



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

62 Prospect St: Civic Space

January 5, 2021

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on October 26, 2021 and November 23, 2021 to review the Central Plaza Civic Space type proposed at 62 Prospect St in the High Rise zoning district in Union Square neighborhood development 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 if applicable design guidelines are satisfied
2. 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 civic space designs. Recommendations that were incorporated into the design through the review process included the following:

- Explore ways to incorporate more “fun” into the design concept, consider the use of color and other elements to help the space find its identity.
- Look for ways to incorporate “cut glass” into the park design to connect with the sites history of being a glass factory.
- More detail on the grading is needed to understand where there is a potential for a sloped walk vs. a ramp.
- Need more details on what the space will look like a night.
- Explore ways to reduce some of the hardscape so the space does not create a heat island effect.

Following a presentation of the revised design by the Applicant and review of the design guidelines for the Central Plaza Civic Space type, the Commission provided the following final guidance and recommended modifications:

- Space needs to be “funky and creative,” keep the weird moments in the design.
- Additional detail needed on “interactive feature” included at southern end of civic space. Applicant suggested a water feature could be included in the program element which was supported by the UDC.
- Look for ways to incorporate “wow” moments into the space, especially at the northern end of the park facing the GLX station and Union Square beyond. The

proposed pavilion could accomplish this if larger and more expressive. The Commission was also open to the exploration of other sculptural concepts to be included.

- Scale of pass through is too small to make both sides of the civic space feel connected, especially from northern end of civic space where grade is higher. Explore increasing the scale of this in coordination with the adjacent proposed lab building.
- Lighting of the civic space needs to be developed further to make space feel more welcoming and unique in Union Square neighborhood.

The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that all of the design guidelines for a Central Plaza Civic Space type were satisfied, voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend the additional guidance identified above and voted unanimously (3-0) that the Planning Board be made aware that the UDC did not review an integrated plan of how the proposed Civic Space will be integrated into the broad plan for the surrounding streets, sidewalks and crosswalks.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Andrew Arbaugh
Debora Fennick
Tim Talun

Attest, by the meeting Co-Chairs:

Cortney Kirk
Luisa Oliveira



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

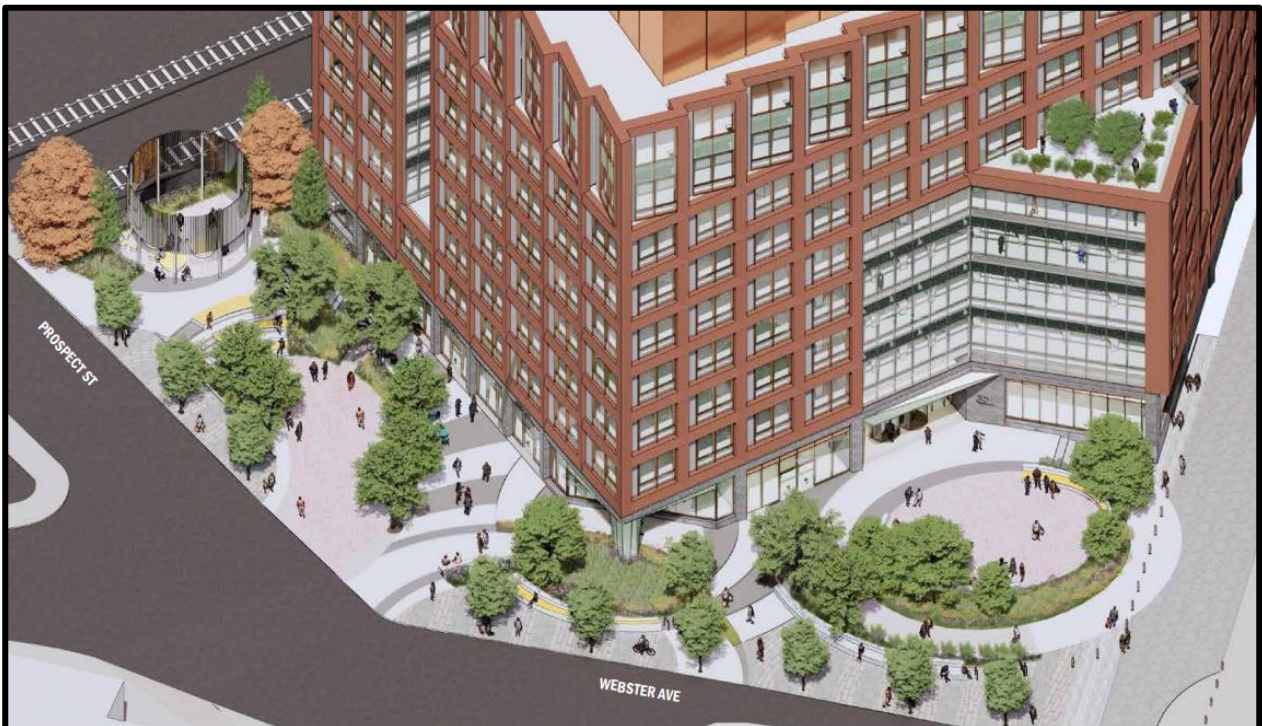
APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

CENTRAL PLAZA			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
A plaza should contain substantial areas of hardscape complemented by planting beds or arrangements of trees with open canopies.	YES (4-0)		
Plantings should contribute to the spatial definition of the space as an outdoor room.	YES (4-0)		
Benches and seating ledges or walls should be designed for the convenience and comfort of visitors, located in support of gathering spaces and along pedestrian circulation paths, but should be out of the flow of pedestrian traffic.	YES (4-0)		
The perimeter of a plaza should be well integrated into its surroundings and free from fences, hedges, and other barriers that would impede movement into the space and obscure visibility from adjacent streets or building frontages.	YES (4-0)		

Central Plaza Design Evolution



October 26, 2021



November 23, 2021