



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

73 Summer Street

March 25, 2021

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on January 26, 2021 and February 23, 2021 to review the **3-Story Apartment Building** proposed for 73 Summer Street. 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

This proposal is subject to the appearance of two buildings requirement for any facade over 100' wide in the Mid-Rise zoning districts. At a minimum, the ordinance requires each 'side' of the building to have a differing cornice, roof eave, or parapet; upper story wall material; and ground story pilasters, columns, or piers (solid wall) on either side of the division between façade designs. The proposal provides this architectural treatment for both the Summer Street and School Street facades.

Design review was conducted over the course of two meetings and the Commission guided the Applicant through a single a revision to the preferred design option. Recommendations that were incorporated into the design through the review process include expansion of the abutting sidewalks to the required twelve (12) feet, alignment of the accessibility ramp, coordination with future city street tree plantings, the introduction of wood details into the modern corner portion, eliminating the brick used for the piers of the ground story for the modern corner portion, the inclusion of roof decks/terraces for the projecting windows of the brick portions, modification to the seating areas of the rear courtyard, the inclusion of a locked egress gate for the rear courtyard, and revisions to the 'gift to the street' landscaped seating areas and short term bike parking spaces.

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:

- For the traditional brick portions, angled bay windows should be considered in place of the projecting box windows.

- For the traditional brick portions, the top edge of the projecting box windows, below the (glass) railing, should be equal to or higher than the datum of the brick materials to either side.
- For the recesses between the modern corner design and the flanking brick portions of the building for both the Summer Street and School Street facades, the grey fiber cement panel should be used (rather than brick) and the width of the recesses should be narrower than the piers to either side.
- For the modern corner portion, the color of the ground story and upper story piers should either be the same, or the higher contrast lighter color should be elevated above the ground story.
- The windows of the modern corner portion should have angled/beveled wood sills like what is provided for the jambs and headers (eliminating the interior fiber cement panel).
- A walkable route should be maintained for the school street sidewalk along the landscaped seating area and short-term bicycle parking racks, which may need their location and orientation revised.



The Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to recommend façade design option #3 for further development, voted unanimously (3-0) that all of the design guidelines for the MR3 district were satisfied, and voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend the modifications outlined above.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Frank Valdes
Deborah Fennick
Andrew Arbaugh
Heidi Cron
Tim Talun

Attest, by the UDC Co-Chair:



Sarah Lewis, Director of Planning & Zoning

Design Review Evolution of Façade Option #3



January 26, 2021



February 23, 2021



January 26, 2021



February 23, 2021



January 26, 2021



February 23, 2021

APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

MR3 – 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)		
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)		

MR3 – MID-RISE 5 DISTRICT			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
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)		