pennypackers Fine Foods (ZBA 2013-22) Magoun Square will have a cluster of foodie activity. In addition, the need for a fast-order food establishment should be balanced with the benefit of filling a vacant storefront in a Square that is in need of more private commercial investment. This will fill a vacant storefront. Space that has been vacant for some time negatively impacts the

other businesses due to the appearance of disinvestment and the reduction in pedestrians in the square that would come for a specific business and stop into another business along the way.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §5.1, 7.11.10.2.1.A, and 9.13

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 a Special Permit with Design Review under SZO §7.11.10.2.1.a to establish a fast order food establishment and a Special Permit under §9.13 for approx 2 spaces of parking relief. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>May 29, 2013</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 17, 2012 (July 1, 2013)</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Mortgage Inspection Plan)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>May 2013 (July 1, 2013)</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (A-1 Proposed Plan)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any changes to the approved plans that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.</p>	Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	May 29, 2013	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	August 17, 2012 (July 1, 2013)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Mortgage Inspection Plan)	May 2013 (July 1, 2013)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (A-1 Proposed Plan)	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.	
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2	The Applicant will submit the signage design to Planning Staff for approval. The signage will fit in the existing sign band on the building and use the existing lighting.	CO/Cont.	Plng.									
4	The storefront windows should not be blocked by more than 30% by interior storage, signage or window coverings.	CO	Plng									
5	Approval is for the fast food use for the Applicant, Ken Szeto. A future tenant of this space for the fast order food use would have to come back to the ZBA for special permit approval in order to operate in this location.	Perpetual	ISD									

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.	
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