



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2013-20
Date: October 31, 2013
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 38 Union Square

Applicant Name: East Boston Savings Bank
Applicant Address: 67 Prospect Street, Peabody MA 01960
Property Owner Name: Joseph Vaccaro
Property Owner Address: 38 Union Square, Somerville MA 02143
Agent Name: Batten Bros., Inc.
Agent Address: 893 Main Street, Wakefield MA 01880
Alderman: Thomas Taylor

Legal Notice: Applicant, East Boston Savings Bank, and Owner, Joseph Vaccaro, seek a Special Permit seeks under SZO §6.1.22.D.5 to install signage for a bank.

Zoning District/Ward: Zone CCD 55. Ward 3.

Zoning Approval Sought: SZO §6.1.22.D.5

Date of Application: October 10, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board November 7, 2013

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-story building in the heart of Union Square. The majority of the first floor was previous occupied by an Animal Hospital and two other businesses and will be occupied by East Boston Savings Bank. The Animal Hospital had wood signs on the three sides of the building and two other businesses had flat signs wood or metal signs. The other current uses on the ground floor are a laundromat and jewelry store. The second floor contains offices.

2. Proposal: The proposal is to install signage for the East Somerville Savings Bank. The signage will be one inch individual letters with the bank's compass logo to the left of the letters. The material will be acrylic and a sample has been provided. There will be signs on three sides of the building in the signage band for the building. The signs will be lit from below by long aluminum fixtures.

The background color for the entire sign band of the building has recently been painted a dark tan with a reddish access strip across the top and bottom.

The other businesses in the building will also require a Special Permit to install signage if it will change in size or technology from what was installed before the sign band was painted.

3. Nature of Application: The structure is located in a CCD55 and the Arts Overlay district. 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 modifications require Special Permit approval.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood is composed of a mix of uses which include residential, commercial, office and retail as this area is part of the larger Union Square neighborhood. This structure is also within close proximity to the Bow Street Local Historic District which is a mixed-use historic district.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The signage conforms to the sign guidelines for the district. It will be made of a high quality material, externally illuminated and be in the appropriate signage band for the building.

6. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.

7. Comments:

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



Previous signage at 38 Union Square



38 Union Square – (l) view of building from Somerville Ave, (r) view of building from sidewalk on Bow St



Ward Alderman: Alderman Taylor is supportive of the Staff recommend. He asked that the signage fits in with the décor of Union Square so that there is not a mismatch of signage of color, size, and design in the square.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §6.1.22.D.5):

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."

The sign design complies with the design guideline for signage in the CCD (§6.1.22.H). The signage design respects the building's context. It has a simple design with white individual letters and a small logo. The colors will be complimentary to the sign band's dark tan background and reddish outline colors. The signage is appropriately located on three sides of the bank in the sign band that will match the signage line of signs that are installed for the other business in the building. The location does not conceal the interesting architectural elements of the building. The signs will not glow, as is discouraged, but will have a light fixture below that will shine light upward on the letters. The logo provides an interesting element and the wording of the sign overall is not excessive and easily readable.

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 providing for and maintaining the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City. The proposal is also consistent with the purpose of the CCD. A bank provides increased commercial investment in a neighborhood-serving mixed use building. The use does not provide as intriguing of a pedestrian experience as other types of businesses; however, the large expanse of windows will be open for pedestrians to have a view inside of the space and the signage will be attractive and appropriate for historic structure in Union Square.

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 sign would be compatible with the building's design as explained in finding two.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §5.1 & §6.1.22.D.5

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 the installation of signage and lighting. 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>Oct 10, 2013</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Oct 7, 2013</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Elevations – Bow St, Somerville Ave, Union Square, External Lighting Fixture Details,)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Oct 10, 2013	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	Oct 7, 2013	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (Elevations – Bow St, Somerville Ave, Union Square, External Lighting Fixture 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	Plng.							
3	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.							

