

DESIGN REVIEW REPORT

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Boynton Yards Project

Design Review Report

The Project team presented to the Urban Design Commission on April 27, 2021 and May 11, 2021. The following provides a summary of the UDC's key recommendations, and a description of any changes to the proposed development made because of the feedback.

Building 2

- **Comment:** The sloped green is a successful element to draw the public up to the second level, could a continuation of circulation to the west side be provided to create a complete path?
 - **Response:** A gracious stair has been provided at the southwest corner that connects to the sidewalk level at Windsor & South St. The stair will incorporate planters that provide a continuation of the planted path at Level 2 and soften the southwest corner of the building.
- **Comment:** The material palette for the base of the building and public realm should continue to be explored. Warmth of material as well as texture, grain and scale should be considered. Incorporate the use of a textured material (like 'OKO Skin') into part of the façade design for the building base and the columns of arcade.
 - **Response:** The design team presented several material studies and proposed the use of glass fiber reinforced concrete panels (GFRC) instead of aluminum panel for the base of the building. The materiality of the panels will create a better sense of scale along the longer, north façade and offer a more inviting pedestrian experience. Warmth of material in the public realm will also be explored through the materiality of the furniture and paving and landscape elements.
- **Comment:** The north lobby entrance could be more pronounced and articulated further.
 - **Response:** The design team is exploring opportunities to further the visual and material dialogue between the interior and exterior. This is being studied in the exterior paving pattern as an extension of the public circulation path through the lobby to the Level 2 exterior terrace, as well as in the development of the winter market / arts and creative enterprise space on the east podium façade. In addition, the lighting design of the soffit ceiling above the podium will enhance the lobby entrance and arcade as a focal point, as well as create a sense of warmth from the wood-tone ceiling treatment.
- **Comment:** The winter market volume on the exterior does not read as the double-height experience as proposed on the interior.
 - **Response:** The design team has developed elevation studies and modified the volume of the winter market to represent a double-height volume. The articulation of the façade will be further broken down to create a human scale experience that spills into the adjacent civic space.

- **Comment:** Make a connection between lobby, market space and arts & creative spaces more porous and connected internally to continue the sense of the public realm
 - **Response:** The team refined the interior space of the winter market and Level 2 planning to enhance the visual continuity of the space and connection of the market / arts creative space to the Level 2 public realm.
- **Comment:** Incorporate a lighter material to be used on the penthouse, to add an appearance of being not as top-heavy compared to the rest of the building.
 - **Response:** The design team has changed the color of the penthouse to a lighter material that will reflect some sky and reduce the apparent mass of the penthouse.
- **Comment:** Refine the penthouse massing and materiality so that it is shaped volumetrically in the massing concept model; extend part of building facade up to become the penthouse cladding.
 - **Response:** The design team changed the profile of the typical "open book" curtain wall to extend the appearance of the tower and minimize the mass of the penthouse. In addition, by extending the tower curtain wall and modifying the profile of the penthouse mass, the tower and penthouse read as more unified and harmonious architecturally.
- **Comment:** The team should incorporate a large section of the penthouse into the mockup for UDC review. Provide the UDC with the proposed mockup drawing for approval.
 - **Response:** The team will include a portion of the penthouse in the mockup scope and work with the construction manager on procurement and schedule that aligns with an appropriate review and comment period.
- **Comment:** The team should consider the how the spine of the façade is viewed from a distance and how could it be reinforced. The team should also explore increasing depth of the recessed "spinal column" on the north and south sides of the building so the open book massing concept is visually apparent from a distance.
 - **Response:** In conjunction with the study to raise the height of the tower parapet, the design team has modified the top profile of the curtain wall parapet, strengthening the language of the two open book panels and giving the spine a stronger presence. The design team will continue to study the detailing of the spine condition at varying distances to ensure the concept is considered from all view corridors.

NEIGHBORHOOD MEETING REPORT

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**Boynton Yards
Building 2
Neighborhood Meeting Report**

The Proponent has worked diligently to listen and respond to the public comments received from the community, and City departments during production of the Development Review Application. The following section describes the key comments received on the Boynton Yards Project during two neighborhood meetings held on March 18, 2021 and May 26, 2021. Responses have been provided for all comments. Generally, the comments were supportive of the Project and did not result in any substantial refinements to the Project.

Building 2 Meeting Notes/Comments

- **On-Site Open Space:**
 - **Comment:** Will the area on the Project Site shown as public realm around the building be truly open to the public?
 - **Response:** Our vision is that these spaces will be privately owned public space (POPs) that will be accessible to the public.
- **Accessibility**
 - **Comment:** What elements are being included to enhance accessibility beyond basic ADA compliance?
 - **Response:** The entire building is accessible. This includes the raised terrace, the winter market and exterior public space. The interior ground floor and upper floors will also be accessible to anyone with mobility challenges.

We met with Bonnie Dennis, Chair of the City of Somerville's Commission for Persons with Disabilities, on May 24, 2021 to discuss our project and collaborate on possible enhancements. We will continue to work together with Bonnie and others to implement a strategy to address any concerns. Additional details on accessibility of interior areas will be provided during the Site Plan Approval process as the design for each building advances.

- **Shadow Studies**
 - **Comment:** We would like to see the results of the shadow study.
 - **Response:** Preliminary shadow studies were presented at the second neighborhood meeting.
- **Traffic**
 - **Comment:** Is there a plan for how to accommodate traffic at rush hour?
 - **Response:** The Project has submitted an updated Mobility Management Plan to the Mobility Division on May 21, in advance of the Site Plan Application submission.

In response to ongoing planning efforts with the City, the Proponent has made refinements to the streetscape to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety. The Project now

proposes a raised, separated bike lane on the north side of South Street and the eastern side of Windsor Street fronting Building 2.

- **Sloped Green**

- **Comment:** Is the sloped landscaping part of a strategy to protect the building against future climate change related flooding?
- **Response:** The slope is more of an architectural public space concept driven by the desire to create connections between two building levels. This was an idea to physically and visually connect and enhance the second level as a public space. The second level green also helps reduce heat island effect.

In response to ongoing planning efforts with the City, the Project has made refinements to the second level terrace, which connects Windsor Street on the west to the sloped green and Civic Space 1 on the east edge of the Project Site. The Project now proposes a large staircase that provides a direct connection to the public sidewalks along Windsor Street and South Street. The Proponent envisions that the stair could have integrated bleacher seating at the sidewalk elevation and planters along the rising steps.

- **Parking**

- **Comment:** How many parking spaces will be accommodated under the building?
- Response:** The Project will provide 242 parking spaces beneath Building 2.

- **Bird Safe Glass**

- **Comment:** There were concerns too about the treatment of the glass and want to confirm it will be anti-collision for the birds.
- **Response:** The design team is starting that process of developing the façade in more detail. The textures of the vertical façades will help, and the glass is not highly reflective. We will focus on making this a building that is safe for birds.

- **Vertical Green Space**

- **Comment:** I would like to see developers start to take advantage of their vertical space. It would be nice if we could get some vines like Virginia Creeper incorporated into the environment.
- **Response:** The Proponent appreciates your comment. The design team will continue to look into opportunities to include vertical landscaping in Building 2, or a future phase of civic space in the Boynton Yards Master Plan Development.

- **Green/High Albedo Roof**

- **Comment:** Is there any possibility that the Project can accommodate a green roof? Also, can you confirm that the roof will be high albedo?
- **Response:** The sloped green is actually a green roof. Lab buildings require extensive rooftop mechanical systems, and therefore it is more challenging to accommodate green roofs. The Proponent confirms that the roof will be high albedo.

- **Habitats**

- **Comment:** I am interested in incorporating in intentional habitat for birds, raptors, etc.
- **Response:** The Proponent will be working with a natural habitat and wildlife consultant and community to foster habitats for peregrine falcons, bats and plant native trees and pollinators that will attract songbirds, butterflies, and moths.

UDC DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

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City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

Building 2 of the Boynton Yards Land Co. Master Plan

June 8, 2021

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on April 27, 2021 and May 11, 2021 to review the **11-Story Lab Building** proposed at the intersection of A.Q. Way and Windsor St in the High Rise zoning district of the Boynton Yards sub area Master Planned Development overlay district and the Boynton Yards neighborhood of Somerville. The purpose of design review, as established by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, is for peers in the professional design community to provide advice and recommendations during the schematic design phase of the architectural design process. In accordance with the UDC's adopted Rules of Procedure and Section 15.1.4 Design Review of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, this recommendation includes, at least, the following:

1. Identification of the preferred schematic design option
2. Identification if applicable design guidelines are satisfied
3. Guidance and recommended modifications to address any design issues or concerns

Design review was conducted over the course of two meetings and the Commission guided the Applicant through various recommendations and suggestions to the applicants preferred building design options. Recommendations that were incorporated into the design through the review process included adding a staircase to the southwestern end of the building to better pedestrian circulation through the building while maintaining a sense of a public realm, adding aspects of a warm palette and texture to the base of the building to help break up the horizontal plane of the building base. The commission also recommended refining the penthouse design by lightening up the material to appear less top heavy compared to the rest of the building.

Following a presentation of the revised design by the Applicant and review of the design guidelines for the HR district, the Commission provided the following final guidance and recommended modifications:

- Incorporate the use of a textured material (like 'OKO Skin') into part of the façade design for the building base and the columns of arcade
- Make the southwestern corner of the building more visually apparent from the outside from A.Q way to enliven the addition of the pedestrian staircase going down to the intersection of Windsor St and South St.
- Make connection between lobby, market space and arts & creative spaces more porous and connected internally to continue the sense of a public realm.

- Incorporate a lighter material to be used on the penthouse, to add an appearance of being not as top heavy compared to the rest of the building.
- Refine penthouse massing and materiality so that it is shaped volumetrically in the massing concept model; Extend part of building facade up to become the penthouse cladding.
- Increase depth of the recessed “spinal column” on the north and south sides of the building so the open book massing concept is visually apparent from a distance.
- Provide a human scaled framing of solid material around the storefront oriented toward the abutting civic space. Possibly using the same material from the northern façade base.

The Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend façade design option A for further development, voted unanimously (4-0) for massing option C, voted unanimously (4-0) that all of the design guidelines for the HR district were satisfied, and voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend the addition of the feedback outlined above.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Frank Valdes
Deborah Fennick
Heidi Cron
Tim Talun

Attest, by the meeting Co-Chairs:

Cortney Kirk
Daniel Bartman



Sarah Lewis,
UDC Co-Chair
Director of Planning & Zoning

Preferred Façade and Massing Concept Design Review Evolution of Façade Option A



Preferred Façade Concept A (above) and Massing Concept Open Book (Below)



Design Review Evolution of Building Base



April 27, 2021



May 11, 2021

Building First Floor Layout (with addition of staircase)



May 11, 2021

Reviewed Mechanical Penthouse Concepts (Further Revisions Desired)



May 11, 2021

APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

HR – HIGH RISE DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
Facades should be visually divided into a series of architectural bays that are derived, in general, from the building's structural bay spacing.	YES (3-0)		
Piers, pilasters, or other features defining each architectural bay should either extend all the way to the ground or terminate at any horizontal articulation defining the base of the building.	YES (3-0)		
Architectural bays should align, in general, with individual or groups of storefronts and lobby entrances.	YES (3-0)		
Piers, pilasters, or other features defining each architectural bay should always project forward and be uninterrupted by any horizontal articulation, excluding any horizontal articulation used to differentiate the base of the building.	YES (3-0)		
Vents, exhausts, and other utility features on building facades should be architecturally integrated into the design of the building and should be located to minimize adverse effects on pedestrian comfort along sidewalks and within open spaces.	YES (3-0)		
Buildings at terminated vistas should be articulated with design features that function as focal points.	YES (3-0)		
Fenestration glazing should be inset from the plane of exterior wall surfaces.	YES (3-0)		
Ribbon windows should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		
Monotonous and repetitive storefront or lobby systems, awnings, canopies, sign types, colors, or designs should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		
Storefronts and lobby entrances should include awnings or canopies to provide weather protection for pedestrians and reduce glare for storefront display areas. Awnings should be open-ended and operable.	YES (3-0)		
Lobby entrances for upper story uses should be optimally located, well defined, clearly visible, and separate from the entrance for other ground story uses.	YES (3-0)		
Lobbies should be limited in both width and total area to preserve floor space and frontage for other ground story uses. Buildings should use any combination of facade articulation, a double-height ceiling, a distinctive doorway, a change in wall material, a change in paving material within the frontage area, or some other architectural element(s) to make lobbies visual and materially distinctive.	YES (3-0)		

HR – HIGH RISE DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
The selection of materials, fenestration, and ornamentation should result in a consistent and harmonious composition that appears as a unified whole rather than a collection of unrelated parts.	YES (3-0)		
The type and color of materials should be kept to a minimum, preferably three (3) or fewer.	YES (3-0)		
Two (2) or more wall materials should be combined only one above the other, except for bay windows.	YES (3-0)		
Wall materials appearing heavier in weight should be used below wall materials appearing lighter in weight (wood and metal above brick, and all three above stone)	YES (3-0)		
Horizontal or vertical board siding or shingles, regardless of material, should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		
Architectural details and finish materials for the base of a building should be constructed of architectural concrete or pre-cast cementitious panels, natural or cast stone, heavy gauge metal panels, glazed or unglazed architectural terracotta, or brick.	YES (3-0)		
Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS) should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		