

Issued: July 11, 2022

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*** APPROVED REGULAR MEETING MINUTES***
THURSDAY, JUNE 23, 2022
ROOM 217, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT**

Call to Order/Roll Call: 4:30 P.M.

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chairman, Jeffrey Gebrian; Commissioners: Sheldon Crosby, Brian Flemming, Hugh Schweitzer, Ray Giolitto and Kimberly Parsons-Whitaker. Alternates: Jim Lawler

Staff: Todd Dumais, Town Planner; Brian Pudlik, Associate Planner

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **1051-1061 New Britain Avenue** – Initial study session preparatory to the submission of a site plan application under the newly adopted Transit-Oriented Development zoning district. The application contemplates the redevelopment of 1051-1061 New Britain Avenue to include the demolition of the existing building and the construction of a new five story, new mixed-use building with associated site improvements.

Mr. Dumais introduced the proposal. A representative from Phase Zero (PZ) presented what he described as a very early concept plan for the development of the property, which currently contains the Ashley Furniture Outlet. The proposal is for a five-story building with commercial tenants on the ground floor and a portion of the second floor, where an outdoor-rooftop seating area will accompany two-story restaurant. The remainder of the second floor and floors above will be residential. All parking for the development will be located to the rear of the proposed building. Outdoor dining areas for two restaurants as well as an outdoor amenity space are also proposed behind the building at grade. PZ also presented initial renderings intended to depict the massing of the building and although not shown, indicated that the overall design of the exterior will be contemporary with contextually appropriate materials.

DRAC universally indicated that the project is off to a very good start with excellent massing and articulation. The DRAC also expressed appreciation of the design team’s interest in presenting a design so early in the project evolution

The DRAC did raise some questions regarding how “back-of-house” operations would be handled for the restaurants, how hood exhaust would be routed how loading/deliveries would be handled and how trash management would be handled.

2. **1003-1007 Farmington Avenue** – Study session preparatory to the submission of a new Special Development District application. The applicant is contemplating the redevelopment of the existing commercial building and the construction of a new residential building. (Initial study sessions on 11-15-21, 12-16-21, 1-13-22, 2-10-22 and 5-19-22)

Mr. Dumais introduced the proposal and noted that the owners are back before the DRAC informally for the fifth time in total and for the second time since introducing a dramatically modified plan with a new five-story building positioned at the street.

The property owners indicated that in response to DRAC's comments at the last meeting, they worked to improve the connection to the public open space and added "green" elements, updated the plan to show HVAC venting on the elevations and noted that the rooftop HVAC equipment would not be visible from the street. They further noted that changes to the cornice line breaks up the massing such that the building reads as multiple buildings rather than a single long building. In discussing the parking area at the rear, the owners noted that they considered screening a portion of the covered parking area, but wanted to get the DRAC's input.

In response, the DRAC unanimously agreed that garage screening was unnecessary and doing so would take away from the overall design aesthetic of the rear portion of the building. Regarding the garage, Mr. Crosby noted that particular attention should be paid to ensuring the garage space is an inviting and not an afterthought.

Staff as well as DRAC suggested the owners spend more time on the public space at the front of the building and how it presents to pedestrians walking by. As shown, knee walls separating the public open space from the drive aisle disconnect it from the public realm, which makes it appear private rather than public.

Overall, the DRAC was very encouraged by the direction the owners have taken the project and how responsive they have been to concerns raised in prior study sessions. They suggested the owners could move forward with a formal application submission for the project.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

3. June 16, 2022 Regular Meeting – No action taken

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

4. None.

ADJOURNMENT – 5:50 p.m.

C: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Labrot, Town Clerk

Dallas Dodge, Corporation Counsel
Todd Dumais, Town Planner

Essie

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