



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Case #:** PB 2013-19  
**Date:** October 31, 2013  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 125 Broadway

**Applicant Name:** Image One Industries  
**Applicant Address:** 677 Dunksferry Road, Bensalem, PA 19020  
**Property Owner Name:** Santander  
**Property Owner Address:** 1130 Berkshire Blvd, Wyomissing, PA 19020  
**Agent Name:** Carolyn Parker  
**Agent Address:** 3 Lorion Avenue, Worcester, MA 01606  
**Alderman:** Maureen Bastardi

Legal Notice: Applicant, Image One Industries, and Owner, Santander, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a to modify signage at an existing commercial structure. CCD 45. Ward 1.

Zoning District/Ward: CCD 45 / Ward 1

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a

Date of Application: October 7, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board – **Thursday, November 7, 2013**

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 3,241 square foot parcel comprised of a single-story masonry building with a building footprint that is approximately 3,000 square feet. The structure is currently the location of Sovereign Bank, which is located in East Somerville at the corner of Broadway and Michigan Avenue. The property has a net floor area of 2,622 square feet with a 0.81 floor area ratio (FAR). The parcel is located within in the East Somerville CCD45.



There has been no prior zoning relief.



*125 Broadway*

2. Proposal: Applicant, Image One Industries, and Owner, Santander, propose to modify signage at an existing commercial structure.

The subject commercial space, currently Sovereign Bank, at 125 Broadway is 2,622 net square feet and the proposed new signage would reflect the rebranding of Sovereign Bank, as this entity takes on the name of its parent company, Santander.

The signage is proposed to be slightly larger than the existing and conforms to CCD45 signage guidelines. There is approximately 35 feet of frontage along Broadway and 80 feet of frontage along Michigan Avenue for this commercial use; however, in a CCD45 there is no size requirement as related to frontage. The proposal is for two identical signs, composed of plate letters on an aluminum composite (ACM) background that would be approximately 75 square feet (3' in width by 25' in length) and located within the sign band above the first floor, and for two decals as well as hours of operation, to be approximately 15 square feet (3" in width by 30" in length) and affixed to the glazing of the front door. Each of the two signs within the sign band above the door would have five gooseneck lights above the ACM panel. Total signage would be approximately 90 square feet.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is located in a CCD45. 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 alterations require Special Permit approval.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject parcel is located in a CCD45 district in East Somerville at the corner of Broadway and Michigan Avenue. The surrounding neighborhood is composed of a mix of uses which include residential, commercial, office and retail.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal to modify signage would not be detrimental to the structure.

The proposed signage conforms to CCD guidelines in material and lighting. The size of all four signs is approximately 90 square feet with the band signs approximately 75 square feet and the decals approximately 15 square feet. Gooseneck lighting will illuminate the band signs.

6. Green Building Practices: The application does not indicate any green building practices.

7. Comments:

*Fire Prevention:* Has been contacted but has not yet submitted comments.

*Ward Alderman:* Has been contacted and requested to view the plans illustrating the proposed signage.

**II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §6.1.22.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."

In considering a Special Permit, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal to alter the existing signage due to the rebranding of Sovereign Bank as Santander conforms to CCD guidelines in material and lighting.

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 promoting "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 facilitate the adequate provision of... other public requirements; 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 CCD45 district, §6.1.22, which is, "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 CCD45 district are addressed with respect to the subject proposal below.

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 use of the structure is not proposed to change as a result of this proposal, but the use as a banking institution serves the neighborhood as well as the larger community and is located within an existing structure. The rebranding of this branch would maintain a contributory neighborhood amenity that is not auto oriented and would encourage pedestrian and bicycle activity.

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 proposal to alter signage is compatible with the site and the neighborhood. This project will reduce the existing square feet of signage and become conforming in material and lighting the district guidelines. There will likely be no impact on the surrounding neighborhood as this proposal does not alter the use, footprint or number of vehicles to access the site.

Further, this proposal adheres to CCD signage guidelines, as outlined below.

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.

The proposed painted wood sign conforms to CCD and Arts Overlay district guidelines in material and lighting. The proposal is for two identical signs, composed of plate letters on an aluminum composite (ACM) background that would be approximately 75 square feet (3' in width by 25' in length) and located within the sign band above the first floor, and for two decals as well as hours of operation, to be approximately 15 square feet (3" in width by 30" in length) and affixed to the glazing of the front door. Each of the two signs within the sign band above the door would have five gooseneck lights above the ACM panel. Total signage would be approximately 90 square feet.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.

6. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.

The proposal would not alter circulation patterns for motor vehicles or pedestrians as a result of this project.

**III. RECOMMENDATION**

**Special Permit under §6.1.22.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 a Special Permit to modify signage at an existing commercial structure. 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>(October 7, 2013)</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>July 16, 2013 (October 28, 2013)</td> <td>Existing &amp; Proposed plans submitted to OSPCD (Pages 7, 10, 11, 13, 14 &amp; 15)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(October 7, 2013)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	July 16, 2013 (October 28, 2013)	Existing & Proposed plans submitted to OSPCD (Pages 7, 10, 11, 13, 14 & 15)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	The Applicant shall at his 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							
<b>Public Safety</b>										
3	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP							
4	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.							
<b>Signage</b>										
5	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.							
<b>Final Sign-Off</b>										

6	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.	
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125 Broadway

