



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2019-16
Date: August 8, 2019
Recommendation: Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 6 Broadway

Applicant Name: Philadelphia Sign Co.
Applicant Address: 707 West Spring Gardens Street, Palmyra, NJ 08065
Owner Name: LaCourt Enterprises LLC
Owner Address: 30 College Avenue, Somerville, MA 02144
Agent Name: Adam Dash, Esq.
Agent Address: 48 Grove Street, Suite 304, Somerville, MA 02144
City Councilor: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant, Philadelphia Sign Co., and Owner, LaCourt Enterprises LLC, seek a special permit under SZO §6.5.D.5.a to install signage and an awning for an automated teller machine (ATM) on the ground floor of the building. TOD55 Zone. Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board – August 8, 2019

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property consists of four parcels fronting Broadway and Mt. Pleasant Streets.

In 2013-2014 the site received zoning relief that allowed the following: 2 Broadway has two commercial spaces and four, one-bedroom residential units. 4 Broadway has one commercial space and two, three-bedroom residential units. The new building, 6-8 Broadway, has two commercial spaces, and 11 residential units (1, 1-bedroom, 1, 2-bedroom, 8, 3-bedroom, and 1, 4-bedroom). 8 Mount Pleasant Street has two residential units (1, 3-bedroom and 1, 4-bedroom). In total the



project has five commercial spaces and 19 apartments (5, 1-bedrooms; 1, 2-bedrooms; and 11, 3-bedrooms; and 2, 4-bedrooms). There will be a total of 3,550 gsf of commercial space.

2. Proposal: One of the commercial spaces, at 6 Broadway, was approved to house an automated teller machine (ATM). The proposal is to install signage for the ATM. The signage will include non-illuminated dimensional letters with a blue octagonal “Chase” logo affixed on the sign band of the building and a blue metal awning.
3. Green Building Practices: The application does not list any green building practices.
4. Comments:

City Councilor: Councilor McLaughlin has no objections.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §6.5.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."*

SZO §6.5.D.5.a requires that *“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 Special Permit, with findings giving consideration to the Design Guidelines of Section 6.5.H.”*

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 provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; 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 proposal is consistent with the purpose of the TOD 55 district, which is, “to encourage mixed-use transit-oriented development with well-designed pedestrian access near transit connections and commercial squares. In response to different neighborhood contexts, TODs have been created featuring various heights, densities, and compatible use mixes. In order to be aesthetically, economically, environmentally and socially beneficial, projects in the Districts shall promote a mix of uses both within buildings and across the districts. Moderate to high-density developments will include commercial,

residential, and institutional cores complemented by pedestrian-oriented retail and business services, and in some districts, compatible industrial uses. Parking, where provided, will be housed within structured parking facilities. In a dynamic commercial center, changes in tenancy and use are expected. Therefore, the TODs are designed to be responsive to changing market conditions while maintaining high standards for building design and construction. As such, development review in these Districts is concerned foremost with appropriateness of building design and broad categories of uses. The major purposes are to:

1. Facilitate development of a mix of uses that contributes to a vibrant business environment and increases street-level activity;
2. Increase real estate investment and strengthen local tax base through intensive commercial development in higher density TOD districts;
3. Create new jobs at a variety of income and skill levels;
4. Redevelop vacant or underutilized land with appropriately dense development;
5. Replace incompatible and environmentally unsound uses with compatible mixed-use development;
6. Increase the supply of affordable housing units within the City of Somerville; and,
7. Encourage sustainable development and the use of green building standards..

The TOD is divided into sub-districts, which are distinguished by their respective height and density regulations. These regulations are shown in Table 6.5.F. The Following sub-districts are designated within TOD's.

- TOD-55. This lower-density sub-district allows for mixed-use development opportunities in close proximity to existing lower-density residential neighborhoods. Where mapped in commercial squares, development is anticipated to be a mix of commercial and residential uses. Where mapped on local streets, development is anticipated to be predominantly residential in nature.

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 property is located on the eastern edge of the East Somerville main street of Broadway. It is an area which consists of numerous small neighborhood businesses including many restaurants and neighborhood services. The Mount Vernon Restaurant is the nearest landmark. Hundreds of pedestrians pass the site each day to get to Sullivan Square station.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):

6.5.H. Design Guidelines for the TODs. 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. The only applicable design guideline for this signage proposal is #7, of which the proposed signage complies.

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.

- 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 §6.5.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	Approval is for signage. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Pln g.		
	Date (Stamp Date)				Submission
	June 18, 2019				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office
	January 28, 2019				Plans submitted to OSPCD (DRC 1-3, 5, and 8)
	April 5, 2019				Signage Details
	February 4, 2011				Awning Details
Any changes to the approved signage that is not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.					
Construction Impacts					
2	The Applicant shall at their 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		

3	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				
4	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.	
Public Safety				
5	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
6	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Plng.	
Signage				
7	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				
8	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.	

