



City of Somerville

# URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

## DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

**394 McGrath Hwy**

11/1/2021

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on September 14, 2021 and October 5, 2021 to review an **Apartment Building** proposed at 394 McGrath Hwy in the Mid Rise 4 (MR4) zoning district in the Prospect Hill 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 façade design concepts. Recommendations that were incorporated into the design through the review process included the following:

- Angled bays need to be extended to the ground-story of the façade.
- Connect the materiality between the lower and upper floors of the façade.
- Further explore the garage door design and its relationship to the pedestrian experience.
- To improve security, explore moving the location of the long-term bike parking.
- Explore moving the location of the building's trash facilities to another location in the building.
- Pull building back slightly to make more room for a public sidewalk and increase green space along frontage area.

Following a presentation of the design by the Applicant and review of the design guidelines for the MR4 district, the Commission provided the following final guidance and recommended modifications:

- Further refinement of the façade windows and bays is needed.
- Look at ways to bring more natural light into the two egress staircases on the west and east side of the building.

- Metal panel materiality needs to be detailed further for its long-term design success.

The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend applicants preferred façade option, voted unanimously (3-0) that all of the MR4 design guidelines were satisfied and to prioritize MR4 architectural design guideline R, and voted unanimously (3-0) that applicant needs to update landscape plans and present in front of the UDC prior to Planning Board approval.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Tim Talun  
Deborah Fennick  
Andrew Arbaugh

Attest, by the meeting Co-Chairs:

Cortney Kirk  
Sarah Lewis




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

MR4– Mid-Rise 4			
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)		
The facade of buildings with five (5) or more stories should be visually divided into, at least, a horizontal tripartite division (a base, middle, and top). The horizontal divisions may not shift up or down across the width of the facade.	YES (3-0)		

**MR4– Mid-Rise 4**

<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<b>SATISFIED?</b>	<b>PRIORITY?</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
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)		
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)		

MR4– Mid-Rise 4			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
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)	<b>YES</b>	
Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS) should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		

## Preferred Façade Concept Design Review Evolution



September 14, 2021



October 5, 2021

**Further Exploration:  
Façade Windows and Bays, metal panel detailing and natural light incorporation  
into egress stairs**

