



City of Somerville

# URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

## DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

### 599 Somerville Ave

August 6, 2021

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on June 8, 2021, and June 22, 2021, to review the **3-Story Lab Building** proposed at 599 Somerville Ave in the Mid Rise 3 zoning district of the Spring Hill neighborhood of Somerville. 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 option
2. Identification if applicable design guidelines are satisfied
3. Guidance and recommended modifications to address any design issues or concerns

Design review was conducted over the course of two meetings and the Commission guided the applicant through various recommendations and suggestions to the applicants preferred building schematic designs. Recommendations that were incorporated into the design through the review process included proceeding with façade option 1 but revising design to include a more natural color palate similar to façade option 3; Explore further where the location of the division between the two building sections would be located; Plant buffer at the rear of the project site needs to have a more meaningful transition to adjacent neighboring properties [more space is needed]; and continue to work on plant list for building landscaping and refine list of proposed public realm amenities for the building frontage.

Following a presentation of the revised design by the Applicant and review of the design guidelines for the MR3 district, the Commission provided the following final guidance and recommended modifications:

- Building landscaping still needs to be worked out. Applicant should consult with Public Space and Urban Forestry division to further to refine overall building landscaping and public realm improvements; Rear landscaping still needs further exploration to allow more space between building site and adjacent rear properties.
- Further exploration into how to “celebrate” the right side of the building corner without getting away from design intent; Needs more differentiation from rest of the building façade.

- Building needs to incorporate design guideline E for MR3 zoning district into building design.

The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend façade option 1, voted (3-0) that all the design guidelines for the MR3 district were satisfied, voted (3-0) to prioritize design guideline E for MR3 buildings into the building design, and voted unanimously (3-0) to approve applicants proposed “zipper design” into the building.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Frank Valdes  
Debora Fennick  
Tim Talun

Attest, by the meeting Co-Chairs:

Sarah Lewis  
Luisa Oliveria



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Sarah Lewis,  
UDC Co-Chair  
Director of Planning &  
Zoning

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### APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

MR3– Mid-Rise 3			
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)		
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)		

<b>MR3– Mid-Rise 3</b>			
<b>LANGUAGE</b>	<b>SATISFIED?</b>	<b>PRIORITY?</b>	<b>NOTES</b>
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)		

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## Façade Evolution



6/8/2021

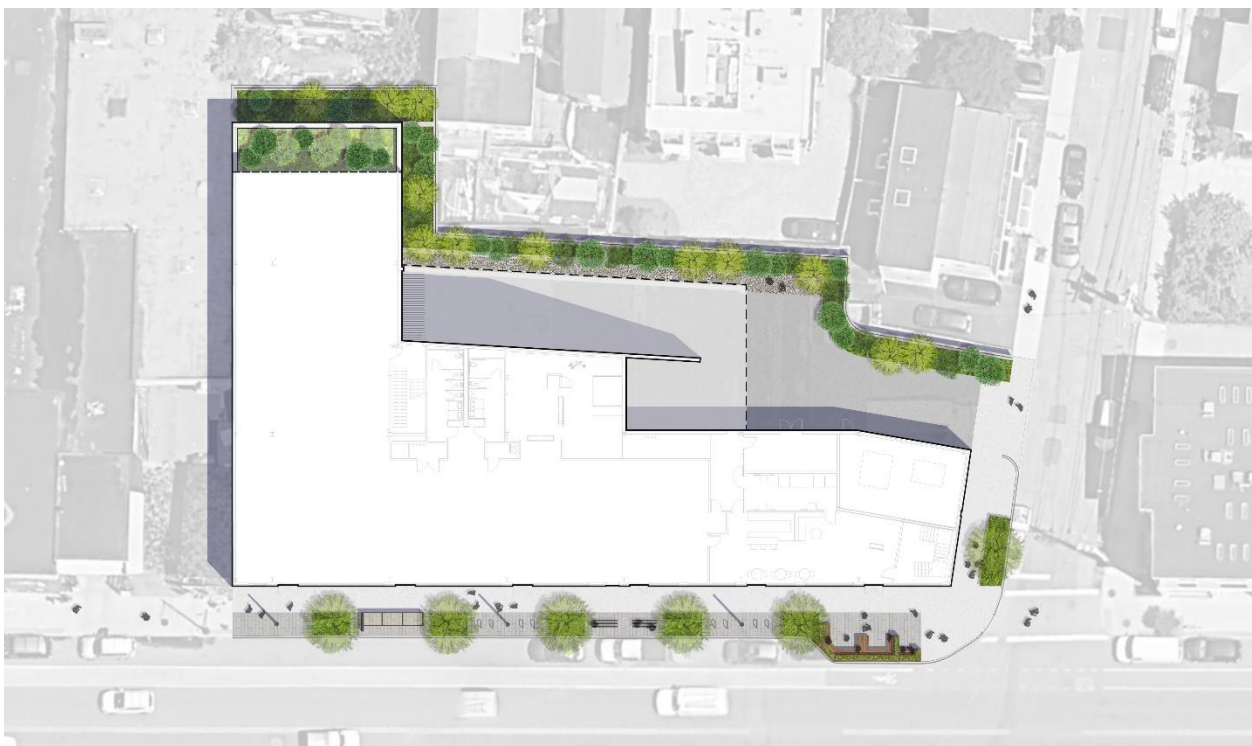


6/22/2021

**Further Exploration  
“Celebration” of right corner of building**



**REMAING CONCERN  
Rear Landscaping**



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## “Zipper” Design – Building Division

