



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

28 OCTOBER 2025 MEETING MINUTES

This meeting was conducted via remote participation on Zoom.

NAME	TITLE	STATUS	ARRIVED
Sarah Lewis	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Estello Raganit	Co-Chair	<i>Present</i>	
Frank Valdes	Member	<i>Absent</i>	
Deborah Fennick	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Andrew Arbaugh	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Tim Talun	Member	<i>Present</i>	
Martin Pavlinic	Alternate	<i>Present</i>	

City staff present: Lexie Payne (Planning, Preservation, & Zoning)

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm and adjourned at 7:00pm.

GENERAL BUSINESS: Meeting Minutes

Following a motion by Member Fennick, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the 23 September 2025 meeting minutes, as amended.

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Pavlinic, the Commission voted (3-0-1), with Member Fennick abstaining, to approve the 14 October 2025 meeting minutes.

DESIGN RECOMMENDATION: 1 Washington Street

The Commission noted that the same amendments made to the 23 September 2025 meeting minutes should also be made to the 1 Washington Street Design Recommendation.

DESIGN REVIEW: 32-40 White Street

The applicant team explained that these two parcels are proposed to be combined to create one project. There are two existing single-story buildings on the site and a two-story home. The general massing scheme of the project was reviewed. After the Neighborhood Meeting, it was determined that all of the main services to the building will be on White Street. The property line on White Street Place will be built up without fenestration on that side. A vault transformer is proposed on the property. For the units without a balcony, there is a common rooftop amenity proposed. There is an existing fire lane on one corner of the building and there will be a 20' 7" drop-off zone in that area.

The applicant team reviewed the proposed landscape plan; including an expanded 12' sidewalk along both White Street and White Street Place is being proposed. It will consist of an 8' wide permeable concrete paved right-of-way and a 4' width furnishing zone that contains permeable pavements, short-term bike parking, and new street tree plantings.

White Street Place, which is Sheep Bottom, is a private way, but where there's currently no existing sidewalk. The applicant team noted that they are also proposing permeable pavements and layered plantings, including new street trees along this route. The rear of the site, visible from the public way, there is a proposed 6' wood privacy fence along the side and rear property line and then layered native plantings. At the rooftop level, there will be an extensive green roof, which will enhance the experience of the resident common amenity deck, as well as encourage biodiversity and offset the urban heat island effect. Additionally, there will be raised planters on the common deck that consist of layered multi-season plant species.

The applicant team reviewed the four design options. Option 1 shows a brick base on the bottom and a through-body fiber cement panel, with two colors, between the bays. The bays will have a slightly darker color, and the whole body of the building will have a slightly lighter color. Option 2 includes fiber cement clapboard siding, in a dark charcoal color, and a lighter color. This scheme introduces an insert below the window in a wood color to make the building feel not as squat. There will be a wood fiber cement accented entrance piece that splits up the mass between the buildings. There will be a similar elongation of the windows, with a charcoal panel below them instead of the wood design. Option 3 uses the blue colors that were already in the existing building, along with pops of red. The fenestration will be similar to the other options. This design also includes some angled parapets at the top corners, little pops of color along the façade, and a similar brick base for the bottom to elevate it above the street level. The preferred is Option 4, which is a hybrid. It uses the first scheme with the elongated windows and wood panels. There will be one façade material on levels 2-4 and a medium dark iron color brick on the bottom, as well as a fiber cement wood-like material introduced at the windows to raise it off the ground.

The Commission asked about the potential permeable concrete mentioned. The applicant team stated that this is a consideration for the sidewalk material and is being proposed for the lot coverage for permeable material on the site.

The applicant team explained that the bike room/trash room is proposed to be at-grade.

The Commission asked about the height of the sill of the windows above the sidewalk level. The applicant team explained that this will be a significant amount. The Commission asked about having high windows into the amenity spaces. The applicant team agreed that adding small windows in that area would be a good idea.

The applicant team stated that the base is coplanar with some of the upper level walls. Only the bays project out from the façade. The Commission suggested a detail in that area to separate those items. The Commission recommended adding windows to the façade along the side street.

The Commission agreed that Option 4 seems to be the preferred option. There was a recommendation to consider additional refinement where the building meets the ground to soften the edge and the blank wall. The wood-like cement panel down to grade feels vulnerable and could instead end at a dark brick. The Commission suggested carrying the windows down into the bike room. The Commission also expressed concern with the proposed permeable concrete. They also noted that the species diversity and pollinators on the roof space could be increased to more closely reflect the Somerville Pollinator Plan.

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

The Commission agreed that the following items need further review by the applicant:

- Refinement to the base of the building
- A separation between the first floor and second floor materials
- Additional windows to the amenity spaces including the bike room
- That the wood material should not come all the way to the ground
- Encouraging greater species diversity in the green roof

- Further design study of the blank wall at the corner

Following a motion by Member Arbaugh, seconded by Member Fennick, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) that the design guidelines have been met.

Following a motion by Member Pavlinic, seconded by Member Arbaugh, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to approve the design guidance, as outlined by the Commission.

RESULT:

RECOMMENDED

DESIGN REVIEW: 382 McGrath Highway

The applicant team explained that three massing options were developed. Option 1 pulls the entrance in and out to create balconies. Option 2 attempts to enhance the ground levels and incorporate balconies through the upper levels. Option 3 creates a large massing and creates a shareable rooftop amenity space. The proposed materials include fiber cement exterior walls and perforated metal panels. Landscaping is proposed along the exterior area. There are exterior and interior bike parking spaces being proposed.

The applicant team explained that this project came before the Commission previously. The proposed changes since that time include an additional unit, an extended width of the main entrance façade, additional balconies, and an extension of levels 2, 3, and 4. The property has a zero-lot line condition, but there are still windows being proposed.

The Commission expressed concern with windows proposed along the zero-lot line condition, as Building Code may not allow this.

The Commission also noted that a landscape plan was not submitted, which is a requirement. The footprint of the building has been changed since the last presentation and so any changes made to the landscape plan must be submitted. The Commission stated that it would like to see the proposed plan in terms of the elevations along McGrath Hwy.

Following a motion by Member Pavlinic, seconded by Member Talun, the Commission voted unanimously (4-0) to continue 382 McGrath Hwy to a future meeting.

RESULT:

CONTINUED

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.