

# 2

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

Design  
Public Process + Design Review Report

# DESIGN

### A Gateway Plaza for Union Square

The arrival of transit to Union Square will establish a new civic node for the Union Square neighborhood. The proposed gateway plaza for Union Square will serve to link this node with the existing neighborhood fabric, prioritizing connectivity to Union Square Plaza through the enhancement of the public realm while maximizing its utility to celebrate the quirky, artsy, and inclusive character of Union Square.

The design approach to this public amenity has evolved with the support of community feedback and sustained coordination with the MBTA. The prioritization of pedestrian access for all users has taken center stage in the proposed concept that provides access at grade for its entire length, eliminating visual and physical barriers and replacing them with vistas that tie to Union Square Landmarks: Prospect Hill Monument, Union Square Plaza and the Historic Post Office. The placement of the plaza at grade provides the added benefit of the gradual separation of public space from Prospect Street using the natural elevation of the street to define an ample space for assembly at the point of greatest separation; a point that similarly boasts ideal southern exposure. The sloping bank in this location also offers the opportunity for amphitheater style seating facing the large gathering area in the plaza.

The generous right of way, framed by green groundcover and tree canopies described herein, provides the backdrop for sustained activation by commuters, employees, residents, and visitors alike, evolving the understanding of Prospect as a Pedestrian-first street and incentivizing its utility to access the surrounding neighborhood.

The plaza is designed to be welcoming and comfortable with sun and shade and a variety of seating alternatives including both permanent accommodations and movable tables and chairs to maximize its sustained use. The spatial organization accommodates ease of movement through the space, while providing for and encouraging lingering, meeting, and even gathering for special events and/or impromptu performances. These encouraged moments of encounter are organized through a design concept rooted in history, that deliver users the length of the block from the new MBTA Station to historic Union Square Plaza and back again.

### Recalling Miller's River

A look back at history reveals that Miller's River once passed through the D2 site and, although long disappeared, the memory of the river inspires the concept for the plaza. While not a literal tracing of the river's path, the paving pattern and overall organization of the plaza design is inspired by the dynamics and movement of Miller's River. The fluid flow of water provides a metaphor for the dynamic pedestrian connection from Union Square Station to the plaza at the heart of Union Square. Lining each edge of the plaza are multiple pockets or "eddies" of seating, steps, and other gathering opportunities. The river's edge metaphor also provides a concept for the green buffer along Prospect Street. Sloping up like a river's bank, the buffer will be planted with trees and low plantings and lined with a variety of types of seating, opportunistically

penetrated from the street to encourage maximum utility.

### Providing More High-Quality Civic Space

Cognizant of the desire for increased open space through sustained community dialogue, expanding the public realm has remained a primary objective over the course of the plan's evolution. The result achieved here is one that achieves an area 40% larger than the 15,100 SF approved through the CDSP. This achieved increase, excludes from its total an additional 6,000 SF of open space which will be provided to enhance the moments of arrival on the Green Line.

The totality of the new civic space area has been designed in concert with the active and transparent retail and lobby frontages to energize the transition from station to square, while preserving view corridors and enhancing wayfinding. The massing of the D2.2 and D2.3 buildings peel back from Prospect Street, affording visibility to the station and leaving a generous green buffer between the plaza and street. The landscape edge at the street and the building facades at grade are inflected in a dynamic, sculptural way that together define an 'outdoor room' that offers pockets of space for different types of activity the length of the plaza.

### Multiple and Varied Activity Zones

The plaza has been organized to accommodate ease of movement to the station as well as for comfortable everyday uses and the special events that are so characteristic of Union Square. A clear central zone, paved in a smooth material, provides a direct connection to the station. On either side of this movement zone are opportunities for seating, gathering and other activities. At the sunny southern end of the plaza is an open hardscape area framed by seating and elegant tree planting that creates a flexible hardscape area for programmed events and circulation.

The planted "bank" along Prospect Street is edged with benches and seat walls that create pockets of seating with differing orientations. A few over-sized seating platforms provide additional opportunities for seating or performing, and chairs can be moved as desired to complete these flexible gathering pockets. Throughout, ample and varied seating offer places to sip a coffee, chat with a friend or work on a laptop outside.

The seating steps of the outdoor room to the south face a wide-open area that can support outdoor performances and other flexible programming. This is the widest and sunniest part of the civic space and offers a spot to watch a performance or participate in a public event, all while keeping an eye on train arrivals and departures. Depending on the activities within the plaza the moveable tables and chairs can be shifted to respond to programming.

### Separation from Prospect Street Vehicles

In response to community feedback, the Proponent revised the approved CDSP civic space design to make it more resilient to vehicular pollution impacts. The width of the D2

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### Design

civic space has been increased to create greater horizontal separation from the civic space areas most likely to be populated by pedestrians to Prospect Street vehicles. The elevation of the plaza has also been set at approximately the same elevation as the adjacent Union Square Station, allowing the southern approximately 150 feet of the plaza to benefit from being more than seven vertical feet below Prospect Street. The largest portion of the plaza, where people are most inclined to congregate, is at the southern end of D2 and benefits from the most vertical separation from Prospect Street (approximately 10 to 14 vertical feet). A vegetated landscape buffer has also been planned between the Prospect Street sidewalk and the main pedestrian areas of the plaza to further separate main pedestrian areas on the plaza from vehicles.

#### **Pedestrian Prioritization**

The new plaza is situated at the level of Union Square Station, providing an easy and accessible connection to the heart of Union Square to the north. At the northern terminus of the defined Civic Space, the plaza connects seamlessly with the mid-block connector of Bennett Court through a 'table-topped' condition that prioritizes its use for pedestrian passage. At the southern end, surface treatments to Charlestown Place blur it's edge, as east-bound pedestrian passage is provided.

To encourage utility and sustained activation of the public space, the western edge adjoins the sloping sidewalk of Prospect Street in three unique locations: at the northernmost end – connecting to Prospect Street at grade, midway - through a low sculptural stair, and at the southernmost edge - with a south facing seating stair that doubles as a gathering space.

#### **Bicycle Connectivity**

Paired with the provision of varied activity zones, the plaza accommodates multiple modes of arrival. Ample accommodations for short-term and long-term bicycle parking are provided nearby. Strategically positioned at all edges of the Civic Space, the variety of parking opportunities incent approach to the space while ensuring it remains a pedestrian zone. This is most evident through aggregated facilities along Charlestown place, where sheltered and secured spaces, combine with alternative short-term spaces

# PUBLIC PROCESS + DESIGN REVIEW REPORT

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes



### Introduction

The Design and Site Plan Review meeting report and minutes section serves to catalogue and summarize the public entitlement process carried out to date. The section provides information on the date, time and location of meetings, a summary of information discussed, description of material shown, along with a summary of any changes made as a result of a specific meeting. Provided direct planning relationships one to another and the intent to deliver building and open space improvements simultaneously, building lots D2.1, D2.2, and D2.3 along with the zoning required 'Plaza' type civic space have all advanced through the sequence of public meetings together.

As the foundation for any proposed building or civic space project in the Union Square redevelopment area, the approved Coordinated Development Special Permit (CDSP) provides the point of departure for the proposed design's evolution. It has been the public process to date that has informed this evolution from the D2 block's CDSP-approved 'Block and Lot Plan' (below left) to the subjects of this DSPR application. (below right)





## PROJECT NARRATIVE

Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### A | Neighborhood Meeting 1

**Date:** April 19, 2018  
**Time:** 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
**Location:** Public Safety Building | Academy Room  
220 Washington Street, Somerville, MA



#### Summary of issues discussed

Neighborhood Meeting 1 represented the first step in the Design and Site Plan Review (DSPR) process for the D2 buildings and Civic spaces. US2, together with its various design teams, presented schematic plans and sought community input through the 'Open-House' style meeting. The team presented preliminary schematic plans of the buildings and proposals for the CDSP defined civic spaces. The room was organized by subject area sections, each of which provided expanded detail and an opportunity for comments to be recorded. Central to the room and discussion was a site model, inclusive of neighborhood context, into which alternative building massing scenarios could be substituted.

A two-sided flyer was provided to members of the public upon signing in, with one side depicting room organization for ease of navigation, and the other providing the framework of the public review process ahead. This material along with the summary of topic areas discussed is provided below:

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Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### Neighborhood Meeting

April 19, 2018

#### Welcome!

We invite you to review the work-in progress and discuss your insights and ideas with the design teams.

We would appreciate your feedback! 



#### Design Teams

Public Realm | Ground, Inc.

Shauna Gillies-Smith

Yao Xiao

Lena Smart

Marin Braco

D2.1 | Spagnolo Gisness & Associates (SGA)

Al Spagnolo

John Sullivan

Chris Brown

Brian Slozak

D2.2 & D2.3 | Höweler + Yoon Architecture (HYA)

Eric Höweler

Jonathan Fournier

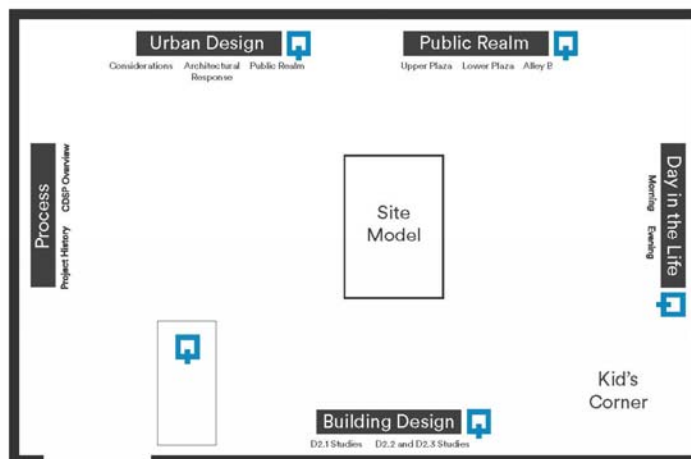
David Hamm

Nancy Nichols

Sarah Martos

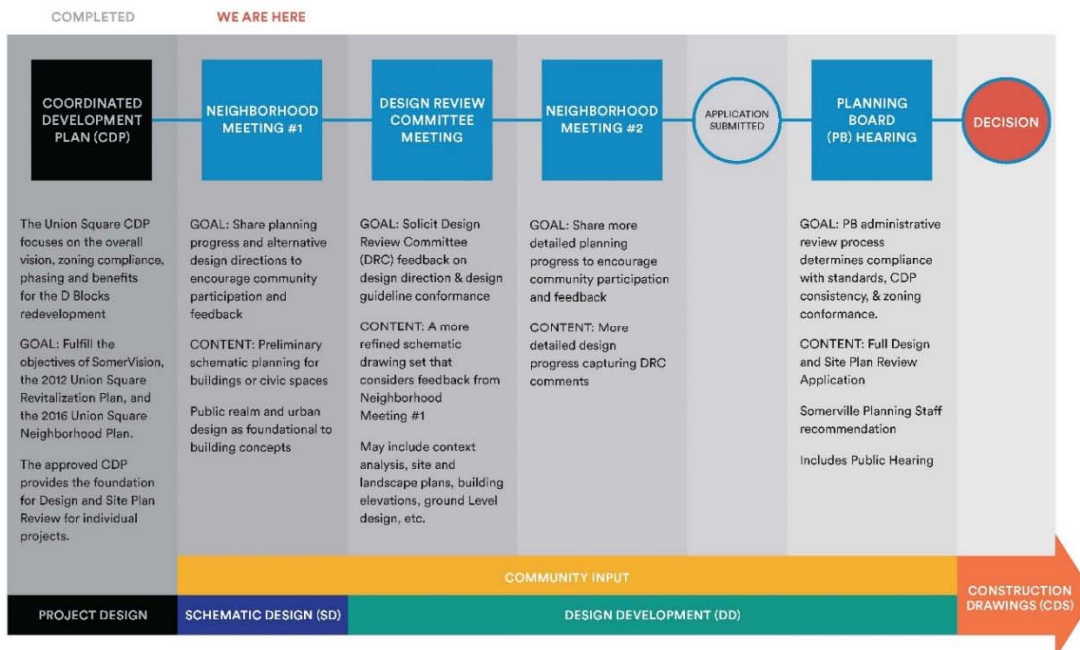
Transportation | Stantec

Walt Woo



### Design and Site Plan Review

Public process as design feedback loop



A project by Union Square Station Associates LLC (US2)





# PROJECT NARRATIVE

## Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### Process

- Project History
- CDSP Overview

### Urban Design

- Considerations
- Architectural Response
- Q: Comment Board

### Public Realm

- Upper Plaza Civic Space
- Lower Plaza Civic Space
- Alley
- Q: Comment Board

### Day in the Life

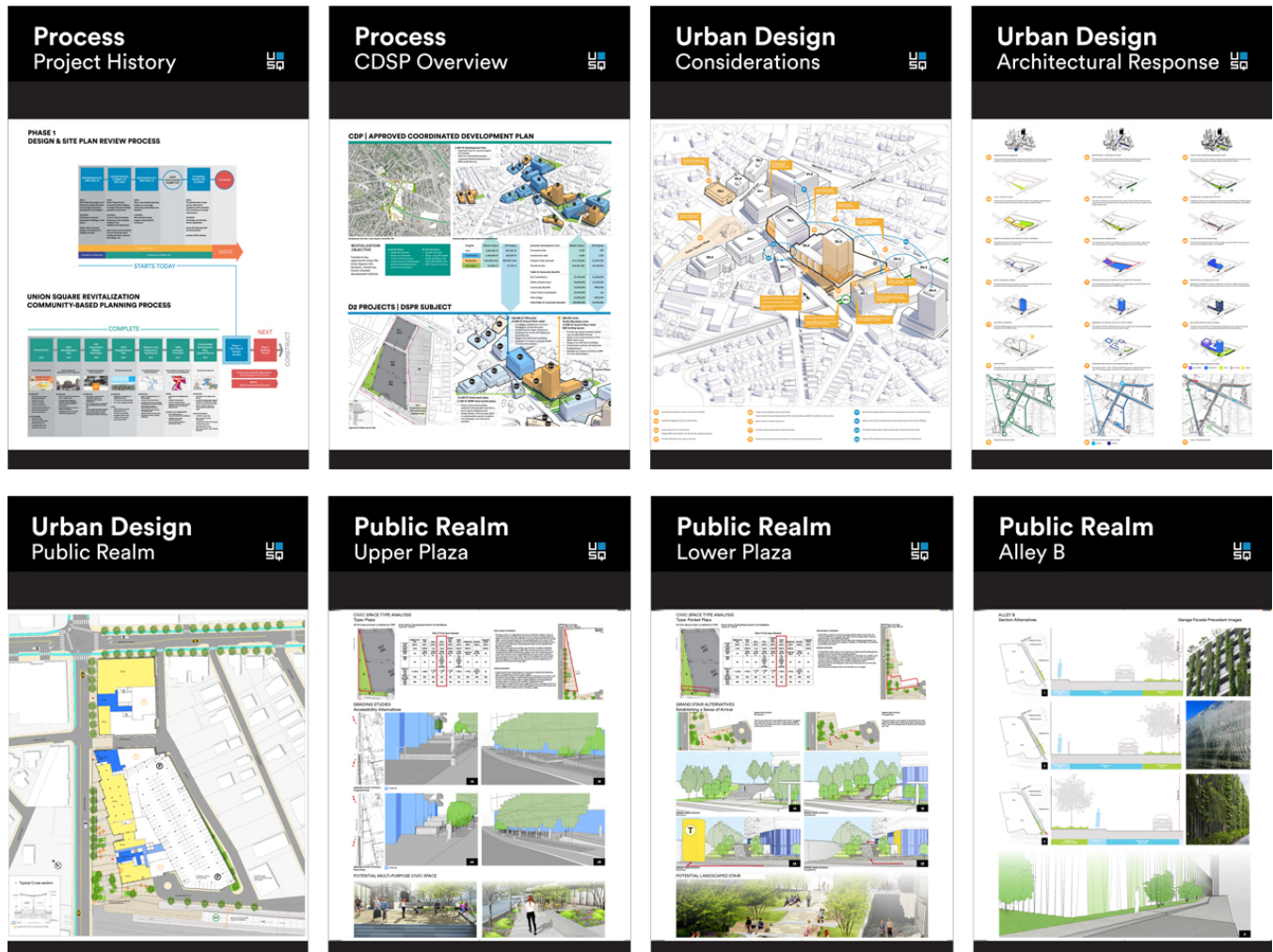
- Morning scenarios of engagement
- Evening scenarios of engagement
- Q: Comment Board

### Building Design

- D2.1 Massing Alternatives
- D2.2 Massing Alternatives
- D2.3 Massing Alternatives
- Q: Comment Board

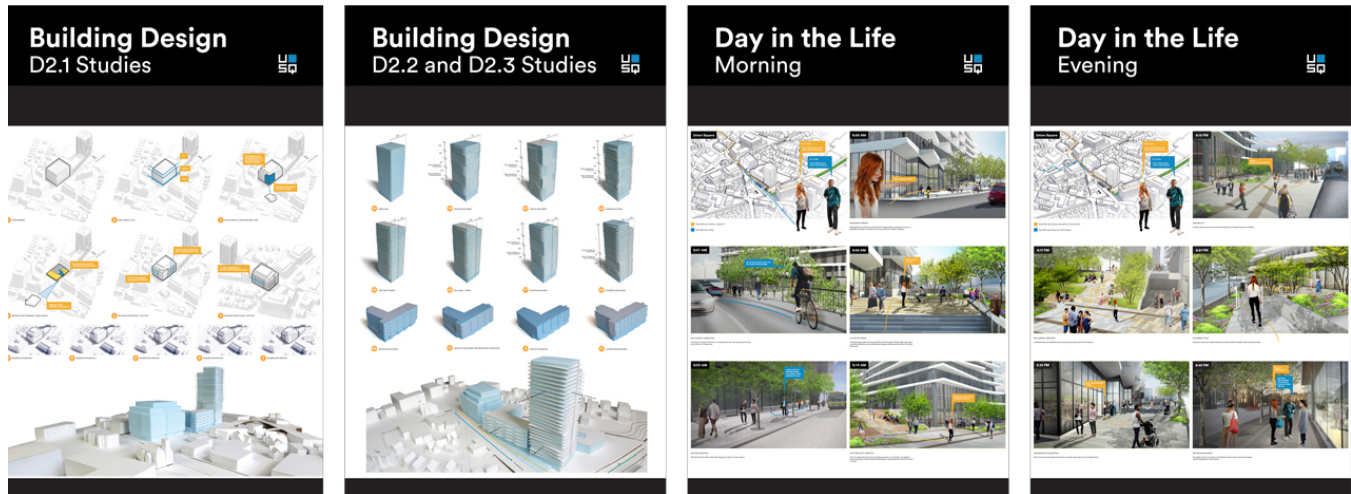
### Materials shown at meeting

The totality of materials presented throughout the design review process have been included as a separate appendix and are included within the applicant's digital submittal. The 4'x8' boards presented at Neighborhood Meeting 1 are included within this appendix at full scale while reduced versions are provided below for reference.



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### Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes



#### Description of any changes made as a result of the meeting

The meeting format allowed for simultaneous conversations across distinct areas of interest. Feedback was collected through written opinions during the meeting on 4'x8' boards available at each unique subject area and through an optional exit survey. In total, 16 design team members presented to 79 attendees. After the meeting, presentation content and an online survey provided additional opportunity to provide feedback. The active participation throughout directly informed changes to the composition of the plan. Prevailing feedback, paired with associated changes made as a result, is as follows

#### Civic Space

- *Do not go up to go down*
  - The terraced plaza that matched the Prospect Street grade was eliminated in its entirety, prompting a redesign of the public space and its interfacing with building and MBTA station elements
- *Maximize Open Space, More, Green, Less Building*
  - The building footprints were reduced, increasing the available Civic area by over 25%. Beyond the increased area, the removal of stairs and terracing enhanced the utility of the now larger area.
- *Enhance Identity of Union Square*
  - Rooted in the site's history, the concept of the 'Miller's River' emerged as the design driver and organizational element of the public space, integrating way-finding while improving accessibility to transit
- *Green Buffer between Prospect & Civic Space*
  - In concert with the redesign, landscaping was concentrated as the mediator between street and public space, introducing the sought-after buffer that could negotiate the changing grades, while also maintaining the sight lines that would promote access and ensure activation.
- *Facilitate a Variety of Activities*
  - Absent the restrictions imposed by the terracing concept, the 'Miller's River' scheme organized multiple and varied activity zones while providing for clear accessibility to and from the MBTA station

#### D2.1 - Commercial Building

- *More corner prominence*
  - Design evolution sought to prioritize corner as feature building element, prioritizing contextual relationship to historic Union Square Plaza. Continued shape-shifting resulted in emphasis of the corner in plan at grade, and in three dimensions at the building's roof through a deferential terracing back of mechanical components.

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### Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

- *No sterile buildings (Kendall Square) / Building materials should relate to Union Square*
  - Building materiality sought to be informed through the site's industrial past. Modern explorations of the timeless, industrial materials of glass and brick were investigated to root a contemporary building to the neighborhood's history.
- *Ground floor scale should relate to neighborhood*
  - The ground floor plan was shaped through continued study of neighborhood site lines to and from nearby landmarks: Union Square Plaza's historic firehouse, the historic post office, and the Prospect Hill Monument.

#### D2.2 - General Building

- *Architectural diversity / Ground Floor scale should relate to neighborhood*
  - Extension of the neighborhood's architectural identity is investigated through the horizontal packaging of upper level floors which remain distinct from the ground level
- *Sensitivity of sightlines*
  - Absent balconies, folds are introduced into the building plan's geometry in coordination with the adjacent plaza's 'Miller's River' concept, identifying and prioritizing opportunities to frame neighborhood landmarks (Prospect Hill Monument) while providing for intuitive wayfinding between neighborhood nodes present (Union Square Plaza) and future, the Green Line Station.
- *More public open space*
  - Building massing was consolidated around all building edges while the residential bar building's massing was evolved to give private building area back to the public realm. Over and above the 25% increase in Civic area, a plan 'pinch-point' between D2.2 and D2.1 was replaced with a generous point of arrival that better prioritized the pedestrian.

#### D2.3 - Podium Tower

- *Architectural diversity should relate to Union Square*
  - Continued study of the diversity of expressions, activities, and colors of Union Square architecture directly informed the continued evolution of the building's façade concept.
- *More active program at station and screening of non-active elements*
  - Tower position was shifted north to provide a larger area for integration with MBTA station. A dog run was introduced to screen non-active elements of the southern façade
- *Jagged balconies are uninviting*
  - A balcony concept, one of several massing alternatives investigated, is discarded while a base-middle-top 'puzzle' concept is developed to respond to unique vantage points
- *Sensitivity of sightlines*
  - Absent balconies, folds are introduced into the building plan's geometry in coordination with the adjacent plaza's 'Miller's River' concept, identifying and prioritizing opportunities to frame neighborhood landmarks (Prospect Hill Monument) while providing for intuitive wayfinding between neighborhood nodes present (Union Square Plaza) and future, the Green Line Station.

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Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### B1 | Design Review Committee

**Date:** August 20, 2018  
**Time:** 6:30 pm – 8:50 pm  
**Location:** Public Safety Building | Academy Room  
220 Washington Street, Somerville, MA



#### Roster of members of DRC in attendance

Sarah Radding  
Frank Valdes  
Jordan Smith  
Deborah Fennick (recused herself)

#### Summary of issues discussed

The second step in the DSPR process, engagement with the Design Review Committee occurred over four meetings from August through September 2018. The first meeting held on August 20<sup>th</sup>, occurred four months after the first Neighborhood Meeting, allowing the design teams time to incorporate feedback from the previous public meeting. The applicant and design team members made presentations to members of the committee and the public in attendance. These presentations were organized around thematic questions and/or feedback that came out of the first Neighborhood Meeting relative to each application, whether Civic Space, D2.3, D2.2, or D2.1. A question and answer period followed each section. A summary of the matters discussed by application is as follows:

#### Project Introduction

- How will D2 be a catalyst for revitalization?
- How will D2 be a multi-modal Hub?

#### Civic Space

- Summary of Feedback
- Flexibility to support matters, uniquely Union Square
- Solutions to adjacency challenges
- Achieving 25% more open space
- Role of connector of GLX to heart of Union Square



## PROJECT NARRATIVE

### Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

- Site history and 'river' concept
- Creation of multiple and varied activity zones
- Prioritizing accessibility

#### D2.3

- Summary of Feedback
- How can we create a new landmark for Union square?
- How can we extend Union Square's Identity?
- How can D2.3 become a gateway to Union Square?

#### D2.2

- Summary of Feedback
- How can we make a great gateway between the GLX and Union Square?
- How can we be a better Neighbor?
- How can we extend Somerville's Residential identity?

#### D2.1

- Summary of Feedback
- Transformation into a Vibrant Employment Center
- Urban Response in Context of Union Square
- Crafting the Public Realm
- Modern Expression of the Industrial Vernacular

The Design Review Committee made comments across the presentation content, prioritizing communication around the public realm. Provided the volume of material, the committee opted to take time to review and discuss the material at the next meeting. The meeting was subsequently opened up for public comment with several members of the public providing additional comments.

#### Materials shown at the meeting

Materials shown at the meeting were presented via digital slideshow and represented a synthesized overview of the more technical submittal provided to committee members for review in advance of the meeting. All application content was on hand at the meeting. The totality of materials presented to the committee has been included as a separate appendix and is included within the applicant's digital submittal.

#### Description of any changes made as a result of the meeting

Feedback from this meeting from both the Design Review Committee and members of the public was documented. With continued review and dialogue expected during the next committee meeting. Committee discussion centered around the public realm – the common element to each of the applications. Absent the formal recommendation of the Committee, no immediate changes were made to the deliverables.

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### B2 | Design Review Committee

**Date:** August 30, 2018  
**Time:** 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm  
**Location:** Aldermanic Chambers | City Hall  
93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA

#### Roster of members of DRC in attendance

Sarah Radding  
Frank Valdes  
Jordan Smith  
Deborah Fennick (recused herself)

#### Summary of issues discussed

No formal presentations were made during the second Design Review Committee meeting on August 30, 2018. The Design Review Committee continued dialogue around presentations and content previously delivered and identified a path for subsequent review at later dates.

#### Materials shown at the meeting

No new materials were provided for this meeting. Committee members made reference to material previously submitted by the applicant.

#### Description of any changes made as a result of the meeting

Subject to continued discussion and absent the formal recommendation of the Committee, no immediate changes were made to the deliverables.



## PROJECT NARRATIVE

Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### B3 | Design Review Committee

**Date:** September 13, 2018  
**Time:** 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm  
**Location:** Visiting Nurse Association | 3rd Floor Community Room  
259 Lowell Street, Somerville, MA

#### Roster of members of DRC in attendance

Sarah Radding  
Frank Valdes  
Jordan Smith  
Deborah Fennick (recused herself)

#### Summary of issues discussed

The third design review meeting prioritized committee review of the Civic Space. The Committee made use of the Design Review Checklist for 'Plaza' type Civic Spaces which governs general review criteria in accordance with the Union Square Overlay District Zoning. In total all seven design guidelines were discussed.

1. The appropriateness of the proposed design for the site relative to solar orientation and contextual integration with surrounding buildings and civic spaces
2. Maximization of utility of the civic space for its intended use through landscape and the accommodation of pedestrian desire lines
3. The appropriateness of irrigation and drainage systems to effectively reduce water use and minimize or eliminate storm water run off
4. The Plazas achievement of substantial hardscape areas complemented by planting beds and tree arrangements
5. The definition through plantings of the space as an outdoor room
6. The utility of planned benches and seating ledges and walls for the convenience and comfort of visitors relative to diverse functional plaza areas
7. The Integration of the plaza's perimeter so as to not impede movement and/or obscure visibility into the space

#### Materials shown at the meeting

No new materials were provided for this meeting. Committee members made reference to material previously submitted by the applicant.

#### Description of any changes made as a result of the meeting

Subject to continued discussion and absent the formal recommendation of the Committee, no immediate changes were made to the deliverables. However, early indications of areas to improve were understood through committee deliberations.

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### B4 | Design Review Committee

**Date:** September 27, 2018  
**Time:** 6:30 pm – 8:00 pm  
**Location:** Somerville High School Auditorium  
81 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA

#### Roster of members of DRC in attendance

Sarah Radding  
Frank Valdes  
Jordan Smith

#### Summary of issues discussed

The fourth design review meeting prioritized committee review of the building projects, D2.1, D2.2 and D2.3. The Committee made use of the Design Review Checklist for Buildings which governs general review criteria in accordance with the Union Square Overlay District Zoning. In total all 46 guidelines were discussed for applicability to each building project. Points of emphasis discussed for each building are summarized below:

- D2.1 – Commercial Building
  - The building's southwest corner and its relationship to both the street and the public realm, as terminus of the D2 Civic Space
  - The porosity of the building's ground floor and its engagement in all directions
  - Materiality of the building, with samples best able to communicate intent
  - Consideration of the roof as the fifth wall and the importance of view from Prospect Hill
- D2.2 – General Building
  - The alley and its significance for access for multiple modes. (Pedestrian, bike, vehicle)
  - Necessity of a roof plan to assist in understanding of buildings relationships on all sides
  - Parking in above-ground format driving building configurations and need for investigation of a below-grade alternative
- D2.3 – Point Tower
  - Articulation of base, middle, and top
  - Resolution of the building top potentially in concert with mechanical systems design evolution
  - Southern elevation and inappropriateness of dog park visibility upon arrival via Green Line
  - Lighting concept sufficiency for site wide safety and security
  - Residential lobby size relative to the tower's footprint

#### Materials shown at the meeting

Materials discussed were those previously submitted for technical review. In addition to these, the design teams issued responses to requests for information from the Committee a week prior to the meeting on September 21, 2018. These responses were issued digitally and were available for reference as needed during the meeting. In addition to these materials, and in anticipation of the discussion of each design guideline, a binder was provided to each committee member with each guideline adjacent the corresponding architectural response. As it was discussed, this material was projected digitally for reference by the public in attendance. Each building architect was available for dialogue and to answer any questions from the committee.

The totality of materials presented has been included as a separate appendix and is included within the applicant's digital submittal.

## PROJECT NARRATIVE

### Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

#### Description of any changes made as a result of the meeting

The Design Review Committee issued their recommendation for each application (Civic Space, D2.1, D2.2, and D2.3) on October 3, 2018, initiating a period of continued investigation and plan alterations. A summary of the feedback paired with associated investigations or changes made as a result, is below. Similarly, comments around the public realm were a prevailing theme throughout each review meeting. Although these do not pertain to any one application, their influence impacts all projects and are included here for continuity.

#### Public Realm

- *D2 Should consider the approach of users from all directions*
  - A network analysis was executed that assessed existing and future accessibility to transit, focusing on route alternatives through the D2 site to the Green Line Station from all points within a 10-minute walk of the transit node. A weighted distribution of unique path utilization rates informed the frequency of use of a given path. These rates informed prioritization of paths through the plaza and east along the southern portion of the site.
- *How does D2 manage multiple modes?*
  - The path utilization rates described above informed areas for pedestrian prioritization. Bicycle routes, previously incited to use the plaza to access bicycle storage facilities, were re-routed away from the plaza. A 'bicycle hub' comprised of public and private bicycle facilities with both short and long-term storage solutions was created to define a unique point of arrival for the mode.
- *How does D2 connect to the east?*
  - The Applicant met with the City's planning department, members of the community, non-profit groups, and other individuals pursuing a vision for development east of the D2 Block (Milk Square Development) in order to further understand this issue. With the D2 service alley intended to provide service to the rear of the future Allen Street buildings, the configuration of the southern portion of the D2 site was revisited.
  - Enhanced connectivity to the east was achieved through the realignment of the southern access road to the MBTA drop-off, and was done through sustained dialogue with neighborhood representatives who had organized to conceptualize future growth to the east.
- *Examine other Civic Space locations*
  - The applicant studied an alternative Civic Space location within the D2 site, consistent with a community preferred alternative that proposed underground parking. A cost estimate was prepared of the alternative scheme to better understand the feasibility of its implementation.
  - Unable to absorb the additional costs, elements of the alternative scheme were adopted into the proposal, among them:
    - the maintaining of sightlines to neighborhood landmarks,
    - a continuous and accessible ground plane,
    - the creation of open spaces further from Prospect Street,
    - a grand stair oriented toward the station to provide a path of travel and an opportunity for congregations
- *What about the proximity of the public space to Prospect Street and the risk of pollution?*
  - The size of the Civic Space was again increased to add greater separation from Prospect Street, while still ensuring the plan remained responsive to its frontage responsibilities towards this zoning-defined, 'pedestrian street'.
  - In addition to the increased horizontal separation, the vertical separation was also addressed. The elevation of the plaza was set at approximately the same elevation as the adjacent Union Square Station, allowing the southern 150 linear feet of plaza frontage to benefit from a vertical separation that is a minimum of seven feet below Prospect Street.

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- As a result, the most expansive area of plaza, where people are most inclined to congregate, will benefit from full southern exposure, maintain the greatest horizontal separation from Prospect Street at more than 100 feet to road centerline, and be between 10 and 14 vertical feet below vehicles traveling Prospect Street. In defining the space and further protecting it from the roadway, the vegetated landscape buffer planned between the Prospect Street sidewalk and the pedestrian plaza, will further support the plaza's safe activation and year-round utility.

#### Civic Space

- *How can the Civic Space's utility as an outdoor room be improved?*
  - The largest portion of the Civic Space and area of best solar exposure was redesigned to facilitate opportunities for public assembly. Landscaping elements of chairs, benches, planters and a potential art opportunity were reorganized to better frame and define its edges, while facilitating functional porosity for plaza users traversing the space.
- *Consider the user experience of the MBTA Station Platform*
  - The dog park, considered an inappropriate view from the station platform, was removed. This action, paired with the road realignment in coordination with neighbors to the east, resulted in a new green space immediately adjacent the station platform, exchanging a potentially unsightly use for an additional 3,000 SF of green and open space. This strategic shift, accommodates a future potential amalgamation of continuous open space with growth east of D2.

#### D2.1 – Commercial Building

- *What is the experience as you walk north from the station?*
  - A sequence of eye-level perspectives was developed to assist in perceiving the changing nature of the view corridor as a pedestrian approached from the south.
  - A study of sidewalk sections was conducted to confirm the adequacy of the proposed pedestrian right of way along Prospect Street
- *Consider redesign of D2.1's southwest corner*
  - Alternatives to the commercial building's southwest corner were developed to consider the view implications to area landmarks. The alternatives were considered for relative achievement of Design Guidelines, their impact to the pedestrian realm, and implications to the building as a whole.
  - Subsequent adjustments to the landscape were made to provide visual cues to pedestrians approaching the commercial building
  - Lastly, the access road was shifted away from the southwest corner, increasing the amount of open space adjacent the corner retail and the viability of outdoor seating.
- *How will the penthouse on D2.1 be designed?*
  - An area section capturing nearby Prospect Hill Monument through the proposed project is prepared to inform distant relationships. Multiple eye-level vantage points from Somerville Avenue and Prospect Street depict the design approach of the 'stepping back' of mechanical penthouses achieved through continued coordination of necessary building systems. Elevations identified for greatest dimensional set-back, north and west, prioritize the lowest building heights facing the area of greatest public import, Union Square Plaza.
  - Unique articulations to enclosure and accent elements are investigated, along with perforated panel components to assist in 'dissolving' the materiality vertically to the sky.
- *What will the view be from around Somerville?*
  - Renderings are developed from unique vantage points around Somerville

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### D2.2 – General Building

- *Explore D2.2's rear façade design in more detail*
  - The service alley was investigated in detail both in section and elevation. Changes in the vertical packaging of the façade increased the relationship to the Point Tower's 'puzzle' concept, helping break down the scale of the garage façade.
  - Alternative façade designs were studied for their potential to engage the pedestrian scale, with a concept for vertical vegetation to soften the elevation.

### D2.3 – Point Tower

- *How can we activate the zone at the southern edge of D2?*
  - The plan was reconfigured to introduce active areas to the southern façade of D2, introducing the bike parking hub and internal MBTA facilities at grade, while re-programming the building's interior uses on the floors above to deliver activity to outside observers.
- *D2.3 clearly has a base but needs more definition at the top*
  - Volumetric shifts at the roof were introduced to break down the scale and create a more dynamic roofline. Heights are coordinated so as to screen mechanical equipment through the façade's extending parapet.

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Public Process + Design Review Report and Minutes

### C | Neighborhood Meeting 2

**Date:** October 17, 2018  
**Time:** 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm  
**Location:** Albert F. Argenziano School | Cafeteria  
290 Washington Street, Somerville, MA



#### Summary of issues discussed

Neighborhood Meeting 2 represented the final step in the DSPR process for the proposed D2 projects. The meeting sought to a) provide planning evolution to date, b) present design evolution relative to Design Review Committee feedback themes, and c) receive community feedback on the design progress to date. The digital presentation was organized around feedback themes to date, prioritizing DRC comments or areas of inquiry to assist in highlighting changes made to the Civic Space and Buildings.

#### Public Realm

- D2 should consider the approach of users from all directions
- How does D2 manage multiple modes and connect to the east?
- Examination other Civic Space locations

#### Civic Space

- How can the Civic Space's utility as an outdoor room be improved?
- Consider the user experience of the MBTA station platform

#### D2.1

- What is the experience as you walk north from the station?
- Consider redesign of D2.1's south west corner
- How will the penthouse on D2.1 be designed?
- What will the view be from around Somerville?

#### D2.2

- Explore D2.2's rear façade design in more detail



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#### D2.3

- How can the zone at the southern edge of D2 be activated?
- D2.3 clearly has a base but needs more definition at the top

#### Materials shown at the meeting

At the request of the Ward Alderman, materials for Neighborhood Meeting #2 were provided on October 10, 2017, one week in advance of the noticed meeting. The digital content was distributed via the applicant's newsletter with all of the material also hosted for download from the applicant's website. During the night of the meeting, all DSPR material developed through that point in time was on hand. In addition to these materials, two new site models were introduced. One model reflected the evolved designs within the contextual model presented at Neighborhood Meeting #1 six months prior, while a second larger scale model of the planned Civic Space presented evolutions to the public realm and connectivity to the Green Line Station.

The totality of materials presented have been included as a separate appendix and are included within the applicant's digital submittal.

#### Description of any changes made as a result of the meeting

Neighborhood feedback for the meeting was provided through a question/answer/comment period immediately following the presentation. In addition, an optional digital exit survey was also extended to participants for additional comment. A link to the survey and meeting content was distributed to the applicant's newsletter subscribers and social media followers encouraging additional feedback. The meeting content and survey were hosted on the applicant's website for three months following the meeting to ensure those unable to participate could engage at their convenience. During this time, the applicant continued to engage with members of the public through different outreach events. These are described in the 'Additional Public Outreach' section later in this report. In all instances, material from Neighborhood Meeting #2 was on hand to offer project updates, and garner questions and comments.

Feedback received as a product of these outreach efforts has resulted in the proposal described elsewhere in this Design and Site Plan Review application. A few of the additional studies or changes made relative to the proposals are as follows

#### Civic Space

- Added additional open space to the plan. At over 21,000 SF, the proposed civic space is over 40% larger than the space approved during the master planning process. Beyond this area, an additional 2,800 SF of open space remains subject to coordination with the MBTA and will further increase the size of the area. Over and above these additions, another 3,200 SF of landscaped open space is proposed central to the block. Beyond increasing the amount of public open space, this green space address three community concerns:
  - Provides for additional open space away from Prospect Street
  - Provides for flexibility to accommodate future planning east of the D2 Block in coordination with the Milk Square Development, facilitating the amalgamation of future open space
  - Provides an improved point of arrival/departure for occupants of the MBTA station platform

#### D2.1

- Preliminary acoustic studies of the site's ambient noise were carried out. These sought to understand the impact of rail vibrations to the building and its occupants, and the impact of mechanical penthouse equipment on the surroundings.

#### D2.2

- The general building's façade was revised to differentiate it from its D2.3 neighbor. The change introduces a modification in elevation that pairs with a 'fold' in plan, helping to further break up the massing of the bar-building along its length.

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#### D2.3

- The corner retail at the tower's base was expended further east to enhance its relationship to the civic space's outdoor room. In concert with this expansion, the enclosed loading dock is moved out of the tower's footprint to decrease its presence on the civic space.
- Breaks are introduced within the tower façade to enhance the 'puzzle' concept of its base-middle-top elements

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## D | Additional Public Outreach

Concluded the formally required meeting steps, the applicant took advantage of the time between the second neighborhood meeting on October 17th and the end of the year to continue community outreach efforts. The more informal meetings provided new opportunities to engage with anyone interested in the project. These included:

#### Fluff Fest

**Date:** September 22, 2018  
**Time:** 3:00 pm – 7:00 pm  
**Location:** Union Square Plaza  
Somerville, MA

#### Union Square Farmer's Market

**Date:** September 15 and October 20, 2018  
**Time:** 9:00 am – 2:00 pm  
**Location:** Union Square Plaza  
Somerville, MA

#### Milk Square Development Meetings

East of the site of the DSPR subject proposals, numerous local organizations have been coordinating a potential future 'Milk Square Development'. US2 has participated in several meetings with representatives of these organizations so as to understand their planning objectives. The multiple points of contact have informed US2's proposed site plan, which was adapted to remain flexible to their goals.

#### ResiStat Coffee Hours

ResiStat Meetings are held every Spring and Fall in each ward in Somerville. City officials talk about updates to city laws, planning projects, and other topical issues. This city-wide series of meetings gave US2 an opportunity to piggyback onto the discussion of current happenings through the organization of pre-ResiStat coffee hours. These pre-meeting were hosted by US2 as a means to discuss the project's current status, design progress and to answer any questions about the Union Square Revitalization. This more casual, city-wide effort was an opportunity to engage with Somerville residents who might not live in Union Square or be as familiar with the project.

Dates and locations of coffee hours, were coordinated with ResiStat meetings and included:

#### Ward 2

**Date:** October 30, 2018  
**Time:** 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm  
**Location:** Block 11  
Somerville, MA

#### Ward 4

**Date:** November 13, 2018  
**Time:** 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm  
**Location:** Style Cafe  
Somerville, MA

#### Ward 6

**Date:** November 1, 2018  
**Time:** 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm  
**Location:** Diesel Cafe  
Somerville, MA

#### Ward 7

**Date:** November 15, 2018  
**Time:** 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm  
**Location:** Knight Moves Cafe  
Somerville, MA

#### Ward 3

**Date:** November 7, 2018  
**Time:** 5:00 pm – 6:30 pm  
**Location:** Somerville Public Library  
Somerville, MA

#### Union Square Holiday Stroll

Geared towards families, the Holiday Stroll is an annual event organized by Union Square Main Streets. The Stroll highlights the diverse offerings of businesses in Union Square with over 40 businesses participating. US2 was a sponsor and participant

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in the event, sharing information about the USQ project while kicking-off the USQ Can Drive – an effort to collect food for the Somerville Homeless Coalition in association with Union Square Main Streets.

**Date:** December 8, 2018  
**Time:** 12:00 pm – 4:00 pm  
**Location:** Workbar, 31 Union Square  
Somerville, MA

#### USQ & A

Marking the end of the food-drive, USQ hosted a year end question and answer session at Bow Market. Like the coffee hours, the event facilitated conversations on the project's latest details and provided an opportunity for continued feedback.

**Date:** December 18, 2018  
**Time:** 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm  
**Location:** Workbar, 31 Union Square  
Somerville, MA