



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

PLANNING DIVISION

STAFF

GEORGE PROAKIS, *PLANNING DIRECTOR*

LORI MASSA, *SENIOR PLANNER*

ADAM DUCHESNEAU, *PLANNER*

DAWN PEREIRA, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: ZBA 2007-63-R2 (8/2011)

Date: September 15, 2011

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 70 & 100 Inner Belt Road

Applicant Name: CoreSite Real Estate 70 Inner Belt, LLC

Applicant Address: 1050 17th Street, Suite 800, Denver, CO 80265

Property Owner Name: same

Agent Name: David Hopper

Agent Address: 149 Littleton Rd, Harvard, MA 01451

Alderman: William Roche

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner CoreSite Real Estate 70 Inner Belt, LLC seek a revision to Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR) (ZBA2007-63) under SZO §5.3.8 in order to substantially renovate the building façade. The original SPSR was for the expansion of an existing 22,667 sf data storage use (§7.11.15.1.c) within the second floor of an existing building for a total of 61,436 s.f. Prior revisions include ZBA 2007-63-R0308 and ZBA 2007-63-R0808 which consisted of increasing the use by approx 141,000 sf and altering the site.

Zoning District/Ward: IA / 1

Zoning Approval Sought: Revision to SPSR §5.3.8

Date of Application: Aug 9, 2011

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals Sept 7, 2011

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The site is located in southeastern Somerville in the “Inner Belt” industrial district. The subject property has an area of 321,424± square feet and is zoned Industrial A (IA). There is



CITY HALL • 93 HIGHLAND AVENUE • SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS 02143
(617) 625-6600 EXT. 2500 • TTY: (617) 666-0001 • FAX: (617) 625-0722

www.somervillema.gov



an existing two-story, 40' high masonry building containing 279,522 gross square feet¹. The footprint of the building is approximately 134,471 square feet. Originally built as warehouse space, in 1999 the ZBA granted a Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR) (ZBA 1999-17) to allow 119,000 square feet of the site to be used for light industrial and office use and to provide 92 additional parking spaces. The site is landscaped with grass and a variety of understory trees in accordance with the 1999 SPSR approved plan.

In December 2007, the Applicant received a SPSR (ZBA 2007-63) under SZO §7.11.15.1.c for the expansion of an existing 22,667 square feet Co-Location Data Center use within the second floor for a total of 61,436 square feet. In March 2008, the Applicant received administrative approval (ZBA 2007-63-R0308) for an additional 3,793 square feet for electrical/mechanical space within the existing first floor as part of the data facility, bringing the existing use to a total of 65,229 square feet.

In September 2008, the Applicant received a revision to the SPSR (ZBA 2007-63-R0808) to add 141,252 additional square feet of the data center use (including support areas such as offices and conference rooms within the mezzanine). With the new tenant fit-out, the entire building area would be permitted for the data center use. The approval included adding nine large pieces of additional machinery next to existing generators and permanent utility trailers to support the expansion of the existing use. The approval also included reducing the number of parking spaces at the site, adding and modifying landscaping, screening existing generators, and altering signage and the façade.

Finally, in April 2010 the Applicant received administrative approval to make minor changes to the site plan and elevations and divide the site work up into two phases.

The facility is open 24 hours and regularly has ten full time occupants who are primarily there during the day. The maximum occupancy once all of the areas are renovated will be 105 and a maximum of 50 visitors are anticipated at any one time.

Some of the interior and exterior renovations are underway. Construction is complete in the following areas of the building:

A data center for another tenant (Internap) on the second floor = 138,270 SF
Mezzanine Area = 10,580 SF
Office / Security / Sales Area = 8,870 SF
Electrical Equipment Rooms = 7,089 SF
Existing Mechanical/Circulation = 9,353 SF
Subtotal of CoreSite's space = 35,892 SF

Remaining Area of data center use on first floor = 105,360 SF

A 18,055 SF area on the first floor is currently under construction. The remaining area that can be built out on the first floor is 87,305 SF.

¹ This includes a mezzanine level between the first and second floors, containing approximately 10,000 square feet. This area was not included in the property description in the 2007 SPSR, which described the structure as containing 269,098 square feet.



70 Inner Belt Rd: (above) main entrance (l), façade to the right of main entrance and parking lot (r). (Below) façade to the right of main entrance is currently under construction to replace the loading docks with glazing and re-grade the site so that it is flat and landscaped (l), view of the southern side of the building from Inner Belt Rd (r).



2. Proposal: The current proposal is to expand upon the exterior improvements that were previously approved to substantially renovate the building façade. A metal panel system would be applied to much of the Inner Belt Road and Third Avenue facades and a narrow metal band would continue along the top of the two other sides of the building that are not very visible. The existing brick that is exposed will be painted a gray color to complement the metal panel color. A different color metal panel will be applied between the windows and in a regular rectangular pattern to break up the long façade. Shade devices will project out from the windows and the long rectangular panels to add some depth and interest to the building. The blue pole-like structural element at the front entrance will be removed. A flat canopy will be added to the front entrance and the wall-like entrance structure will be attached with perforated metal to the façade of the building so that it does not appear to be floating. Translucent glass will be installed in the openings of the front entrance structure and the glass will be back lit.

3. Nature of Application: Revisions to Special Permits may be sought before the final Certificate of Occupancy is issued for a project that received a special permit. The proposed revision is not deemed de minimis because the changes would be noticeable to persons generally familiar with the plans.

Revisions that are not de minimis are subject to the full notice and hearing provisions of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood, adjacent to the MBTA right of way, is composed of large industrial and commercial buildings and vacant lots.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The changes will greatly improve the appearance of the building which currently has large expanses of painted brick with no fenestration. The style of the entrance element will be updated and its theme will be carried throughout the façade.

6. Green Building Practices: The adaptation and reuse of an existing building instead of building a new one reduces material waste and energy usage.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Fire Prevention inquired about the gate that was installed in the parking lot and what access was permitted by emergency vehicles. The building is staffed 24 hours, 7 days a week and if the fire alarm goes off, the gate is opened to allow emergency vehicles to pass.

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Design Review Committee: The Design Review Committee (DRC) reviewed the application at their meetings on August 25 and September 8. The recommendations at the first meeting related to making sure that the building did not go from being a plain “brick box” to a plain “metal box”. They suggested that the applicant make the building more engaging by adding lines of color, breaking the fascia line by staggering the panels, staggering the joint pattern of the metal panels, adding a logo to the building, allowing a band of brick to show through some of the metal panels, and/or adding additional light to the façade. They liked the changes proposed to the main entrance element including the lighting of the glass panels.

The Applicant came back to the second meeting with three different options for plans that tried to address the DRC’s concerns without straying too far from the Owners’ (CoreSite) design intent. The DRC liked Option C which added larger metal panels in a different color to the right side of the main entrance in a regular pattern to break up this façade. The brick on the bottom of the building was proposed to remain the natural brick color to add another color to the façade.

The current plans are the Option C scheme except that the visible brick will be painted gray. The DRC preferred that the brick was not painted; however, they were not opposed to the brick being painted. CoreSite feels strongly that the brick should be painted and is seeking approval for this scheme.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT REVISION (SZO §5.3.8):

In order to grant a special permit with site plan review, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.2.5 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.2.5 in detail.

The following findings are relevant to the proposed façade renovations.

1. Information Supplied: The Staff find that information provided by the Applicant complies "with the information requirements in Section §5.2.3." The information provided by the Applicant allows for a comprehensive review of the proposed development and is in general compliance with the requirements set forth under §5.2.3 of the SZO.

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 with site plan review."

The proposal complies with the standards for issuing a revision to the special permit. The final Certificate of Occupancy has not yet been issued, the proposal otherwise is in accordance with the originally approved plans and conditions, and notice has been given for the public hearing.

3. Site and Area Compatibility: The Applicant has to ensure that the project "[i]s designed in a manner that is compatible with the existing natural features of the site and is compatible with the characteristics of the surrounding area, and that the scale, massing and detailing of buildings are compatible with those prevalent in the surrounding area."

The changes to the building exterior will dramatically improve the appearance of the site. The metal panels and changes to the front entrance will give a face-lift to the building. The existing building has large expanses of painted brick with no fenestration. The change to the façade will give the building a coherent style that it is currently lacking.

4. Enhancement of Appearance: The Applicant must demonstrate that "the natural character and appearance of the City is enhanced. Awareness of the existence of a development, particularly a non residential development or a higher density residential development, should be minimized by screening views of the development from nearby streets, residential neighborhoods of City property by the effective use of existing land forms, or alteration thereto, such as berms, and by existing vegetation or supplemental planting."

The previously approved site work will greatly improve the amount of landscaping on the site. Some of the site work is currently being completed while other improvements will not be complete until the proposed façade work is done. The façade work will require having full access to the area immediately surrounding the building and it will be easier to complete the work without needing to be careful of new plantings near the façade. A recommended condition will be placed on the special permit to ensure that the previously approved site work is complete twelve months after a revision is issued in the event that the façade work is never completed.

14. Lighting: With respect to lighting, the Applicant must ensure that "all exterior spaces and interior public and semi-public spaces shall be adequately lit and designed as much as possible to allow for surveillance by neighbors and passersby."

The glass panels that will be added to the main entrance will be back lit to add visibility and interest to the building. An existing condition of approval restricts light trespass and glare.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Revision to Special Permit with Site Plan Review under §7.11.15.1.c & 5.3.8

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 **REVISION TO SPECIAL PERMIT WITH SITE PLAN REVIEW**.

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.

(Deletions ~~struck~~, additions underlined)

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes										
1	<p>This approval is for the revision to Special Permit 2007-63 to make façade improvements as shown in the following materials submitted by the Applicant:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Plan Date</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>8/9/11</td> <td>Application Form</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7/7/10</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (C1 Site Demolition, C2 Site Development,</td> </tr> <tr> <td>8/8/11</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (T001 Cover Sheet, A201-2 Exterior Elevations, A301 Entry Canopy Details, A601 Wall Sections, A701 Section Detail)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>9/15/11</td> <td>Renderings – NW corner, Entry, SW corner</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The conditions of this approval shall supersede any conditions attached to prior zoning approvals. Any changes to the presently approved use or site plan that are not <i>de minimis</i> or specifically delegated to staff review below must receive ZBA approval.</p>	Plan Date	Submission	8/9/11	Application Form	7/7/10	Plans submitted to OSPCD (C1 Site Demolition, C2 Site Development,	8/8/11	Plans submitted to OSPCD (T001 Cover Sheet, A201-2 Exterior Elevations, A301 Entry Canopy Details, A601 Wall Sections, A701 Section Detail)	9/15/11	Renderings – NW corner, Entry, SW corner	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.	
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2	Prior to the issuance of the CO, all of the building’s devices shall be tied to the new fire alarm panel, and the old panel will have to be removed.	CO	FP											
3	Should the final project be deemed “substantial rehabilitation”, the PMC (or initial payment thereof)	CO	ISD/Housing											

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes
	will be required prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. This payment may apply to previously permitted area if it underwent substantial rehabilitation yet was below the 30,000 g.s.f. threshold. <u>A Project Mitigation Contribution (PMC) (linkage) agreement will be signed and payments made for the area in the building that does not yet have a certificate of occupancy for the data center use by the time of this approval (September 2011). This includes the 18,055 sf that is under construction currently (September 2011) labeled Phase 3A in the attached floor plan and the remaining 87,305 sf that is anticipated to be built out as a data center. Linkage payments will be made for each phase of the build out before a certificate of occupancy is issued for each phase, as specified in the agreement.</u>			
4	If swing gates at the entrances and exits of the site are included in the final design, these facilities will require approval by the Planning Staff as well as the Fire Prevention Bureau.	BP	PLNG/ FP	
5	<i>De minimis</i> changes to the building and site will be subject to Planning Staff review and approval; and it is further recommended that Planning Staff review and approval be required for subsequent additional signage.	BP/CO/ Perpetual	PLNG	
6	Planning Staff approval will be required for the final landscaping plan and plant list; additional trees along the Third Avenue frontage are encouraged.	CO	PLNG	
7	Lighting design shall limit light trespass, sky-lighting, and glare from the site.	BP/CO/ Perpetual	ISD/ PLNG	
<u>8</u>	<u>Site work must be complete 12 months after this special permit revision is issued. After the 12 month period, no building permits or certificates of occupancy will be issued until the site work is complete.</u>	<u>BP/CO</u>	<u>PLNG</u>	
<u>8</u> <u>9</u>	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final sign-off on the building permit to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	CO	PLNG.	

