



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: PB 2017-28

Date: December 14, 2017 February 13, 2018

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

UPDATED PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 192 Broadway

Applicant / Owner Name: Gilberto Yoshida

Applicant / Owner Address: 192 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145

Alderman: Matthew McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Gilberto Yoshida, seeks a Special Permit pursuant to SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a to alter the façade by adding a sign for the existing travel agency/currency transfer establishment. CCD-55 Zone. Ward 1.

Dates of Public Hearing: Planning Board – December 14, 2017

This staff report has been updated. Items which no longer apply have been ~~struck~~ and updated information has been highlighted in yellow.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject site contains a parcel of 11,890 square feet. The parcel consists of a mixed use building with two retail tenants (a currency transfer/travel agency and a bakery) and four dwelling units. The commercial building is situated on the front of the site along Broadway and has a parking lot in the rear.



2. Proposal: The proposal is to erect a sign on the façade for Chang Express, a currency transfer and travel agency. The sign is fabricated out of aluminum with primary lettering of 12" tall halo lit channel

letters and secondary lettering of 6" tall individual non-illuminated letter. light box underneath to illuminate the sub text.

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

4. Comments:

Ward Alderman: Alderman McLaughlin has been made aware of this proposal and has expressed his support for the proposal.

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."*

According to SZO §6.1.22.D.5.a "alterations to an existing or approved façade other than a one-for-one replacement of signage within the same sign footprint and using the same sign technology shall require a new Special Permit, with findings giving consideration to the Design Guidelines of Section 6.1.22.H."

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 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 protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; 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 CCD-55 district, 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 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.

The use associated with the façade renovation is Chang Express, which provides currency transfer and travel services. The retail use is permitted as-of-right in the CCD-55 zoning district.

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."*

Surrounding Neighborhood: The locus is located on the eastern end of Broadway between the blocks of MacArthur Street and Autumn Street. This particular storefront shares a building (owned by the owner of Chang Express) with a bakery, Pastelaria Vitoria. An auto glass and mirror repair service abuts the site to the east. Three multi-family residential structures fill out the rest of the block to the west.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):

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. *Building(s) should complete the streetwall along the primary street edge(s).*
2. *Massing and height of buildings should be articulated in a manner compatible with the physical character of the surrounding districts, particularly where a building abuts a residential or historically designated property. Whenever possible, historical variety in the scale, rhythm, and relationship of buildings to pedestrian public ways should be preserved.*
3. *A transition in height should be established between residential or historically designated properties and new development.*
4. *Thirty-foot-wide commercial bays with independent entrances onto the street are typical in Somerville and should be repeated in new developments to create visual and pedestrian interest. Varied architecture should be created and flat facades avoided by using recessed or projected entryways, bays, canopies, awnings, residential balconies on 2nd floor or above, and other architectural elements. Non-residential ground floor façades should have a minimum seventy-five (75) percent transparent material, and second floor facades should have a minimum of forty (40) percent transparent material. These openings should provide views into the building and should not be blocked by interior storage, nonartistic displays, or greater than thirty (30) percent internally mounted signage.*
5. *Exterior building materials for all visible portions of the building should be high quality, durable, and aesthetically appropriate. Particular attention should be paid where properties abut residential districts and historically designated property. Predominant exterior building materials should include an appropriate combination of brick, glass, wood, artistically used metal, stone, or stucco. Precast concrete panels, EIFS-type finishes, and large expanses of glass or corrugated sheet metal are generally discouraged. Bare or painted concrete as the only exterior facade material shall not be allowed.*

6. *Visible rear and side façades should maintain a similar character to the front façade of the building and the intended character of the surrounding district.*

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 size, material, metal, and the colors of the sign respect the building and the neighborhood. The sign will be in line with the existing sign for the bakery. The sign uses halo lighting for the primary name and the secondary lettering below is unlit a small light box to illuminate the subtext on the bottom portion of the sign. The metal look of the sign offers a unique sign to the East Broadway streetscape and complements the brick façade and black metal storefront windows.

8. *Retail, restaurant and other pedestrian-oriented uses are encouraged, particularly on the Ground Floor. As noted in 6.1.22.E, residential uses shall not be permitted on the Ground Floor street frontage along major streets unless they are located in structures that are historically residential on the Ground Floor.*

9. *Individual Artist Live/Work Spaces should be designed as closely as possible in accordance with the "Design Guidelines for Artist Housing" produced by the Somerville Arts Council.*

10. *Residential units should be of varying sizes to accommodate a range of family sizes. Generally dwelling units within a structure should not have an average size of less than 1,000 square feet.*

11. *A sidewalk depth of at least ten (10) feet from the street curb to building is strongly encouraged for developments fronting major streets.*

Overall, the subject building completes the streetwall and has a one-story massing that is shorter than surrounding structures. The primary entrance is oriented to the sidewalk and parking is in the rear of the site. The proposed fabricated metal sign conforms to CCD district guidelines in size and material. The "Chang Express" part of the sign will be halo lit behind the channel letters.

7. Housing Impact: Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.

8. SomerVision Plan: Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, and protect and promote a diverse and interesting mix of small-scale businesses in Somerville's neighborhoods.

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 façade renovations. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Plng.							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>October 26, 2017</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>November 22, 2017 February 6, 2018</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	October 26, 2017	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	November 22, 2017 February 6, 2018	Plans submitted to OSPCD
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
Construction Impacts										
2	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.							
3	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P							
Public Safety										
4	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP							
Signage										
5	Signage will be limited in size and location to that shown in the elevation diagrams which does not illustrate lighting.	CO/Cont.	Plng.							
Final Sign-Off										
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.							

