



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

DESIGN RECOMMENDATION

71-72 Union Square

OCTOBER 8, 2020

Members of the Somerville Planning Board,

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on July 22 and August 27, 2020 to review the proposed Commercial Building at 71-72 Union Square.

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.

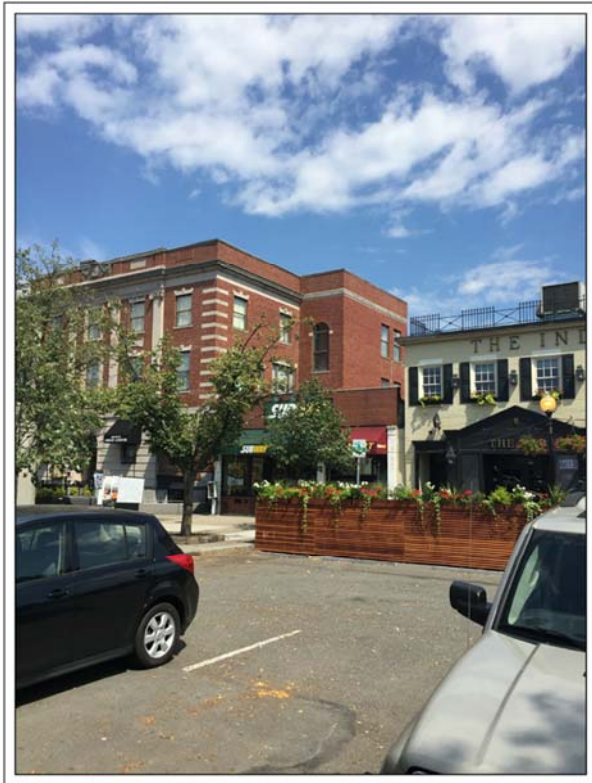
Applicable meeting minutes are attached and video recordings of Urban Design Commission meetings are available upon request. Please contact the UDC's Staff Liaison, Senior Planner Dan Bartman for more information: dbartman@somervillema.gov.

Following review of the submitted plans and illustrations and a public presentation by the development team, the Commission provided the following recommendations concerning schematic designs presented:

The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend façade design option #1. The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend that the Planning Board consider design guidelines 6.2.12.a.ii and 6.2.12.a.iv (with specific attention to the building's pilasters) as a priority for the proposed building. The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that all of the CC5 design guidelines have been met to their satisfaction by the Applicant's preferred façade design option and preferred ground floor elevation. No recommendation was provided for any modifications to the preferred façade design option. The commission discussed some façade design details, such as the buildings signage and canopy, but did not provide any recommended changes.



Option #1 (multiple views)



EXISTING STREET VIEW



PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT VIEW

APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

CC4 – COMMERCIAL CORE 5 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
<p>Facades should be visually divided into a series of architectural bays that are derived, in general, from the building’s structural bay spacing.</p>	<p>YES (3-0)</p>		
<p>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.</p>	<p>YES (3-0)</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>The Commission identified this design guideline as a priority consideration for the further evolution of the façade through design development.</p>
<p>Architectural bays should align, in general, with individual or groups of storefronts and lobby entrances.</p>	<p>YES (3-0)</p>		
<p>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.</p>	<p>YES (3-0)</p>	<p>YES</p>	<p>The Commission identified this design guideline as a priority consideration for the further evolution of the façade through design development.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>YES (3-0)</p>		

CC4 – COMMERCIAL CORE 5 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
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)		

CC4 – COMMERCIAL CORE 5 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
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)		

CC4 – COMMERCIAL CORE 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)		



City of Somerville

PLANNING & ZONING DIVISION

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

TO: Planning Board
FROM: Planning & Zoning Staff
DATE: December 29, 2020
RE: 71 Union Square Second Neighborhood Meeting Minutes

This memo summarizes the second neighborhood meeting for the Cannabis Retail Use Special Permit and Building Site Plan Approval, that is required by the Somerville Zoning Ordinance.

Meeting Date: September 9, 2020

Meeting Start Time: 7:30pm

Meeting Location: via Zoom

Attendees from the Applicant Team: Attorney Adam Dash, Greg Santos (Union Leaf), Will Chalfant (Khalsa Design), Binoj Pradhan (Owner), Peter Grillo (Product Expert)

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

In addition to minutes, the Director of Planning & Zoning shall keep a public record of the neighborhood meeting that includes, but may not be limited to:

- Copies of all materials provided by the applicant at the meeting
- A list of those persons and organizations contacted about the meeting and the manner and date of contact
- A roster or signature sheet of attendees at the meeting

ATTENDEES

Eric
 Stuart Dash
 Andrew Cheever
 Debbie Musnikow

Donald Waide
 Barrat Krame
 Ben Weber

Hang Ngo
 Jesse Waites
 Jon Wooding

MINUTES

Ward 3 Councilor Ben Ewen-Campen welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave an overview of the project. The project has already had two neighborhood meetings in March and October of 2019. This neighborhood meeting is for both the Use Special Permit and for the building Site Plan Approval. He then introduced the applicant team.

Charlotte Leis briefly gave an overview of what approval this project requires from the Planning Board and answered questions about the Cannabis Retail Use Special Permit review criteria.

Adam Dash gave an overview of site history and current proposal. The ground floor & basement are proposed as cannabis retail, the 2nd floor is educational, the 3rd floor is offices, and it will have a green roof. He noted that nothing has changed from the 2019 proposal except building exterior. Will Chalfant showed site plans, floor plans, and façade plans of project. He noted that they went through the Historic Preservation Committee and received approval to demolish building.

Cannabis products will not be visible from the street, but the windows facing the street will be transparent and not blocked off; there may be rotating local artwork in the storefront behind the windows. The new zoning ordinance requires 18' floor-to-floor heights for long-term commercial viability, but the entrance canopy brings the building down to the pedestrian level.

The side windows on the former police station next door will not be blocked due to the angling of the buildings. The ground floor front façade will meet the 70% fenestration requirement. The UDC recommended replacing the 3rd floor patio with brickwork detailing to create texture. The building is successfully fitting in with neighboring buildings in terms of character and scale, but it feels modern. Plan to possibly have mural on side of building over The Independent.

The following comments/concerns were brought up by attendees of the meeting:

Building Design – One individual preferred the earlier terrace design, but another resident preferred the current design. Overall, no strong feelings about the design were expressed. Residents expressed support for the proposed community / educational space. Residents asked about visual and acoustic screening of mechanical equipment on roof; equipment on roof will be visually and acoustically screened.

Construction Timing & Impacts – Some individuals expressed concern about the construction impacts on neighboring buildings and the Square more generally. With the amount of construction going on already in Union Square, worried that this may exacerbate existing problems. Anticipated that once all approvals have been granted, construction will take approximately one year. Applicant will conduct existing conditions study of surrounding buildings so they can ascertain if their project causes any damage during construction.

Traffic – Business will bring additional foot traffic to Union Square which is good. Application is required to submit Traffic Impact Study as part of application to Planning Board which will examine impacts of proposed cannabis use on surrounding area and can impose conditions, if necessary, to address concerns.