



Issued August 25, 2023

DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*****SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES*****
THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023
ROOM 407, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT

AGENDA

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

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chair, Ray Giolitto; Members: Brian Flemming, Jenna McClure, Elizabeth Pang, Kimberly Parsons-Whitaker, Hugh Sweitzer. Alternates: David Hines & Jim Lawler

ABSENT:

Staff: Todd Dumais, Town Planner; Brian Pudlik, Associate Planner; Kristen Gorski, Economic Development Coordinator

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **West Hartford Wayfinding Signage Study** – Presentation, part of the broader community stakeholder engagement, on the development of a comprehensive community wayfinding signage program designed to help to residents, employees, and visitors more easily navigate to destinations throughout Town. In addition, this study seeks to develop a signage and wayfinding system that will present a consistent image and unify branding within the community. Presentation and meeting facilitation by project consultant MERJE. (Note: MERJE will participate remotely).

K. Gorski – Town EDC – Introduced the project and provided a brief background on why the Town has decided to pursue a comprehensive wayfinding signage program.

L. Harrison – MERJE – Presented survey results, followed by a presentation of “information hierarchy”, which informs the methodology for developing wayfinding signage. Finally, presented a series of orientation maps from the around the Town.

G. Swantak – MERJE – Noted that there are 24 entry points into West Hartford, which makes a wayfinding signage program challenging. Need to determine where best to place signage by determining the primary and tertiary entry points. Other considerations that must be made include the types of destinations in the community, the pedestrian experience once one exits a vehicle vs. pedestrians who have not traveled by car, the Trout Brook Trail connection, etc. Regarding parking signage, an evaluation of existing signage revealed that there are too many different types of “P’s” around the center and those that are there may not be in optimal locations. A priority of the project will therefore be to standardize the parking “P” and optimize where they are placed. Other considerations in determining sign-types will be high speed vs. low speed vs. pedestrian level.

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Questioned whether the existing Leisure Services signs will be staying. Mr. Swantak confirmed that they would be.

G. Swantak – MERJE – Presented two different options for the wayfinding sign designs – one focused on the Town’s current branding and identity (primarily aluminum with yellow accents) and one focused on a more “time-honored/classic” aesthetic (metal and brick elements).

DRAC – All members stated that the Town branded version with yellow accents is the preferred approach. General sense that the branded version is a more modern aesthetic that captures a forward-looking perspective for the community. The second version is too old fashioned and will require too much maintenance.

2. **579 New Park 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 579 New Park 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.

T. Dumais – Town Planner – Introduced the project and noted that this would be the second application for a new development under the recently adopted Transit Oriented Development zone.

B. Bowin – Project Architect – Provided a brief project introduction and noted that the site is challenging due to the 5-foot change in grade from the front to the back of the lot.

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Indicated that a site plan must be provided in addition to site context so that the Committee can get an understanding of how the project fits into the neighborhood.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Questioned how the mass would be articulated, whether mechanical equipment would be on the roof, how screening of the landscaping yard to the west would be achieved and whether there would be any balconies. Mr. Bowin indicated that those details have not been determined at this time, as he was awaiting confirmation from the Town as to whether the building would meet minimum standards of the TOD zone prior to moving forward with building detailing.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Expressed concern that the proximity to the landscaping yard to the west would create excessive noise for residents of the proposed development.

D. Hines – DRAC member – Indicated that as currently presented, the building aesthetic is unwelcoming and has an institutional/industrial feel

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Questioned why a walkway is shown connecting the public way to the private open space area and whether the intent is for the space to open to anyone or just the residents to the building? Mr. Bowin indicated that it is not meant to be a public use area and they would propose a gate to restrict access.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

1. None

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

2. None

ADJOURNMENT: 6:10 PM

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

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Essie Labrot, Town Clerk