



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

379 Somerville Ave.

DECEMBER 10, 2020

Members of the Somerville Planning Board,

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on October 13, 2020 and October 27, 2020 to review the proposed 5-Story General Building at 379 Somerville Avenue.

The purpose of design review, as established by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, is for peers in the professional design community to provide advice and recommendations during the schematic design phase of the architectural design process. In accordance with the UDC's adopted Rules of Procedure and Section 15.1.4 Design Review of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, this recommendation includes, at least, the following:

1. Identification of the preferred schematic design concepts supported by the Commission.
2. Identification of all design guidelines that are achieved to the satisfaction of the Commission.
3. Identification of any priority design guidelines.
4. Recommended modifications to the proposed schematic design necessary to remedy outstanding design issues for guidelines that have not been achieved to the satisfaction of the Commission.

After review of the submitted plans and illustrations and a public presentation by the development team, the Commission provided the recommendations detailed below.

The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend façade design option #1 for further design development. The Commission required the design team to incorporate a round of feedback and recommendations into a revised design for option #1 and was satisfied by the modifications presented at the second design review. The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that the architectural design guidelines of Section 4.4.13 of the zoning ordinance were satisfied by the revised façade design option. The Commission determined that there were not any priority design guidelines and did not take a vote to recommend any modifications to the preferred façade design option, but members did provide the following:

- Member Arbaugh recommended that the design of the proposed open space to the rear of the building be reconceptualized with a more contemporary design aesthetic (such as a less traditional and formal fountain), that the planting schedule include native plants, and that the open space be useable rather than serving only as a visual amenity.



REVISED FAÇADE DESIGN OPTION #1



APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

MR5 – MID-RISE 5 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
Facades should be visually divided into a series of architectural bays that are derived, in general, from the building's structural bay spacing.	YES (3-0)		
Piers, pilasters, or other features defining each architectural bay should either extend all the way to the ground or terminate at any horizontal articulation defining the base of the building.	YES (3-0)		
Architectural bays should align, in general, with individual or groups of storefronts and lobby entrances.	YES (3-0)		
Piers, pilasters, or other features defining each architectural bay should always project forward and be uninterrupted by any horizontal articulation, excluding any horizontal articulation used to differentiate the base of the building.	YES (3-0)		
The facade of buildings with five (5) or more stories should be visually divided into, at least, a horizontal tripartite division (a base, middle, and top). The horizontal divisions may not shift up or down across the width of the facade.	N/A (3-0)		
Vents, exhausts, and other utility features on building facades should be architecturally integrated into the design of the building and should be located to minimize adverse effects on pedestrian comfort along sidewalks and within open spaces.	YES (3-0)		
Buildings at terminated vistas should be articulated with design features that function as focal points.	YES (3-0)		
Fenestration glazing should be inset from the plane of exterior wall surfaces.	YES (3-0)		
Ribbon windows should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		
Monotonous and repetitive storefront or lobby systems, awnings, canopies, sign types, colors, or designs should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		

MR5 – MID-RISE 5 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
Storefronts and lobby entrances should include awnings or canopies to provide weather protection for pedestrians and reduce glare for storefront display areas. Awnings should be open-ended and operable.	YES (3-0)		
Lobby entrances for upper story uses should be optimally located, well defined, clearly visible, and separate from the entrance for other ground story uses.	YES (3-0)		
Lobbies should be limited in both width and total area to preserve floor space and frontage for other ground story uses. Buildings should use any combination of facade articulation, a double-height ceiling, a distinctive doorway, a change in wall material, a change in paving material within the frontage area, or some other architectural element(s) to make lobbies visual and materially distinctive.	YES (3-0)		
The selection of materials, fenestration, and ornamentation should result in a consistent and harmonious composition that appears as a unified whole rather than a collection of unrelated parts.	YES (3-0)		
The type and color of materials should be kept to a minimum, preferably three (3) or fewer.	YES (3-0)		
Two (2) or more wall materials should be combined only one above the other, except for bay windows.	YES (3-0)		
Wall materials appearing heavier in weight should be used below wall materials appearing lighter in weight (wood and metal above brick, and all three above stone)	YES (3-0)		
Horizontal or vertical board siding or shingles, regardless of material, should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		

MR5 – MID-RISE 5 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
Architectural details and finish materials for the base of a building should be constructed of architectural concrete or pre-cast cementitious panels, natural or cast stone, heavy gauge metal panels, glazed or unglazed architectural terracotta, or brick.	YES (3-0)		
Exterior Insulation and Finish Systems (EIFS) should be avoided.	YES (3-0)		

Applicable meeting minutes and video recordings of Urban Design Commission meetings are available upon request. Please contact the UDC's Staff Liaison, Senior Planner Dan Bartman for more information: dbartman@somervillema.gov.