

Issued January 17, 2023

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DRAFT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2022
ROOM 400, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT**

AGENDA

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

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chair Jeffrey Gebrian, Vice-Chair Sheldon Crosby, Brian Flemming, Ray Giolitto, Hugh Schweitzer (arrived 4:45 pm), Kimberly Parsons Whitaker. Alternates: Jim Lawler

Staff: Brian Pudlik, Associate Planner

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **900 Farmington Avenue** – Initial study session preparatory to the submission of a potential new Site Plan application for the redevelopment of the West Hartford Inn property. The applicant contemplates the redevelopment of the Inn into apartments with an affordable component.

Mr. Pudlik introduced the proposal by noting that project will be an adaptive reuse of the existing building, together with a new addition, all of which will be used as residential apartments.

T. Daly – Project Engineer – Provided a site orientation and discussed the site improvements proposed as part of the plan. Those included the addition of green space, street trees and outdoor seating area along the Farmington Avenue frontage, new plantings and beautification of the Arnold Way garage entry, outdoor bike storage and the replacement of the fence separating the subject property from the gas station to the east.

D. Goslin – Project Architect – Discussed the specifics of the interior improvements to the existing building as well as the proposed new building layout. In the new wing, the first floor will be used as common space with upper floors being predominantly two-bedroom apartments. The old section of the building will be made up of predominantly one-bedroom apartments. The new and old portions of the building will be tied together using color and a mix of exterior wall treatments.

S. Crosby – DRAC member – Noted that the proposed “cap” on the new addition is out of proportion with the rest of the building and should be in a different plane. He also suggested that the cornice line be strengthened.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Suggested that the design was too “cubic” with not enough change in plane. He added that the elevations need to be more activated to create more shadow play and that overall, more work was needed on the color palette.

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Indicated that the architecture has a corporate feel to it; that the architecture has no life. Also noted that the proposed “fin” sign is out of place.

J. Lawler – DRAC Member – Cautioned against the use of too many materials, particularly on the new addition. He also added that additional plantings should be considered on the east side of the building at Arnold Way.

K. Parsons Whitaker – DRAC Member – Indicated that she preferred some of the earlier design studies to the one ultimately selected to present by the design team. Suggested that adding balconies would help to strengthen the sense that this is a residential project.

J. Gebrian – DRAC Member – Appreciates the new proposed open space treatments on the Farmington Avenue side of the property and encourages the developer to consider a matching treatment or one of equal quality on the east side at Arnold Way.

B. Flemming – DRAC Member – Indicated that the old and new portions of the building need to be better integrated to establish a design continuity between the two.

2. **1700 Asylum Avenue & 1800 Asylum Avenue – Initial study session preparatory to the submission of a potential new Special Development District application for the redevelopment of the former UConn campus. The applicant contemplates the redevelopment of both the eastern and western portions of the campus with multifamily housing and mixed-use development including commercial, retail, restaurant, residential and office uses. (Initial study session on 10-27-22).**

Mr. Pudlik introduced the project and reminded the committee that this was the second informal study session on the proposed redevelopment of the former UConn campus.

B. Fischer – Project Architect – Discussed some of the changes made since that last study session including modifying the shape of the proposed medical building to break up its mass and bring it back from Asylum Avenue, adjusted the position of the multi-family apartment building on Lawler Road to be more sensitive to the neighboring residential community and the addition of a community-focused building located mid-block on the west side the campus and adjacent to TB Drive.

L. Gilmore – Project Architect – Presented site sections through the Asylum Avenue side of the project, through the interior “Main Street” and through Lawler Road. The section through Asylum shows a landscaped berm to help screen the parking field and shows the position of the medical building located 75 feet back from Asylum. The section through the Main Street shows 12-16’ sidewalks, parking and travel lanes. The Lawler section shows townhomes proposed at 35-40’ back from the street.

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Questioned the capacity of the parking structure (240-250 parking spaces) and why the medical building is positioned where it is currently proposed.

Mr. Gebrian – DRAC member – Suggested that the medical building be turned.

Mr. Lawler – DRAC member – Stated that there is too much density proposed throughout the site and specifically noted that a 100,000 square foot medical office building is not appropriate in this location. Further stated that the concept makes no effort to blend into the surrounding residential community.

Mr. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Noted that the project is not presenting as the “village” the design team is trying to achieve. Further noted that the concentration of development should be on the east side of the campus with quiet, residential uses on the west side. As noted by Mr. Lawler, the project feels apart from the community rather than a part of it.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Stated that the project as currently presented does not call out to the community to attract people into the development.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

1. None.

TOWN PLANNER’S REPORT:

2. None.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:15 PM

Cc: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Dallas Dodge, Corporation Counsel

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk