



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

MARCH 8, 2022, MEETING NOTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>
Cortney Kirk	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>
Frank Valdes	Member	<i>Present</i>
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Absent</i>
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>
Tim Talun	Member	<i>Present</i>
Tim Houde	Member	<i>Present</i>

City staff present: Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning), Charlotte Leis (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm and adjourned 8:23pm.

PUBLIC MEETING: 21-23 Francesca Avenue (P&Z 21-031)

The applicant team presented their proposal to renovate an existing backyard barn to establish a backyard cottage. They noted that the hay loft will be restored, roof windows and sky lights will be added, and various landscape improvements will be applied including permeable pavers along the driveway. Materials include clapboard finishes and clad wood windows.

The Commission discussed that there is minor impact to the public realm, how they felt the design was well done with a thoughtful approach, and how they are unsure why the UDC is still reviewing backyard cottages at all.

Co-Chair Lewis stated that Staff is currently rewriting the Rules and Regulations for all the Boards and Commissions, and this is one of the topics of discussion. There may need to be a Zoning Amendment put forth to remove backyard cottage review from the purview of the UDC.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Valdes, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend the façade design.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend that the design guidelines have been met.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

OTHER BUSINESS: 3-5 Hawkins Street (P&Z 20-021) Material Board Review

The applicant team gave an overview of the project and reviewed each material on the board.

The Commission examined the material board against the elevation rendering. The Commission had difficulty deciphering the color of certain materials and asked for clarity between the approved design and the materials so

that they can see the relationship between the materials and where they will be on the actual building. The Commission suggested that the application team show side by side elevations and materials shown together, as well as showing both buildings framing the open space.

Co-Chair Lewis suggested the applicant team submit the Commission's requested items via email considering material board reviews do not actually require a vote. Alternatively, the applicant team can return to the next UDC meeting with the requested items to give the Commission a chance to review and discuss the materials further.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue the material board review to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

Member Arbaugh recused himself from the meeting.

PUBLIC MEETING: 45 Broadway (P&Z 21-035)

(continued from 14 September 2021)

The applicant team presented an overview of the project and the updated design since the last design review in September 2021. They presented three façade options, as well as landscape, streetscape, and site plans.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the location of the entrance, the improved streetscape, the possibility of the applicant team working with the DOT to relocate curbs and extend the bike infrastructure onto Lombardi Street, the landscaping against the building, the building elevation, and the need of a more developed egress plan for the ground floor especially onto to DOT property. The applicant team confirmed that they have been in communication with the DOT about the ground floor egress. The Commission would like the issue finalized with the DOT prior to the approval of the project, as it affects the public realm and landscaping plan. The applicant team stated that they are unsure of the timeline of the agreement, as communications with the DOT can be slow at times.

The Commission felt it would be important to see more information on the retaining wall, as the renderings do not do justice to what is visible to the public. The renderings, as is, show a generous sidewalk wrapping around Lombardi Street, but they are unsure if this is actually being proposed.

The Commission and applicant team continued the discussion with the window glazing plan, bike parking, the need for a better understanding of the materiality on all the facades of the building, and how further articulation is needed overall in the design.

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

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Houde, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to continue the design review to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

PUBLIC MEETING: 51 Broadway (P&Z 21-034)

(continued from 14 September 2021)

The applicant team presented an overview of the project and the updated design since the last design review in September 2021. They explained that they looked at how they could move the loading dock location, which led to obtaining additional land on Benedict Ave. This will allow for more continuous retail/ACE space along Broadway. They plan to have a structured deck along Benedict Ave, which will create an opportunity for a community garden for the neighborhood. The team presented three façade options, as well as the landscape plan, streetscape plan, and bike parking.

The Commission and applicant team discussed the location of the main entrance, how the second means of egress through the loading dock does not seem viable due to safety issues, how the team needs to communicate with the Public Space and Urban Forestry Division regarding the proposed community garden, and how PSUF advises applicants to fit within the existing streetscape conditions with regards to furnishing zones.

The Commission inquired about 55 Broadway and how this proposal's landscape plan is literally going right up next to that house. Co-Chair Lewis noted that the team is also going before the Historic Preservation Commission because they are proposing to demolish half of the duplex and leave the other half in place. The Commission is concerned that it might not be viable to keep the 55 Broadway side of the duplex. The team confirmed that there will need to be a series of retaining walls put in place to accomplish their proposed plans. The Commission would like to understand more about how they plan to accomplish this with specific examples and how the applicant team is impacting 55 Broadway, as someone owns and lives at that property.

The Commission and applicant team discussed that the glass area at the far right of the building is not successful and is not integrated into the rest of the building design on all three options, the proposed materiality, and how the Commission would like to see contextual elevations showing the entire block to understand the scale of the surrounding neighborhood. The Commission spoke about how this is a gateway site into Broadway and East Somerville, so this should be a transition building into the taller scale district. They noted that they would like to see additional variation introduced to the design, including a more solid elevation on Benedict Ave as it leads to the neighborhood. They continued the conversation with the details of the loading area including the possibility of adding a door at the street and the location of the trash/recycling.

The Commission was split between the preferred façade option and the alternate 1 façade option. They would like to see the full contextual elevations and more consideration of the materiality prior to deciding on one option. The Commission noted that the side of the building facing I93 is not just the back of the building, as it is highly visible to thousands of people every day, so a lot of consideration should be given to that side as well.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to continue the design review to the next regularly scheduled meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. To review a full recording, please contact the Planning, Preservation & Zoning Division at planning@somervillema.gov.