



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

494 Medford St.

February 23, 2021

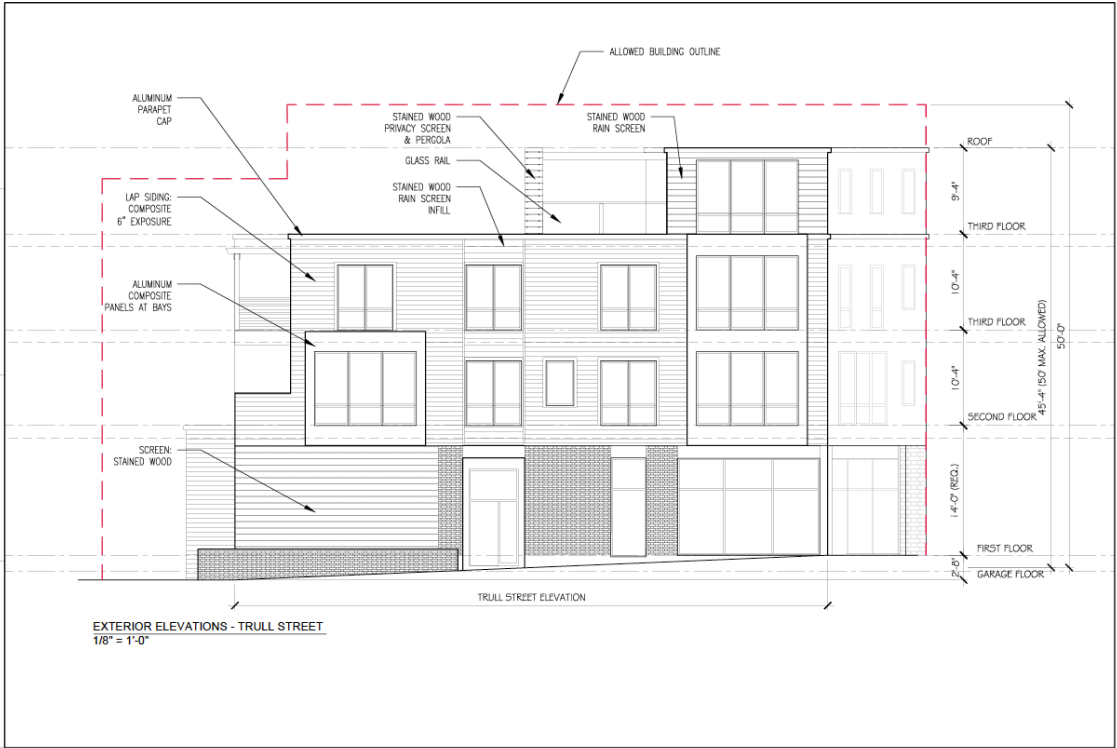
The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on October 27, 2020 and November 23, 2020 to review the 4-Story General Building proposed for 379 Somerville Avenue. The purpose of design review, as established by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, is for peers in the professional design 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 concept 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.

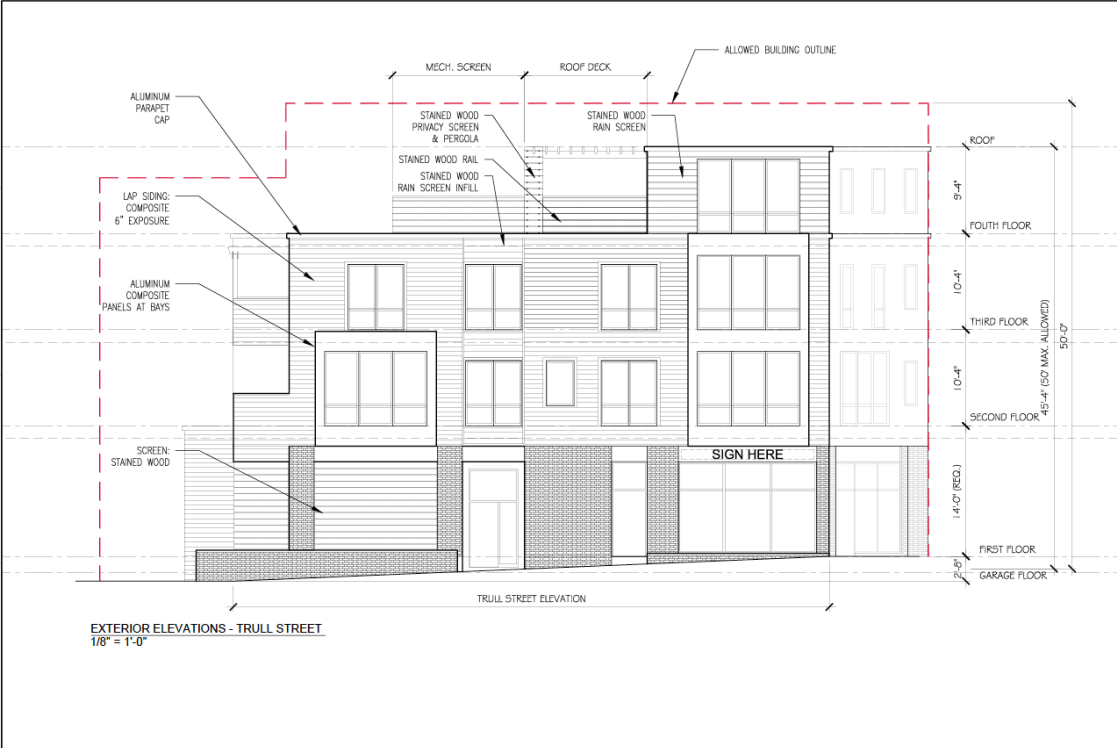
Following a presentation by the Applicant and review of the submitted materials and the design guidelines for the MR4 district, the Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend façade design option #4 for further design development. The Commission advised the Applicant to revise option #4 to have a more well-defined base of the building, with particular attention paid to the ground level columns/piers and the design of the storefront, and for the materials for the balconies to be more contemporary in nature. The Commission requested additional building elevations & massing diagrams and asked the applicant to incorporate the design feedback provided into an updated concept, voting unanimously (3-0) to continue the meeting. On November 23, the Commission reviewed an updated design and voted unanimously (3-0) that the applicable design guidelines were satisfied and to recommend the modified option #4 incorporating the Commission's feedback from the first meeting.

The Commission has remaining concerns over the success of the northern facing frontage area planters at the front of the building due to limited direct sunlight and recommends that the frontage area planters along Trull be expanded in depth to provide proper volume for healthy plant growth. The Commission also identified that the proposal was currently non-compliant to the requirements for expanded sidewalk width but determined that the above issues could be resolved by the Applicant prior to applying for site plan approval.

Original Option



Revised Option



APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

MR4 – MID-RISE 4 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)		
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)		
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)		

MR4 – MID-RISE 4 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
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)		
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.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Frank Valdes
Deborah Fennick
Andrew Arbaugh

Attest, by the UDC Co-Chair:



Sarah Lewis