



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

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

STAFF PRESENT

DAN BARTMAN, *SENIOR PLANNER*
ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

MEMBERS PRESENT

JULIE BRADY
DEBORAH FENNICK
JIM KIRYLO
TANYA PAGLIA
MATTHEW RICE
FRANK VALDES

RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, April 26, 2012**, at **6:30 p.m.** in City Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

The purpose of the meeting was to review and make recommendations on the following proposals:

16 Butler Drive/100 Temple Street (Case # ZBA 2007-03-R5-4/2012)

Review of proposed revisions to Phase 3 design.

Description: Applicant, Somerville Community Corporation, and Owner, St. Polycarp Redevelopment, LLC, seek a revision to Special Permit ZBA 2007-03 under SZO §5.3.8. The revision is to modify the site and building design for Phase 3 of the development consisting façade alterations, change the roof line, potentially remove balconies, and alter windows. NB zone. Ward 4.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: May 16, 2012

Frank Valdes recused himself from participating in the review of this project. This was the first time this project had come before the Design Review Committee regarding proposed revisions to the design of Phase 3 for the St. Polycarp's project. The Phase 3 portion project had been before the Committee approximately a year ago when the project team sought Special Permit approval for the original design of Phase 3, which they received from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Now that the design Phase 3 is becoming more fully developed, the project team is running into some budget constraints and they are hoping to revise a few aspects of the design to make it fit within the budget. In this proposed revision there is the potential that the balconies on the building may have to be removed along with the penthouse on their originally approved design. Other proposed changes include defining the entrance and corner of the building a bit more on the Memorial Drive elevation, adding a penthouse with a sloped roof to enclose the Energy Recovery Ventilator (ERV), and replacing some of the non-energy efficient storefront style windows with smaller, more standard windows. On the Mystic Avenue elevation, the storefront windows would be reduced in size, the number of windows in each bedroom would be reduced from between 4 and



6 to 3 and 5, and some of the material on the façade would be changed from panel to siding. On the elevation that faces the Somerville Housing Authority's (SHA) project, the parapet will be raised and some of the windows will be removed.

The DRC asked about the following aspects of the project and the Agent/Architect provided the following responses.

- What will your criteria be for determining which balconies will stay and which ones will be removed? What are your criteria for determining if all the balconies stay and the penthouse is removed? – (r) The energy efficiency components are our most important attributes that we are trying to preserve along with the overall aesthetic of the design. We are also looking at different types of flooring materials, finishing materials, and other elements that we could work into the design to help us save money before we have to remove the balconies.
- Will there be solar panels on the roof? – (r) We have been able to install solar panels in every project that we have done so far. We have gotten a proposal from a company that says it will be able to lease us panels. We are going to do everything we can to have them installed.
- In the currently approved design there are six balconies facing the courtyard and six facing the parking lot? – (r) Yes, that is correct.
- How many units in the originally approved design have balconies? – (r) Twelve out of the 31 units will have balconies.
- Are the balconies similar to what was built in the first two phases of the project? – (r) They are similar but they have a different construction method. In this design the metal is actually detached from the building and provides a better thermal break.
- What is the strategy for the color of the building? – (r) We have talked about using neutral colors such as a light or medium gray and then using a type of accent color such as a sage green or a light orange. There would actually be a large field of the accent color on the façade.
- Are there side lights against each of the doors? – (r) These are actually solid panels with a light on them that will be used to mark each main entrance.
- On sheet A 200-1, the approved and the proposed facades seem different but there are not any changes called out. Can you explain this? – (r) We have changed the size of the façade siding but the materials and the color will still be the same. We were trying to break up the massiveness of this surface of the façade.

We would like to see what you are actually going to be doing with the final design. It would be better if we had a proposal that was more detailed. It is hard for the Committee to direct you because it feels like anything could happen with regard to the aspects of the final design.

The penthouse is less of a design concern for the Committee because it will have less of an impact when someone is standing on the ground looking at the building since the roof line will remain the same. We would like to see the penthouse retained in the design as it will have a positive impact on the energy efficiency of the building. It would also be preferable if the penthouse could have the same roofing materials as the low awnings on the building because the penthouse has a similar geometry. Since the penthouse would be so unique to the overall design it would be good to give it some connection to the rest of the building.

If the balconies are going to be retained, most of the proposed changes seem very reasonable in terms of why they are being done and visually the proposed changes have improved the overall look of the project.



On sheet A 200-2, switching the sliders to a window and a door is good, but it would be better if it was aligned with the sliders up above on the façade. Also, taking the same details that are used in the unit entries below and matching those elements or the panel configuration higher up on the façade would be preferred as it would bring some commonality to all levels of the façade and the other side of the building.

The spacing or sizing on the new proposed siding design is helpful to the overall design. On the larger spaces of the facade it is more appropriate to have the siding at a larger spacing or sizing.

The balconies are a much more critical component to focus on and attempt to preserve as the budget for the project becomes clearer. The penthouse is not as much of an issue or a concern with regard to the design of the building because it will not have a large view impact on someone looking up at the building from the ground.

The balconies on the side of the building that face the SHA building help to reduce the massiveness of that façade. If these balconies were to be removed it would be a good idea use the existing trim on the façade more frequently to give this elevation some more definition and interest.

The Committee feels that the balconies that face the courtyard are extremely important to the overall design and they should be retained. The Committee would prefer the balconies to remain on the north and west elevations, but the Committee is more flexible on whether they are retained in the final design or not.

92-100 Properzi Way (Case # ZBA 2012-34)

Review of project before it goes before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Description: Applicant Safdie Architects and Owners Moshe Safdie and Michal Ronnen Safdie, seek a Variance under SZO §5.5 for relief from the minimum side yard setback under SZO §8.5.H and relief from the minimum rear yard setback under SZO §8.5.I for the land at 92 Properzi Way. The Applicant and Owners are also seeking Special Permits under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure to construct a two story rear addition to add an additional dwelling unit and under SZO §9.13.a for relief from three additional off-street parking spaces. The Applicant seeks to establish a three-family residence at 92 Properzi Way and use a portion of the structure for activity accessory to the use at 100 Properzi Way per Section 7.4 of the SZO. 92 Properzi is in the RB zone and 100 Properzi Way is in the NB zone. Ward 2.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: May 16, 2012

This was the first time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. Safdie Architects is proposing to expand the two-family dwelling that they own that is adjacent to their existing warehouse-style office building. The two-family dwelling that they own is historically significant. The proposal is to restore and preserve the existing front portion of the two-family dwelling and demolish the rear portion of the building that is currently used for storage. The structure would then be converted into a three-family structure and connected to the existing Safdie Architects building via a roof deck bridge and an underground hallway. Both of these connections would have the ability to be removed very easily if Safdie Architects ever sold the property in the future.

The DRC asked about the following aspects of the project and the Agent/Architect provided the following responses.



- Will you be increasing the hard surface area of the roof from what is currently on the existing two-family structure? – (r) Yes, the existing structure is a single story flat roof and we will be replacing it with a two story flat roof that has a larger surface area. Part of it will be a roof deck and the other part will be a membrane roof.
- In terms of runoff and stormwater management from the roof are you proposing anything in the way of sustainable methods? – (r) We have not gotten that far in our design plans for the project yet.
- With a change of ownership, there would be two things that would happen. The basement connection would be removed but what would happen with the roof connection? – (r) We would remove the bridge that connects the two structures.
- There is no connection being proposed at grade? Is that correct? – (r) Yes, that is correct. There would be the below grade connection and the bridge connection at the second story.
- What is growing on the sides of the building? – (r) An ivy. There will be a variety of ivy on all sides of the proposed structure.

The overall design is very thoughtful and it is a nice intervention into the surrounding area. While it is not completely contextual to the worker cottage vernacular, it is not all that important because the design also addresses the adjacent existing brick structure. The fact that the design also renovates and maintains the front of the existing historic structure is also appreciated.

On the residential neighbor side, where the obscured glass is proposed for the stairwell, this portion of the façade could perhaps be solid brick, or even a metal could be worked into this area. This might make for a better separation and perhaps this portion of the façade could be planted all the way up, or not.

Late Items

25 Clyde Street (ZBA # 2012-20)

Review of project before it goes before the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Description: Applicant and Owner Stateside Realty Group LLC, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure to construct two additional dwelling units behind an existing single-family dwelling and a Variance under SZO §5.5 from the parking requirements of SZO §9.5 for relief from two off-street parking spaces. RB zone. Ward 5.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: TBD

Matt Rice recused himself from participating in the review of this project. This was the first time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The Applicant is proposing to construct a two story, two unit addition onto the back of an existing historic single-family worker's cottage. As proposed, the two new units in the rear would have two bedrooms each and there would be three total parking spaces on the property. The project would need to receive a rear yard setback variance from the Zoning Board of Appeals to be constructed.

The DRC asked about the following aspects of the project and the Agent/Architect provided the following responses.

- Is the existing height of the worker's cottage the original height of the building? – (r) Yes, we believe that is correct.



- How old is the historic structure? – (r) It was built in the mid-1800s, sometime in the 1850s.
- What material is being proposed for the paved area? – (r) Concrete, possibly a stamped concrete. The parking spaces will be an aggregate material or a pervious paver to cut down on the amount of concrete at the site. There will be no asphalt on the property.
- What is going on at the rear of the property behind the proposed addition? – (r) That is a patio area and some greenspace with some flower beds and shrubbery. Across the front of the property we will do whatever we can to work in some landscaping.
- Will you be recladding the existing historic structure? – (r) Yes, we will be recladding the existing building with wood cedar. A cedar clap will be used for the addition in the back.
- Will there be any condensers or other mechanical equipment on the roof? – (r) No, all of the condensers or mechanical equipment will be contained or be at grade level.

If there was a design component that was making the proposed addition to this building look contemporary or historical, the Committee should have seen this rendition already. The purpose of the Design Review Committee is to review aesthetics and it would have been good for the Committee to have seen the earlier rendition at some point in time. It is difficult for the Design Review Committee to request dramatic changes to the project at this point when the Historic Preservation Commission has already set so many parameters.

The proposed pavers and the stamped concrete should stay in the design of the project as an application component.

It would be preferable to have the design identify the front component as the historical piece and identify the addition in the back as the contemporary piece. There should be some distinguishing design characteristics that separate the new addition from the historical component. There could have been a better strategy used at this property to better respect the historic structure at the front of the property.

The third unit entry could perhaps be more prominent as it is very tucked away deep into the design of the project and not visible from the street.

In the area that connects the historic structure with addition, perhaps something could be done with the canopy of that area to bring in some contemporary design components such as having the canopy be made of glass or copper.

Making the historic structure and the proposed rear addition slightly different colors would be preferable.

