



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

14 JANUARY 2025 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

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

City staff present: None

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm and adjourned at 8:00pm.

It was noted that Cheri Ruane has resigned from her position. That member position and two alternate positions are currently open.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted (3-0-1), with Member Fennick abstaining, to approve the 12 November 2024 meeting minutes.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVIEW: 181 Pearl Street

Following a motion by Member Talun, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the design recommendations for 181 Pearl Street.

RESULT:

APPROVED

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REVIEW: 3 Craigie Street & 67 Somerville Avenue

The Commission discussed its recommendations on this item, including that the transformer should be outside of the 12' sidewalk area; that there be a more durable material used where the building meets the ground; and that the rendering should reflect the actual structural configuration of the building, noting the depth of the structure along the perimeter of the second floor does not appear to be accurately depicted. The depth should be minimized to preserve the design intent of what has been presented, and that there is a thickness to the balcony.

Following a motion by Member Valdes, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted (3-0-1), with Member Fennick abstaining, to approve the design recommendations for 3 Craigie Street & 67 Somerville Avenue, as amended.

RESULT:

APPROVED

DESIGN REVIEW: 44 White Street

The applicant team reviewed the proposed plans and landscape design. The proposed building contains three residential units, as well as a 440 s.f. roof deck that belongs to unit #3 with a small green roof area. The applicant team reviewed the three proposed façade options, with option #1 being the preferred option. It shows a minimal use of materials, oversized balconies, and a continuous line at the corners between the first and second floors.

The Commission discussed the different options and recommendations for conditions. There was discussion regarding the project potentially needing to comply with the Passive House requirements. There was agreement that Option #3 seems to be the most successful compositionally. There was a suggestion to include a street tree or planting within the setback zone to the street from the building. It was noted that parking is not required for this project, due to its location to a nearby MBTA station. The Commission discussed not having parking on the site, if it is not required.

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Valdes, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to recommend Option #3 as the preferred massing option.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Valdes, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this hearing to a future meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

DESIGN REVIEW: 151 Linwood Street

The applicant team explained that the existing U-Haul facility no longer meets their desired growth and prosperity goals. U-Haul is looking to transform the existing building into something more state of the art that blends in with the growth of the existing neighborhood. Some of the site improvements made after the last Commission meeting include cement concrete sidewalks along an area in front of the building, two shade trees, and three pedestrian benches along Joy Street. A 4' wide pedestrian concrete walkway is proposed to connect Joy Street to a crosswalk and to Linwood Street. The team also notes that a mural wall, approximately 100' in length and 8' high, is proposed within the new drive aisle, adjacent to the pedestrian walkway, where some benches will be located. The mural will be periodically refreshed, and multiple artists will have an opportunity to display their art. The applicant team reviewed the proposed planting plan and noted that the project has a proposed Green Score of 0.23. Three façade options were presented.

The Commission asked about the Neighborhood Plan for Brickbottom. It was stated that this was adopted in August.

The Commission discussed the need to create a building that is appropriate for the character of the Brickbottom District.

The Commission expressed some concern with the proposed options and noted that they all seem to have the same composition. They stated that there may be a missed opportunity in incorporating some of the corporate brand items into creating a building that will be appropriate in the future. There is more information needed that the renderings are not currently showing. It was noted that a fake brick or stucco material is not allowed on a public realm building. There was discussion regarding seeing all of the materials before approval. Regarding the landscape plan, there was suggestion to place the path in back of the curb and moving the plantings behind the pathway. There was concern expressed regarding who would manage the refreshing of the mural. Information was

requested regarding the lighting proposed along the pathway. It was noted that this is a large building with a large footprint and there could be a possibility for something on the roof.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue this hearing to a future meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

OTHER BUSINESS: Re-Appointment Process

It was noted that, per the Mayor's letter, each person currently on the Commission has served more than two terms. Thus, these positions need to be readvertised to the community. This process will be done via alphabetical order, leaving the Urban Design Commission toward the end of the list. Member Valdes is the only one whose term has not yet expired. Member Arbaugh noted that he does not plan to reapply. There have not yet been any applications for the two open alternate positions.

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.