



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

26 AUGUST 2024 SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

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

City staff present: Madison Anthony (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Stephen Cary (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm and adjourned at 7:06pm.

OTHER BUSINESS: SomerNova

The Commission discussed the application material from Rafi Properties to the City Council for a zoning overlay text amendment and map amendment for the area known as SomerNova on Somerville Avenue. The Land Use Committee and the Planning Board held a joint hearing and have left comments open until the end of this month. This will be taken up by the Planning Board at its 5 September 2024 meeting. The original designations in this area are part of SomerVision 2040. This location is not within a transit area. The concept of an overlay district, which allows for increased density and additional entitlements in exchange for community benefits, was discussed.

The Commission discussed the proposed development's plan in terms of open space and the design guidelines. The Commission discussed the proposed civic space amount, quality, and that the orientation may be problematic. The Commission also discussed the proposed sidewalk setback and following the guidelines for street tree plantings. There was a suggestion regarding establishing a minimum open space percentage and an emphasis that open space should carry the same weight as buildings. The Commission also discussed potential uses for the buildings.

The Commission discussed submitting a letter by Friday, 30 August 2024, detailing any concerns and offering to meet jointly with the Land Use Committee and/or Planning Board on this topic.

OTHER BUSINESS: Discussion of Topics for Future Meetings

This topic was not addressed at this time.

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 urbandesign@somervillema.gov.