

Background Material for Design Review Committee, Historic Preservation Commission, Planning Board, and Zoning Board of Appeals

Board Composition/Website/Minutes

- Design Review Committee (DRC): <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/design-review-committee>
- Historic Preservation Commission: <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/ospcd/historic-preservation>
- Planning Board (PB): <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/planning-board> (Joe Favaloro was not re-confirmed)
- Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA): <https://www.somervillema.gov/departments/zoning-board-of-appeals> (Rick Rossetti has opted to not apply for re-confirmation)

Board Descriptions

Design Review Committee (DRC) assists the Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals by providing design criteria, guidance and recommendations for those applications specifically referred to the Committee by either Board or as requested by the Applicant. The goal of design review is to maintain and enhance the character of the City; enhance the natural and aesthetic qualities of the City, preserve the value of land and buildings; and protect and preserve the cultural aspects and heritage of the City.

More specifically, design review is intended to:

- Maintain, protect and enhance existing buildings of historical and architectural significance,
- Foster new development that is aesthetically compatible with existing buildings and infrastructure,
- Encourage and assist building owners to restore and rehabilitate existing buildings in a cost effective, sensitive manner and in such a way as to be compatible with the surrounding neighborhood,
- Encourage originality and creativity in the design of new buildings and additions, or the remodeling of existing buildings, and
- Maintain and enhance the appearance of signage, new and existing.

Enabling legislation:

https://library.municode.com/ma/somerville/codes/zoning_ordinances?nodeId=ZOORSOMA_ART5AD_S5.6DERECO

Historic Preservation Commission reviews any alterations or repairs to properties in a Local Historic District (LHD) that are visible from a public way and that would result in an irreversible change in the design, materials, or outward appearance of the structure. It also reviews any changes in the general arrangement of the building's features or its architectural details, such as the arrangement of windows or doors. The SHPC does not review cases that involve routine maintenance or replacement of any part of

the property using the same design and materials as the original building. The SHPC also does not review cases in which buildings have been destroyed by fire or other disaster, as long as the reconstruction occurs within a year and is substantially similar to the original building in exterior design, type of use, and size. The SHPC offers pro bono professional advice, practical information, and pertinent references about materials and techniques used in historic preservation and restoration, and provides technical assistance throughout design and construction. SHPC has developed specific guidelines to aid historic property owners in making appropriate and sensitive decisions about alterations, additions, and repairs to their properties.

The SHPC also administers the City's Demolition Review Ordinance adopted in 2003. This ordinance affects properties built fifty (50) or more years ago and that are not already designated as part of a Local Historic District.

Enabling legislation:

https://library.municode.com/ma/somerville/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOOR_CH7HO_ARTIIHIDI_S7-19HIPRCO

Planning Board is the Special Permit Granting Authority for the Assembly Square Mixed-Use Development (ASMD), Corridor Commercial Development (CCD), and Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Districts, Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), Overlay Districts, and Site Plan Approvals. The Board also holds public hearings and renders recommendations to the Board of Aldermen on zoning amendments.

Enabling legislation: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter41/Section81A>

Zoning Board of Appeals is a quasi-judicial body charged under the provisions of Chapter 40A of the Massachusetts General Laws. The ZBA is the Special Permit Granting Authority for Variances, Special Permit Applications, including Special Permits with Design Review and Special Permits with Site Plan Review, Appeals by aggrieved parties of administrative or enforcement decisions, and Comprehensive Permit Petitions (MGL Chapter 40B).

Enabling legislation: <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleVII/Chapter40A/Section13>