



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

AUGUST 27, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Luisa Oliveira	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Frank Valdez	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>	

The meeting was held via GoToWebinar and was called to order by Co-Chair, Sarah Lewis at 7:05pm and adjourned at 8:20pm.

Others present: Senior Planner Dan Bartman, *Planning & Zoning*
Senior Planner Cortney Kirk, *Public Space & Urban Forestry*

DESIGN REVIEW: 71-72 Union Square

(Continued from July 22, 2020)

Adam Dash, Principal Attorney from Adam Dash & Associates, introduced the development proposal site and referenced the events of the previously held design review meeting. William Chalfant, Project Manager from Khalsa Design Inc., presented new information concerning the changes that were made to façade design option #1 based on feedback provided by the Commission at the previous meeting. Particular detail was provided concerning materials, façade relief, articulation, windows, and a wall mural.

The Commission remarked that the revised option #1 was an improvement over previous versions and that the building now has a contemporary interpretation of the use of brick without trying to replicate the historic architectural styles of neighboring buildings. Member Fennick questioned the design team about the relief provided by the building's brick pilasters and the shadow lines provided by the Flemish bond detail located under the upper story windows. Member Arbaugh suggested the ground story canopy appeared thin and could be made thicker, which would also improve the legibility of the signage. Member Fennick suggested keeping the canopy as is, but to locate the signage elsewhere since there are other options for commercial signs provided by the zoning ordinance. Member Valdez requested the Applicant provide material samples for the Commission to approve the color selection of final materials chosen by the design team.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh seconded by Member Valdez, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that design guidelines 6.2.12.a.ii and 6.2.12.a.iv (specifically related to the building's pilasters) be considered priority design guidelines as the building progresses through design development.

Following a motion by Member Valdez seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that all of the applicable design guidelines have been met by the recommended design option and overall design character of the building.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

DESIGN REVIEW: 152-158 Broadway

Michael LeBlanc, Principal Architect from Utile, Inc., presented an overview of the proposed 5-story, net zero ready General Building with 45 dwelling units and 4,100 sf of ground story commercial space. The materiality and façade articulation of neighboring structures was reviewed and three façade design options were presented as required by the Urban Design Commission's Rules of Procedure & Policy. Façade design option #1 was identified by the design team as their preferred option.

Commission member Fennick asked for further information about the fiber cement panel comprising the majority of the façade. Mr. LeBlanc explained that the material is through color and will maintain its color over time and that although the fiber cement is itself about ½" thick, the detail of the window assemblies provided about 8-10" of depth between the face of the fiber cement boards and the actual plane of the window glass. Commission member Arbaugh commented that façade design alternate A appeared heavy and out of characteristic with the surrounding neighborhood and that façade design alternate B was a nice design, but felt more appropriate for an civic or institutional building such as a library and create a focal point inappropriate for an general building (with upper story residential). Mr. Leblanc asked for the Commission's advice concerning the materiality of the recessed portions of the 5th floor penthouse façade. Commission member Valdez advised the design team that the colored "Oko Skin" material should turn the corner onto the sidewall of each recessed portion (as shown graphically). Member Valdez raised concerns about the proposed design of the façade masking the ground floor transformer room and whether the design shown will withstand demands of the utility company as the project progresses through to construction and occupancy. He identified past experience with N-Star and Eversource requiring changes to transformer room enclosures from what was originally envisioned due to requirements for air infiltration, size, clearances, etc. and expressed regret if the design of the ground story were to completely change due to the location of the transformer. The design team committed to collaborating with the utility companies to ensure a great solution exists. Member Valdez emphasized that when a transformer room is located immediately behind the façade, that all parties involved must remain in good communication and work together to the make sure the resulting design does not disturb the public realm. Samples of the final materials were requested for review by the Commission. Director of Public Space and Urban Forestry (PSUF) and Commission Co-Chair Luisa Oliveira asked for clarification about the landscape design at the rear of the property, including the dog relief area, and reminded the design team of PSUF departmental standards and landscape requirements applicable to the development. Planning & Zoning Director and Co-Chair Sarah Lewis expressed a wish to have seen multiple options presented for the ground story.

Following a motion by Member Valdez seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend the preferred façade design option for further design development.

Following a motion by Member Fennick seconded by Member Valdez, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend the preferred ground floor elevation for further design development.

Following a motion by Member Valdez seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend that the Planning Board consider 4.3.12.n of the MR5 design guidelines a priority for the proposed building.

Following a motion by Member Valdez seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that all of the design guidelines have been met by the recommended design options for the façade and ground story.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

NOTE: Recorded votes from August 27 have been adjusted to correctly reflect the results of the Commission's voting membership.