



City of Somerville
URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION
City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

MARCH 14, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on GoToWebinar.

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

City staff present: Andrew Graminski (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning), Wendy Sczechowicz (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:04pm and adjourned at 7:39pm.

PUBLIC MEETING: 35 McGrath (P&Z 21-151)
(continued from 28 February 2023)

Co-Chair Lewis stated that Member Fennick was not present at the last meeting but has since watched the recording and signed an affidavit. She also reviewed the reasons for the continuance from the last meeting and noted that the Commission will need to vote on a massing option, façade option, and whether the design guidelines have been met.

The applicant team presented an updated design proposal, including two massing options to address the comments made at the last meeting, as well as three façade options for each massing option, floor plans, and landscaping plans.

The Commission agreed that massing option B's architectural form and faceting would do well in the location, how the unique topography of the site is an opportunity to have it read in the building and use it as a generator for the overall form, how the unique massing would work well with the neighboring building, and how the screening has the potential to be very interesting.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend massing option B.

The Commission then proceeded to discuss the façade options, agreeing that concept B option 3 was the most elegant because of the diagonal lines, how the change in facets reinforce the form and height, and how the penthouse must look like it is part of the building to ensure option 3's success. The Commission and applicant team discussed changing the color of the garage door at the ground level to add more contrast and to make the garage bay appear smaller, the possibility of applying a glass curtain wall elsewhere on the building to make the building more 3-dimensional, how elements oriented to other directions in which pedestrians arrive to the site should be

considered such as from the community path in the back of the building, and if the applicant team would be interested in alternating solid and glass vertical pieces.

The Commission and applicant team then discussed the landscape plan, seating options, how the planters along the building should be more robust to match the scale of the building, the plan for the crosswalks and how the team will have to work with MassDOT to finalize the plan, that the Commission recommend that the team use native plants, and the ongoing maintenance plan for the landscaping especially in the back of the building.

The Commission recommended projecting the cantilever out over the garage entrance, much like it is over the entrance and bike parking, to reduce the visual prominence of the garage entry.

The Commission also noted that they are happy with the design changes that the team has made thus far and the direction that they are going, but at this point they feel that the design is at a conceptual stage rather than a finished product. They agreed that the team has been receptive to the Commission's comments and so they felt comfortable moving the project forward with additional design guidance.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Ruane, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve façade concept B option 3.

The Commission reviewed the design guidelines for the high-rise district and noted that they do not feel that some of the design guidelines have been met yet. They stated that the team is moving in the right direction, but they have not flushed out all the details of the project yet. Staff reviewed each of the design guidelines for the high-rise district, one by one. The Commission felt that more refinement of the pedestrian and tenant experience was needed, as well as the materiality of the penthouse.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) that the project met the design guidelines, except guidelines M, N, Q, S, and U.

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) that additional design guidance be incorporated into the design and will be provided to the applicant team by Staff at a later date.

RESULT:	RECOMMENDATIONED
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NOTICE: These minutes constitute a summary of the votes and key discussions at this meeting. A recording of these proceedings can be accessed at any time by using the registration link at the top of the meeting agenda.