



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2014-03
Date: February 13, 2014
Recommendation: Denial

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 337-341 Broadway

Applicant Name: Winter Hill Bank, FSB
Applicant Address: 342 Broadway, Somerville MA 02145
Property Owner Name: KLT Corp.
Property Owner Address: 20 Red Coat Road, Framingham, MA 01701
Agent Name: Adam Dash, Esq.
Agent Address: 48 Grove St, Suite 304, Somerville MA 02144

Alderman: Tony Lafuente

Legal Notice: Applicant, Winter Hill Bank, FSB, and Owner, KLT Corp., seek a Special Permit under SZO §6.1.22, for new signage. CCD 45 zone. Ward 4.

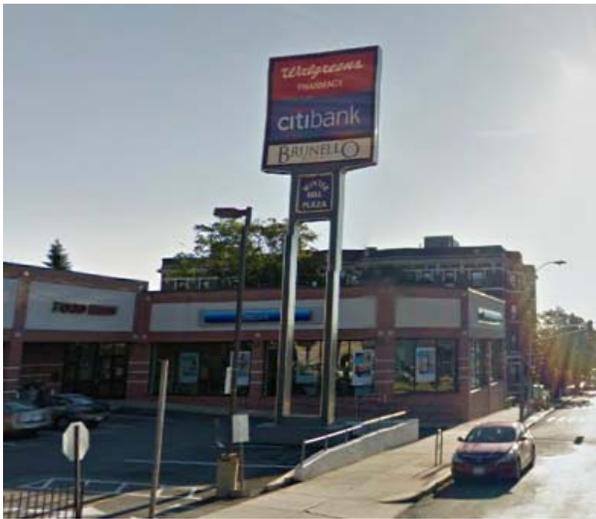
Dates of Public Hearing: February 20, 2014

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

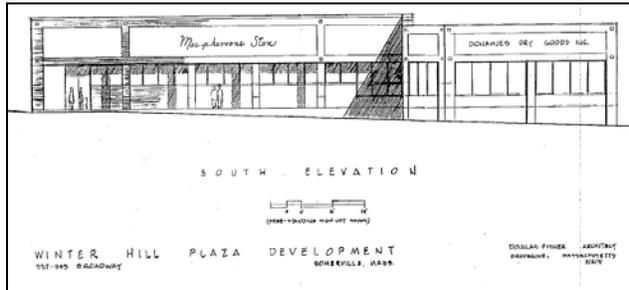
1. Subject Property: The subject storefront is located in an existing shopping center that is on an approximately 74,983 square foot lot. Winter Hill Bank, FSB, is now occupying the space that Citibank previously occupied. The corporate headquarters and a branch is across the street from the premises and a loan center will open on the subject site. Citibank closed the branch and removed their signage which consisted of two interior-lit signs in the sign band on the building facing Broadway and the shopping center parking lot and a sign on the pylon sign for the shopping center.



2. Proposal: The proposal is to replace the prior Citibank signage on the building facing Broadway and the parking lot, add a third sign on the angled building face between the two other signs and replace the Citibank sign area on the pylon sign with Winter Hill Bank signage. The two signs on the building will have a slightly different footprint than the Citibank signage. Each Citibank sign was 300 inches by 52 inches (25 feet by 4.3 feet) and the Winter Hill Bank signage will be 275 inches by 54 inches (22.9 feet by 4.5 feet). The third sign on the building will be 140 inches by 50 inches (11.6 feet by 4.2 feet).



337-341 Broadway – previous signs for Citibank – (top left) along Broadway, (top right) facing parking lot, (bottom left) pylon sign, (bottom right) elevation show for original special permit approval



3. Green Building Practices: The signage will use an LED lighting source.

4. Comments:

Wiring Inspection: Has reviewed the application and does not have comments at this time.

Ward Alderman: Alderman Lafuente is aware of the application but did not have any comments at this time.

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

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."

The structure is located in a CCD55. In accordance with SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a, alterations to an existing façade, other than one-for-one replacement of signage, require a Special Permit. Therefore, the proposed signage requires Special Permit approval. The replacement of the panel on the existing pylon sign does not require a special permit because it is a one-for-one replacement. The two signs on the building are arguably the same size as the existing signs if the gray background color is included. Each Citibank sign was 300 inches by 52 inches (25 feet by 4.3 feet) and the Winter Hill Bank signage will be 275 inches by 54 inches (22.9 feet by 4.5 feet).

The third sign on the building is a new sign that does not comply with the design guideline for signage in the CCD (§6.1.22.H). Large interior-lit box signs are discouraged and Planning Staff do not recommend approval of this sign with its proposed design. These signs are discouraged because they overwhelm the façade of the building. They are also oriented towards fast moving vehicles and in this district signs should be oriented towards pedestrians creating a positive experience along the street. Existing or future businesses moving into the shopping center or neighboring properties will likely want to install larger signs with the same level of or brighter lighting to compete with the signage that is proposed for this tenant.

Other elements of the sign comply with the design guidelines. The signage design respects the building's context as it is in the sign band of the building and does not conceal any interesting architectural elements of the building.

Planning Staff find that if the third sign is made of a material that is not discouraged (vinyl or plastic) and is either not lit or externally lit, it will not be as dominant and would be acceptable. Ideally the other two signs on the building would also comply with this standard.

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 encouraging the most appropriate use of land throughout the City.

The proposal is not consistent with the purpose of the district as the signage is oriented towards fast moving traffic and not towards creating a friendly pedestrian environment.

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 new sign would not be compatible with the design guidelines and surrounding mixed use area as explained in finding two.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §6.1.22.D.5

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **DENIAL** 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.