



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

DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE

STAFF PRESENT

GEORGE PROAKIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
DAN BARTMAN, *SENIOR PLANNER*
ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

MEMBERS PRESENT

JIM KIRYLO
TANYA PAGLIA
MATTHEW RICE
FRANK VALDES

RECOMMENDATIONS and MINUTES

The City of Somerville Design Review Committee held a public meeting on **Thursday, May 24, 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:

15 Park Place (Case ZBA # 2011-96)

Review of building materials in order to convert a garage into a 2½ story single-family dwelling per the conditions of the awarded Special Permit. RB zone. Ward 2.

This was the second time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The project had already received approval from both the DRC and the Zoning Board of Appeals and was returning to the DRC to get approval of their building materials from the Committee and Planning Staff to get a sign off to pursue their Building Permit from the Inspectional Services Division. The siding will be a 3/4" stock and each corner will be treated with a fry leglet flashing. The building will be air sealed with a Tescon tape that sits behind the siding. Makrowin, triple-pane windows will be used to help maximize energy efficiency. The front deck will be made out of Ipe, which is a sustainable mahogany.

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

- What will the roof be made out of? – (r) A standing seam aluminum.
- Is it correct that there will be a black or dark material behind the gaps in the siding? – (r) Yes, that is correct. We have it specked for general tar paper right now but we will most likely use Solotex. There are some shading concerns, but UV light concerns with regard to the UV light changing the color of the material behind the siding are nonexistent.
- Will the metal trim be painted out to match the roof or will it be an anodized aluminum? – (r) We will most likely get the trim anodized the same color.
- What color is the roof going to be? – (r) The roof would be red.



The Committee was glad to see that the 3/4" siding boards were being proposed because with a 1/4" board there is a greater potential for the boards to warp.

If there is a way to integrate the canopy into the building more this would help the canopy fit better into the overall design of the structure.

The Committee was supportive of the proposed materials and thought they were very appropriate for the project. The Committee also noted that the overall project was commendable.

16 Linden Avenue (Case ZBA # 2011-70)

Review of the updated project design which proposes one principal structure with eight dwelling units and underground parking before the case goes to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Description: Applicant and Owner 16 Linden Avenue, LLC, seeks Special Permit with Site Plan Review approval under SZO §7.3 to construct a principal structure with eight (8) dwelling units, one (1) of which would be an affordable unit as defined in SZO §13, on a 12,320 square foot lot. The Applicant is also seeking a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter the existing nonconforming three-family structure to create the proposed residential building. RB zone. Ward 5.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: June 6, 2012

This was the second time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The original proposal reused an existing three-family dwelling that was on the lot and proposed a new five unit structure be added to the site. Now the proposal calls for the removal of the three-family dwelling in favor of one new eight unit building on the site, with all of the parking be located underground. In the design of the building there was an attempt to break up its massing through the design of each façade and the entire third story was put under a mansard. The building tries to draw on the existing streetscape as much as possible by including a series of gables in its design.

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

- Would there still be an affordable unit in the project? – (r) Yes, one affordable unit would remain in the project.
- What is the height of the building to the top of the gable? – (r) 36.5 feet.
- What is the “future lift” location for? – (r) The Fair Housing Act requires that you be able to install a lift for potential future handicap accessible users if necessary. This future lift location is showing the area where a lift could be installed to get someone from the parking garage to a sidewalk level.
- What is the trigger for private versus public trash pickup? – (r) Seven or more units in a project requires private trash pickup and therefore this project would require private trash pickup.
- The rear deck is kind of enclosed and it is almost like a sun porch. Can you explain the reasoning for that? – (r) We call it a shadow box porch and there are actually some porches like this on the street already. This design came out of some negotiations with a neighbor who had concerns about the noise that could potentially come from the building and this enclosed porch would help to cut down on that.
- What is the finishing material? – (r) A clapboard, probably a fiber cement panel will be used.



- Have you tried making the garage door the same color as the main color of the building instead of using an accent color? – (r) We did and when we made the garage door the same color as the main color of the building it seemed to draw too much attention to itself.
- Where will you be placing the eight gas meters on the building? – (r) We would like to put the eight of them on the side of the building as we would like to keep the front of the building clean.
- Where will the condenser units for the project be located? – (r) About half of the condenser units would be located on the roof on the building and the other half, for the first floor units, will be located at the rear of building.
- Now that the parking is proposed to be located underneath the building, there is no basement storage. Have you given any thought to having an accessory structure to enclose equipment that might be used for the maintenance of the grounds at the property? – (r) Landscaping and grounds maintenance will be performed by a private management company which will bring their own equipment to perform the work and they will take it away when their work is complete.
- Is there bicycle parking proposed anywhere on the site? – (r) We can take a look at putting bike racks at the front of the parking spaces in the basement.

The Committee is not completely supportive of the main entrance to the front of the building. Perhaps a porch element could be implemented here, maybe something along the lines of the projected bay windows that are already on the proposed front façade. More shelter from the elements for someone walking into the main door off of the street would be preferable. However, the porch entry does not necessarily need to have the same roof expression as the rest of the structure. A covered porch that extends over the entire length of the front stairs might work well in this area and perhaps the deck above it could even be enlarged.

It would be beneficial to see a roof plan layout to see where items such as the condenser units will be located and how someone would be able to access the roof.

It would be preferable to see bicycle parking added somewhere in the design of the project.

57 Pitman Street (Case ZBA # 2012-17)

Review of the updated project design before the case goes to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Description: Applicant is proposing seven dwelling units in two separate structures with associated parking on-site. BA zone. Ward 3.

SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals

Hearing Date: June 6, 2012

This was the third time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The previous plan was to construct a five unit building on the site with parking on the first floor. The Applicant, after extensive discussions with the neighborhood, is now proposing to construct two buildings with seven smaller residential units and ten total parking spaces on site. One building would contain four units and the other would contain three units. The surface parking spaces would be shield with plantings, fencing, and concrete bollards. There would also be a guardrail, a fence, and a landscape barrier at the rear of the site to provide additional safety measures for vehicles on Belmont Terrace. The project's grade level units would also be adaptable to be handicap accessible. The changes that were made should help to preserve the views from the rear of the site and the project now appears to be keeping more in scale with the structures in the surrounding neighborhood.



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

- How wide is the space between the two buildings on the site? – (r) Approximately 68 to 70 feet.
- What does the facing of the rock outcropping consist of? – (r) There is a rock wall consisting of big chunks that comes down a certain distance, and as you approach the ground, the bottom coarse of the wall turns into concrete that is from the foundation of the building that was originally there.
- Is there a particular reason why the two buildings are so different aesthetically? – (r) The neighbors felt that this would make the project not feel so much like a development as there are a number of different styles of architecture on Pitman Street already.
- Is there any room to implement trees along the front edge of the project site? – (r) This is a really tough area to plant trees and our landscape architect is telling us that any trees that are planted in this area would not survive. However, we can take another look at possibly planting trees there.
- Do you have any bike parking in mind for the project? – (r) Bike parking for the project will be located at the rear of the property.

The two buildings share a large common space between the two structures. It would be preferable if this area could have more of a courtyard treatment as opposed to being treated like a parking lot. Lighting, fencing, and the materiality of the pavement, such as a scored concrete, can all be used to emphasize this point and to make the buildings feel more connected. The area between the two buildings should be more of a connection between the two structures as opposed to an extension of the street onto the lot. Something more pedestrian friendly would be preferable in this area.

Please look at accentuating the texture of the on-site parking area to make it feel for more hospitable and please look at implementing pervious pavers into this area as well.

A single texture of the paving material throughout the entire parking area (where vehicles will be maneuvering and parking) between the two buildings is preferable.

There is a large amount of fenestration in the building on the right that faces the area between the two structures. It would be a good idea to modify the fenestration on the building to the left in the same or a similar way. This will help to improve the hospitality and the safety of the interior courtyard/parking area space.

In the entrance doors along the street front, the amount of low glazing is a bit of a concern as it limits the amount of privacy each unit has. It might be preferable to the people living there to remove the windows on these doors.

It would be a good idea to delineate pedestrian walkway surface areas from parking or vehicular surface areas on the project site.

39-43 Elmwood Street / 40 Cameron Avenue (Case ZBA # 2011-31)

Review of the updated project design before the case goes to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Description: Applicant GFC Development Inc. and Owner Sadler Realty Trust, seek Special Permits with Site Plan Review under SZO §7.2 and §7.3 and Special Permits under SZO §4.4.1 and §9.13.b to alter a nonconforming structure and modify parking design standards to construct three buildings with eight total dwelling units and associated parking. RB zone. Ward 7.



SPGA: Zoning Board of Appeals
Hearing Date: June 6, 2012

This was the fourth time the project had come before the Design Review Committee. The Applicant has revised their project design to reduce the number of units at the site from nine to eight across three buildings, all of which would be two bedroom units. In the original design, the Applicant was proposing to renovate the existing single-family gable roofed structure on Elmwood Street. In this new proposal, that structure would be demolished and there would be six units in two newly constructed, gable roofed buildings along Elmwood Street. A new, two unit structure that would incorporate some of the existing walls of the commercial structure is still being proposed along Cameron Avenue. The project would have 13 on-site parking spaces and each unit would have one parking space underneath it. The existing wall of the commercial structure at the perimeter of the site would be reduced to approximately four feet in height.

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

- What is the plan for snow removal? – (r) The front yards and the spaces beyond the walkways will be used for snow storage, along with the possibility of snow being trucked away. This will not be a snow plow job as it will have to be done with tools.
- Has the location for electrical/gas meters and condenser units been thought about? – (r) Meters will be located on the backs and sides of the buildings. We would like to put the condenser units up on the rooftops of the buildings.
- Will the units have basements? – (r) We are still exploring that option and we would like to have them, but we are not certain if the units will be able to have them at this time.

Maintaining a stamped concrete material in the interior parking area or implementing something such as brick pavers for the entrance driveway is preferable to help create some type of aesthetic looking internalized street as well as separation from Elmwood Street.

Using a stamped concrete or other material for the interior parking area, as opposed to asphalt, would be preferable.

The location of where trash cans will be stored and how private trash pickup will occur needs to be fleshed out before the design of the project is finalized.

It would be preferable to cap off the vent at the top of the gables with a full triangular vent for the structures on Elmwood Street.

The Committee did wonder if there is a lot of value to be gained or preserved by retaining the concrete block wall, but this is more likely a fine tuned decision that needs to be worked out between the developer and the neighbors.

