



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

8 OCTOBER 2024 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

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

City staff present: Emily Hutchings (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning); Madison Anthony (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

Emily Hutchings sat in as Acting Co-Chair of the meeting.

The meeting was called to order at 6:08pm and adjourned at 6:50pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the 10 September 2024 meeting minutes.

UDC RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVIEW: ASQ Block 9

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to approve the Design Recommendation for Assembly Block 9.

RESULT:

APPROVED

DESIGN REVIEW: 181 Pearl Street

(continued from 10 September 2024)

It was noted that the Commission previously voted on Option 1 for the massing and façade but still needs to vote on design guidelines and any additional design guidance.

The applicant team reviewed items it heard from the Commission at the last meeting including how the landscape and streetscape can be improved and better integrated with the architecture; how the metal panels on the facade can be detailed to create an elegant design while being careful about glare; how more variation can be added to the West facade; what the experience is when entering the site from the street with the stoop culture of the

neighborhood highlighted; additional colors to be considered; and what kind of roof is required to support future PV.

The applicant team explained that, regarding the landscape and streetscape design, a planter is now proposed along both the Pearl Street and the Dana Street facades. The planters are filled with pollinators and native plant species aligned with the Somerville Pollinator Action Plan, and the planters are clad in a red brick similar to others in the neighborhood. These planters buffer the building from the sidewalk, creating a soft edge, consistent with the way houses and buildings in the neighborhood meet the sidewalk.

Regarding the façade details, the applicant team explained the finish has been changed from anodized aluminum to a mica based coating, which gives the same dynamic color change and shadow play, while being less glare prone. The corners are proposed to be turned using standard pieces to create a reentrant corner which is elegant and true to the material. Also, the direction of the panel is flipped from floor-to-floor, creating dynamic shadow play on the façade.

The applicant team explained that the entry façade was reworked to add more variation. The breeze block wall previous along the property line was also changed to a red brick to create more of an outdoor room. The intention is to pull the stoop culture of the neighborhood throughout the site. A generous sized bench is now proposed on Pearl Street, at the entrance to the property, situated beneath a new oak tree.

The applicant team explained that the color of the balconies has been addressed by adding more color to areas where people touch the building. The railings are proposed to be a green color, and the window sashes are an orange/red that complement the brick planters.

The applicant team verified that the specialized energy code requires the roof to be solar ready and the design has been updated to accommodate that requirement. This is otherwise an unoccupiable roof. There is a provision in the Zoning Ordinance which states that unoccupiable architectural features are exempt from the green roof requirement.

Regarding the larger zones of planting, the applicant team explained that they tried to maximize the amount of planting within the property line to increase the Green Score in that way.

The Board expressed support for the changes made. There was discussion regarding additional design guidance recommending the continued evaluation of how light can be integrated into the entrance and the canopy, continued evaluation of the materials of the canopy, and that there be a condition requiring the review of materials prior to submission of application for a Building Permit.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to incorporate the additional design guidance as described.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that the building has met the Design Guidelines for the MR3 District.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

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.