



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
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**Case #:** PB 2014-13  
**Date:** May 15, 2014  
**Recommendation:** Conditional Approval

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**PLANNING STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 77 Broadway

**Applicant Name:** Sean O'Connor  
**Applicant Address:** 77 Broadway Somerville, MA 02145  
**Property Owner Name:** O'Connor Realty Associates, LLC  
**Property Owner Address:** 77 Broadway Somerville, MA 02145  
**Alderman:** Matt McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant, Sean O'Connor, and Owner, O'Connor Realty Associates, LLC, seek a Special Permit under SZO §6.1.22, for new signage and awnings. CCD 45 Zone. Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board – May 22, 2014

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 3,630 square foot parcel on the north side of East Broadway. The existing storefront is Awards Unlimited, there is a commercial second floor. See the photo on the next page.





2. Proposal: The proposal is to improve the signage on the building by renovating the existing sign with the business name and trophies on each side, adding a blade sign with a trophy, and adding awnings. The second floor of the building will also be patched and painted an off-white. The existing lighting will be reused for the signage band. There will be accent lights added over the blade sign.

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

4. Comments:

*Ward Alderman:* Alderman McLaughlin has been contacted but has no comments at this time.

## **II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §6.1.22.H):**

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."*

Per SZO §6.1.22.D.b, sign replacement of the same size within the same sign footprint and using the same sign technology shall be permitted by right. Any other change in signage shall require a Special Permit.

In considering a special permit under §6.1.22.H.7 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure.

Although this is not a new development, the design does promote the development standards of the CCD district where possible. It will increase the pedestrian oriented focus of the district by making a more desirable storefront. The awnings and blade sign are pedestrian oriented. There are a few conditions as part of this special permit. The first is that the awning over the door is removed, this is a recessed entryway so an awning is not needed. A second condition of approval is that the final blade sign size and mounting height is reviewed and approved by Planning Staff. This is to ensure pedestrian orientation.

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 The purposes of the Ordinance are 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 provide adequate light and air; and to preserve the historical and architectural resources of the City.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, which is, "to establish and 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.

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 surrounding neighborhood is a mix of commercial and residential uses. This block of Broadway has a 1-story commercial building, Mudflat Studios, and a 2.5 story residential building. The building is 2 blocks from the East Somerville Library. The neighborhood behind the Broadway corridor is a mix of multi-family homes in a Residential A zoning district.

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. 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.

There are no impacts to the proposal. The signage and awning are pedestrian oriented, improve the building composition, and avoid excessive wording.

### **III. RECOMMENDATION**

#### **Special Permit under §6.1.22.H**

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 under SZO §6.1.22, for new signage and awnings. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/ Png.							
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>April 17, 2014</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(May 13, 2014)</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Existing &amp; Proposed View, Signage Details)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	April 17, 2014	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	(May 13, 2014)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Existing & Proposed View, Signage Details)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light on the signage/building and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Png.							
3	The awning over the door shall not be installed.	Perp	Png							
4	The Applicant shall provide the final blade sign size and mounting height to Planning Staff for review and approval.	BP	Png							
5	The scalloped awnings over the second floor shall not be installed.	Perp	Png							
<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	Png.							

