



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2018-20
Date: February 7, 2019
Recommendation: Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 15 Temple Street

Applicant Name: Mass Sign and Decal, Inc
Applicant Address: 443 Webster Street, Rockland, MA 02370
Owner Name: Comar Real Estate Trust c/o Robert Allen
Owner Address: 89 Winchester Street, Brookline, MA 02446
City Councilor: Jesse Clingan

Legal Notice: Applicant, Mass Sign and Decal Inc., and Owner, Comar Real Estate Trust c/o Robert Allen, seek a special permit under §6.1.22.D.5 to alter two signs on the building. CCD-55 / RB Zone. Ward 4.

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board – February 7, 2019

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 25,493 square foot lot containing a one-story retail building currently used as a Walgreens. A portion of the building is also located on 299 Broadway, which is owned in common with the subject property. The building current has two signs; one facing the parking lot and another facing Temple Street (the façade).



2. Proposal: The proposal is to remove the existing Rite Aid signs on both sides of the building and replace them with smaller Walgreens signs.

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



4. Comments:

City Councilor: Councilor Clingan has been informed of this proposal and has yet to comment as of the publication of this report.

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."*

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, with findings giving consideration to the Design Guidelines of Section 6.1.22.H. The sign facing Temple Street is the only sign that requires a special permit since that is considered the façade.

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 promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The Corridor Commercial Districts (CCD) have been established 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.*

The CCD has two sub-districts, which are distinguished solely by their respective height and density

regulations. These regulations are shown in Section 8.5 Table of Dimensional Requirements.

- CCD-45. This sub-district shall provide for mixed-use or commercial development at a small to mid-rise scale.
- CCD-55. This sub-district shall provide for mixed-use or commercial development at a mid-rise scale.

The proposed signage alterations will not affect the building's consistency to the purposes of the CCD district.

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."*

Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject site is located in a shopping center that is shared with a vacant super market. Nearby uses include retail uses along Broadway and Temple Street as well as single-, two-, three-, and multi-unit dwelling structures.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):

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. For projects located in both the Arts Overlay District and the Corridor Commercial Districts, the following CCD Design Guidelines shall apply.*

1. *Building(s) should complete the streetwall along the primary street edge(s).*
2. *Massing and height of buildings should be articulated in a manner compatible with the physical character of the surrounding districts, particularly where a building abuts a residential or historically designated property. Whenever possible, historical variety in the scale, rhythm, and relationship of buildings to pedestrian public ways should be preserved.*
3. *A transition in height should be established between residential or historically designated properties and new development.*
4. *Thirty-foot-wide commercial bays with independent entrances onto the street are typical in Somerville and should be repeated in new developments to create visual and pedestrian interest. Varied architecture should be created and flat facades avoided by using recessed or projected entryways, bays, canopies, awnings, residential balconies on 2nd floor or above, and other architectural elements. Non-residential ground floor façades should have a minimum seventy-five (75) percent transparent material, and second floor façades should have a minimum of forty (40) percent transparent material. These openings should provide views into the building and should not be blocked by interior storage, nonartistic displays, or greater than thirty (30) percent internally mounted signage.*
5. *Exterior building materials for all visible portions of the building should be high quality, durable, and aesthetically appropriate. Particular attention should be paid where properties abut residential districts and historically designated property. Predominant exterior building materials should include an appropriate combination of brick, glass, wood, artistically used metal, stone, or stucco. Precast concrete panels, EIFS-type finishes, and large expanses of glass or corrugated sheet metal are generally discouraged. Bare or painted concrete as the only exterior facade material shall not be allowed.*
6. *Visible rear and side façades should maintain a similar character to the front façade of the*

building and the intended character of the surrounding district.

7. 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.

8. Retail, restaurant and other pedestrian-oriented uses are encouraged, particularly on the Ground Floor. As noted in 6.1.22.E, residential uses shall not be permitted on the Ground Floor street frontage along major streets unless they are located in structures that are historically residential on the Ground Floor.

9. Individual Artist Live/Work Spaces should be designed as closely as possible in accordance with the "Design Guidelines for Artist Housing" produced by the Somerville Arts Council.

10. Residential units should be of varying sizes to accommodate a range of family sizes. Generally dwelling units within a structure should not have an average size of less than 1,000 square feet.

11. A sidewalk depth of at least ten (10) feet from the street curb to building is strongly encouraged for developments fronting major streets.

The only applicable design guideline for this proposal is #7. The proposal is to remove the current "Rite Aid Pharmacy" sign and replace it with a smaller "Walgreens" sign. The size of the sign will be reduced from 113.8 sq. ft. to 99.85 sq. ft. The sign type, individual channel letters, will remain the same. The sign will be located within the same signage line and will not contain excessive logos or wording.

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

6. 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.

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 **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 the modification of signage. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>December 13, 2018</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>October 16, 2018</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	December 13, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	October 16, 2018	Plans submitted to OSPCD
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Any changes to the approved signage that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	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							
Miscellaneous										
3	Electrical conduits on the exterior facades of buildings shall be painted to match the wall material to which they are attached. Conduits are not allowed on the front of any structure.	CO	Plng.							
4	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.	Cont.	ISD							
Public Safety										
5	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP							
Signage										
6	Signage will be limited in size and location to that shown in the elevation diagrams and lighting after 10p.m. facing residential property will be turned down or off.	CO/Cont.	Plng.							
Final Sign-Off										
7	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.							