

Issued January 17, 2023

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
DRAFT SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 1, 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, Ray Giolitto, Hugh Schweitzer.
Alternates: Jim Lawler

ABSENT: Kimberly Parsons Whitaker & Brian Flemming

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. **53-65 LaSalle Road, 27-43 LaSalle Road, 8 Arapahoe Road, 12 Arapahoe Road and 1001 Farmington Avenue** – Formal referral on the application of The Arapahoe Group, LLC for Change of Zone from RP, RO & RM-O to BC with Special Development District Designation for a mixed use redevelopment along Arapahoe Road, LaSalle Road and Farmington Avenue. The application contemplates the demolition of two existing buildings on Arapahoe and the construction of two new buildings containing 83 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.

Mr. Dumais introduced the project and reminded the DRAC that this is the eighth time the project has come before this committee. Also noted that the prior application was withdrawn and the study session this time is to discuss changes made to the project in response to DRAC's negative referral of the prior application.

R. Pearson – Counsel for applicant – Reiterated that the prior application was withdrawn based on the negative referral from DRAC and the purpose of the team's presentation today is to highlight the changes made to the project in response to the DRAC's comments. She noted that the building was reduced in size, walkways were increased in size where possible and parking was tightened up where possible.

G. Fitzgerald – Project Engineer – Began by noting that the consensus is positive around the corner building, so the focus of the presentation is on the larger building, Building A. He indicated that the mass of Building A is reduced by stepping the penthouse level back from the lower floors and by reducing the length of the building by 18' to allow for a better pedestrian experience on the east side of the building. He further noted that the windows in Building A were changed to reflect

a more residential scale and that overall the use of high quality materials is a high priority of the team.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Stated that he thrilled with the corner building, but is not persuaded by the arguments made in favor of Building A. Particularly the design team’s comparison of the size and scale of Building A vs. the Memorial Garage in BBS. Also not persuaded that the back-of-house operations of the restaurants on LaSalle will allow for the proposed outdoor patio area.

J. Gebrian – DRAC member – Commented that this is the first project where the building placement is not at the street, but rather in an “island”.

J. Lawler – DRAC member – Commented that if not for the one remaining building on Arapahoe, he would not have a concern with Building A’s placement. Because of that existing building, however, the proposed building is out of context.

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Commented that parking appears to driving many of the site design considerations. Because of this, the area behind the LaSalle building is a dead end to a parking area rather than a destination. In addition, the approach from Arapahoe into the site is compromised due to parking.

S. Crosby – DRAC member – Commented that he appreciates the high quality design and choice of materials throughout the project, but cannot support it due to the size and scale of Building A.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Made a motion to not recommend approval to the Town Council. In doing so, he noted an appreciation for the use of high quality materials, the proposed public improvements and the design and placement of the corner building, but expressed concern over other aspects of the project. Specifically, the reduction of mass on Building A is not enough and the building remains incompatible with the surrounding properties. He further noted that the mass and placement of Building A do not create a coherent site design and that the scale, architectural design and proportions are not compatible with the neighborhood.

S. Crosby – DRAC member – Seconded the motion

VOTE on Motion: 4-1

2. **900 Farmington Avenue** – Formal referral from the Town Planner on Site Plan Application #1397. The site plan seeks approval for the redevelopment of the West Hartford Inn property into a new residential multifamily use and includes the demolition of the existing restaurant building and the construction of a new residential wing with

community amenity space on the first floor and apartments above. (*Initial Study Session on 11-10-22*)

Mr. Dumais introduced the application and reminded the DRAC of the prior study session.

D. Goslin – Project Architect – Provided an overview of the changes made to the project since the initial study session. Specially, he noted improvements to landscaping along the Arnold Way frontage, modified choices of building materials in response to DRAC comments, the brick on the existing building will be painted to match new addition and added some projections on the new addition to enhance shadow.

S. Crosby – DRAC member – Noted that the taller parapet on the new addition does not work the lower portion of the building and is unnecessary.

J. Lawler – DRAC member – Stated that the south side of the building appears unresolved.

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Also noted that the taller parapet is unnecessary and leaves too much space above the windows. Regarding the color palette, he noted that the proposed yellow color is too bright and the gray too dark.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

1. None.

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

2. None.

ADJOURNMENT: 6:45 PM

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

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk