

Issued: October 11, 2022

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*** DRAFT REGULAR MEETING MINUTES***
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2022
ROOM 400, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT**

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

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chair Jeffrey Gebrian, Vice-Chair Sheldon Crosby and Ray Giolitto. Alternates: Jim Lawler

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

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN COUNCIL:

1. **950 Trout Brook Drive** – Formal referral associated with a new Special Development District and rezoning application filed on behalf of the Kingswood Oxford School, Inc., owner of 950 Trout Brook Drive and West Hartford Partners, LLC, contract purchasers of approximately 3.3 acres of the property formerly occupied by The Children’s Museum, together with a 0.63 acre triangular portion of 125 Kingswood Road. The stated purpose of the application is to merge the properties and rezone both from RM-2 and RM-3 to RM-MS for the construction of a new 172-unit multifamily residential building and associated site improvements (*Initial Study Session on 2-10-22, additional study sessions on 3-17-22, 5-19-22 and 7-28-22*)

Mr. Dumais introduced the application and provided a brief background on the evolution of the project. He further explained that this is the fifth time this project has been presented to the DRAC, but this time it is before them as a formal referral from the Town Council.

Attorney Hollister, representing the applicant, also provided background on the project and noted that the new information being shown as part of this presentation will be a shadow study to show any potential impacts to the Hampshire House property to the north as well as an updated layout for the internal common area/pool deck.

Mr. Lessard, project architect, presented the results of the shadow study, which demonstrated that the only month where a shadow from the proposed project would affect Hampshire House is December. Even then, the shadow would be limited to the garage/parking deck and would not impact the condo units themselves.

Mr. Cassidy, project engineer, discussed the benefits of the building placement and proposed screening along the easterly property line. Regarding building placement, he noted that the building will be 131 feet from Hampshire House and 49.2 feet from the rear property lines of the homes on Outlook Avenue. Regarding screening, he noted that the existing mature tree-line along the easterly property boundary will be maintained and further enhanced with additional plantings and a new solid fence.

Mr. Williams, Landscape Architect, presented the detailed plan for the common area/pool deck. He noted a mix of seating options and shade structures would be provided for the residents to use, in addition to the large outdoor pool. He described the diverse range of plantings that will be provided within the pool deck area and throughout the entire project site.

Mr. Lawler, DRAC member, stated that the overall landscape plan is well designed and thought out. He appreciates applicant's willingness to share the design evolution of the project with the DRAC and their responsiveness to DRAC comments during the prior informal study sessions. Further, he noted that the shadow study is favorable and that overall, the applicant appears to have been responsive to all neighborhood concerns.

Mr. Crosby, DRAC member, stated that the building fits well into the context of the site. In response to the parapet concern raised by a neighbor, he noted that the parapet is very important to ensure that the mechanical equipment is shielded. He further stated that the shadow study showed favorable results for Hampshire House and that the proposed plantings would be beneficial and respectful of Hampshire House.

Mr. Giolitto, DRAC member, stated that he is excited about the design for the site and building. He echoed comments of other DRAC members noting that the building fits well into the property and that the overall shape of the building is well articulated, which serves to break up the mass. Finally, he commented that growth is inevitable in any community, so long as the growth is contextually appropriate and is "right" for the community – "This is right".

Mr. Gebrian, DRAC member, commended the design team on their evaluation of alternative site design concepts and ultimately that the final design is the most appropriate for the site and how it relates to neighboring properties. He noted that the landscape plan is exceptional and that the outdoor common areas are well thought out.

Mr. Giolitto, DRAC member, made a motion to recommend approval of the project to the Town Council; Second by Mr. Lawler. The motion unanimously passed 4-0.

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **52-54 North Main Street** – Second study session preparatory to the submission of a site plan application. The applicant contemplates the redevelopment of site to include the demolition of the existing buildings, merger of the parcels into one lot and the construction of a multifamily apartment building with associated parking and site improvements (*Initial Study Session on 7-28-22*).

Mr. Pudlik introduced the project and reminded the DRAC that this is the second study session for this project. He also reminded the DRAC that this study session is unique in the sense that the application for Planning approval will be an administrative site plan application and that no formal referral from the Town Council will take place.

Mr. Arcari, project architect, indicated that the building architecture has changed substantially the last study session. He pointed out the prominent brick element at the southwest corner, which helps to anchor the building. Brick elements were added throughout the building. The primary material proposed for the façade treatment will be some type of “rain screen”, painted white, which creates strong horizontal banding and pronounced corners. Natural wood elements were added throughout and glazing will be surrounded by black frames. The building will offer rooftop amenity space for tenants and will feature some green roof elements and additional plantings.

Mr. Giolitto, DRAC member, complimented the design team on the changes made. He indicated the corner element on the building is excellent and anchors the building well. He appreciated the black-framed windows contrasted against the white siding material. He noted that the siding product choice will be extremely important due to the complexity of creating clean seams and corners as shown on the renderings.

Mr. Crosby, DRAC member, echoed Mr. Giolitto’s comments regarding the challenges in created the clean lines of the siding shown in the renderings and that a rain screen product may not be the best choice. He questioned how the canopy would drain, to which the architect answered with gutters and downspouts. Mr. Crosby commented that the additional vertical elements should be added on the north elevation around the balconies and indicated that the sign, as shown in the renderings. Is too large and out of place.

Mr. Gebrian, DRAC member, stated that he was supportive of the design changes made to the building since the first study session. He further noted that the additional plantings should be proposed along the North Main Street frontage. Finally, he noted strong support for the rooftop amenity space landscaping and particularly the use of green roof materials.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

2. None

TOWN PLANNER’S REPORT:

3. None.

ADJOURNMENT – 6:00 p.m.

C: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk

Dallas Dodge, Corporation Counsel
Todd Dumais, Town Planner