

Issued: August 30, 2022

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
\*\*\* APPROVED SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES\*\*\*  
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 29, 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, Kimberly Parsons-Whitaker, Hugh Schweitzer and Ray Giolitto. Alternates: Jim Lawler

**Staff:** Todd Dumais, Town Planner; Brian Pudlik, Associate Planner; Duane Martin, Director of Community Development; Kristen Gorski, Economic Development Coordinator; Rick Ledwith, Town Manager.

**REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:**

1. **27-43 & 53-65 LaSalle Road, 8 & 12 Arapahoe Road and 1001 Farmington Avenue** – Preliminary review of revised application to be filed on behalf of The Arapahoe Group, LLC the intended partial owner, developer and operator of a proposed mixed-use residential and commercial infill development on 3.4 acres of land fronting on Arapahoe and LaSalle Roads and Farmington Avenue. The proposed development includes five properties and contemplates the demolition of two existing buildings on Arapahoe and the construction of two new buildings containing 89 multifamily housing units and 3,500 s.f. of new commercial space along with associated site amenities including a parking garage, surface parking, landscaping and public areas. (*Initial Study Session on this new revised plan on 9-29-22*)

***Mr. Dumais introduced the application and provided a brief background on the evolution of the project. He explained that this is the initial study session on the new revised plan which was submitted in response to the Committee’s comments and formal referral to not support the prior SDD application.***

***Attorney Pearson, Counsel for the applicant, noted that they are back before the DRAC informally to discuss what they believe are substantive changes to the proposal in response to DRAC comments, which were the basis of their decision to not recommend approval of the project to the Town Council during the formal referral meeting on September 1, 2022.***

***Mr. Pather, project Architect, reiterated the DRAC’s concern regarding the overall massing of “building A”. He stated that in order to address that concern, the building’s overall length from east to west was reduced by 15 linear feet on the east side of the building. He noted that some of that FAR was added back by reducing the step-back of the penthouse from 11’ to 6’ and by adding an additional story on “building B”. Mr. Pather presented an updated rendering of the site perspective from Arapahoe Road, which he indicated demonstrated a***

*well-screened building at the rear with extensive landscaping/trees. Finally he noted that the windows on “building A” were adjusted in size to be more residential in scale.*

*Mr. Mrva, project Landscape Architect, provided a breakdown on some of the site changes. Specifically, on the east side of the building where the reduction in building width in this area allowed for a much wider and improved pedestrian pathway and the addition of street trees lining the edge of the parking area adjacent to the pedestrian path. He also noted that walkways in several other areas of the site were increased. Lastly, Mr. Mrva indicated that the vehicle entry on the east side was shifted to the south to further separate it from the pedestrian garage entry.*

*Mr. Lawler, DRAC member, stated that despite the plaza area on the east side of the building being larger, it does not provide meaningful benefit to users of the property. Its primary function is still a parking lot. He encouraged the design team to look at other options to establish the area as a real site asset; potentially by closing it to parking for portions of the year and that not doing so would be a missed opportunity.*

*Mr. Schweitzer, DRAC member, stated that the prior concerns raised by the Committee regarding the mass and scale of “building A” have not been adequately addressed by the design team. Noting that in his opinion the building is still out of a scale that inappropriate for the site. The proposed roughly six percent mass reduction does not change that conclusion.*

*Mr. Giolitto, DRAC member, stated that he appreciates some of the changes presented by the design team, but ultimately, the mass and scale of “building A” are still not compatible with the surroundings. He further stated that the upper floors should be stepped back to a greater degree, which would introduce more light into the site.*

*Ms. Parsons-Whitaker, DRAC member, indicated that progress has been made since the last meeting and she appreciates a greater emphasis on improving the public spaces within the site, but was troubled by the fact that parking constraints are factoring so heavily into overall site design and appear to be driving the discussion around the plaza design. She also expressed concern regarding the massing of “building A” despite the size reduction, saying that it is still problematic.*

*Mr. Crosby, DRAC member, stated that a six percent reduction in mass is still not enough and the building still does not work on the site. He further noted that the building edges are too hard and work should be done to soften them in some way. Lastly, he made a general comment that the overall design language for the buildings is representative of old mill and factory buildings – not something that West Hartford has.*

*Mr. Gebrian, DRAC member, stated that the site is still too crowded on the north side and is too close to the property line and to the adjacent buildings along Farmington Avenue. He noted that "building A" is still too large and does not relate well to adjacent properties. Mr. Gebrian did also note that the overall landscaping plan has improved and he appreciated those changes.*

*Mr. Dumais concluded the Committee's discussion by thanking the applicant for their presentation and design changes. He noted that the meeting dialogue positive and constructive from both sides of the table and as evidenced by the DRAC members comments, the Committee is hoping to continue the positive dialogue and hopes the applicant will continue to refine its project design and work collaboratively with them.*

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**

1. September 1, 2022 Special Meeting Minutes – No action taken by DRAC

**TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:**

2. None.

**ADJOURNMENT – 6:05 p.m.**

C: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager  
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk  
Todd Dumais, Town Planner

Dallas Dodge, Corporation Counsel  
Duane Martin, Director of Community Development