



City of Somerville

URBAN DESIGN COMMISSION

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

DESIGN REVIEW RECOMMENDATION

74 Middlesex: Civic Space

July 16, 2021

The Urban Design Commission (UDC) met virtually via GoToWebinar on April 27, 2021 to review two civic space types [Through block Plaza and Neighborhood Park] proposed at the 74 Middlesex Ave in the High Rise zoning district of the Assembly Square Mixed-Use (ASMD) district in the Assembly Square 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 if applicable design guidelines are satisfied
2. 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 applicant's civic space design. Recommendations that were incorporated into the design through the review process included: Revising civic space design to incorporate more interconnectedness between the building public realm and civic space [Through Block Plaza]; create a more porous opening for the shared bike and pedestrian path with the neighborhood park space; engage (move) proposed trellis with the shared bike and pedestrian path; and add color to both civic spaces.

Following a presentation of the revised design by the Applicant and review of the design guidelines for the Neighborhood Park and Through Block Plaza Civic Space types, the Commission provided the following final guidance and recommended modifications:

- Transition between Through Block Plaza and building public realm still needs further examination into making the two spaces interconnected and cohesive. Suggested adding permanent furniture into the space to make space feel more open and welcoming; and bring tan colored horizontal paver lines of the building public realm down Through Block Plaza to make the spaces feel cohesive.
- Applicant team should share civic space revisions with the Commission before applicant team goes in front of the Planning Board.

The Commission voted unanimously (3-0) that all of the design guidelines for a Neighborhood Park Civic Space type were satisfied and voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend the guidance and design modifications identified above.

Attest, by the voting membership:

Frank Valdes
Debora Fennick
Andrew Arbaugh

Attest, by the meeting Co-Chairs:

Luisa Oliveria
Sarah Lewis



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

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APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
Connectivity to the surrounding environment in a Neighborhood Park is vital. Sidewalks, bike paths, crosswalks and connections to larger transportation systems should be established and clear.	YES (3-0)		
Wherever possible, spaces should be multi-use and flexible to accommodate as many different uses as possible.	YES (3-0)		
Spaces in a Neighborhood Park should reflect the desires of the surrounding residents and provide programming that is relevant to that neighborhood's demographic and user groups.	YES (3-0)		
Varied play environments that foster the development of children's cognitive, physical and social development are encouraged.	YES (3-0)		
Water features and changes in topography are encouraged.	YES (3-0)		
Amenities and furnishings may include, but are not limited to: seating, drinking fountains, tables, chairs and benches, movable tables and chairs, litter receptacles, etc. Signage should be placed at entrances or other points where people gather.	YES (3-0)		
Fencing and vegetation should preserve privacy for Abutting yards while providing resident visibility into the park.	YES (3-0)		
In addition to active physical recreation, Neighborhood Parks should provide opportunities for public art, performance space and community engagement in artistic and cultural expression. Public art and performances should reflect the neighborhood and preserve a sense of neighborhood identity.	YES (3-0)		

NEIGHBORHOOD PARK			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
A neighborhood park should offer a variety of seating types and seating locations, including places to sit in the sun, in the shade, out of the wind, in groups, alone, close to activity, and in relative seclusion to every extent possible.	YES (3-0)		

APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINES:

THROUGH BLOCK PLAZA			
LANGUAGE	SATISFIED?	PRIORITY?	NOTES
Adjacent buildings should provide ground level spaces fronting onto the through block plaza for commercial uses including, but not limited to, the arts & creative enterprise, eating & drinking, and retail use categories.	YES (3-0)		
Exterior walls fronting onto the through block plaza should meet the ground story fenestration and blank wall standards for the appropriate building type to every extent practicable	YES (3-0)		
Upper story balconies and terraces overlooking the through block plaza are encouraged for adjacent buildings.	YES (3-0)		

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Revised Illustrative Site Plan (06/08/2021)



Remaining Concern: Transition between Building Public Realm and Through Block Plaza

