

Issued December 20, 2023

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 28, 2023
ROOM 400, 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: Jim Lawler

ABSENT: David Hines

Staff: Todd Dumais, Town Planner; Brian Pudlik, Senior Planner

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN COUNCIL:

1. **1244 North Main Street** – [Application](#) of Trout Brook Realty Advisors for rezoning the subject parcel from R-13 to RM-1, then to Special Development District (SDD). The application contemplates the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of a portion of the existing synagogue building with a new addition at the rear of the building, all to accommodate a new multi-family residential development.

T. Dumais – Town Planner – Provided a brief introduction of the project and noted that this is a formal referral from the Town Council based on the submission of an application for zone change and SDD, which is going to public hearing on October 24, 2023.

T. Hollister – Project Attorney – Provided an update on how the project has progressed since the last study session including responses to the DRAC’s comments. Specifically, he noted that the team clarified the open space programming on the east side of the building, noted that they reviewed the driveway alignment with Woodmont Road and determined not feasible due to geometry and not practical from a traffic conditions standpoint, noted that a tree survey had been completed to determine the health and viability of the existing mature landscaping around the property, noted that a shadow study was completed, which showed no impact and lastly, noted that the ADA parking space location had been changed.

D. Gosslin – Project Architect – Explained that in initially approaching this project, the team evaluated the extent to the which the building could be saved. They determined that the existing architecture lent itself to saving the front 24 feet of the building due to a natural break in the building’s framing. Regarding the new construction, noted that a three-story addition would be added to the north and east, with a total of 49 units proposed. Within the historic portion of the structure would be located a community room in addition to two two-story town-home style units. The types of units are proposed

as follows: 24 one-bedroom, 23 two-bedroom and 2 three-bedroom. Parking for the building will be located to the rear of the building with the main building entry also located at the rear. The existing driveway on the north side of the building will remain and provide access to the parking area. Regarding building aesthetics, original design cues present on the old section of the building, such as the colored glass panels, will be replicated elsewhere on the newer sections of the building and particularly at the rear entry to the building. Regarding building mechanicals, all will be located on the roof and will be screened from view. Lastly, the design team heard DRAC's comments regarding introducing more light into the central corridor and are exploring options to do so.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Noted that the project “sings” and appreciates the work that went into tying the new and old sections of the building together. He questioned whether any signage is proposed. Mr. Gosslin indicated that a low monument style sign may be proposed. Mr. Schweitzer also questioned how the open space area on the south side of the building would be programmed.

W. Violette – Project Landscape Architect – In response to Mr. Schweitzer, noted that they are planning for flex-use of the space with a mix of hardscape and grass, along with picnic tables and a possible community garden space. An exterior sidewalk will be provided around the building to access the space.

J. Corrado – ED of Housing Authority – Noted that the space needs to be carefully designed due to proximity of the existing residential property to the south. Wants to make sure they are not disrupted with use of the space in the future.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Questioned what type of system they will be using to handle HVAC. Mr. Gosslin indicated that a VRF (variable refrigerant flow) system would be used.

J. McClure – DRAC member – Noted that she appreciates the approach to tying the older section of the building to the newer section. On the north and east sides of the parking lot, she questioned whether there will be a buffer between bedrooms and the parking lot. Mr. Gosslin indicated that there are no walks planned between the lot and the building. Mr. Violette suggested that they could look at opportunities to buffer the building from the parking lot, but space is limited for plantings.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Suggested that the team review the use of boxwoods and suggested that the details for tree planting be revised to allow for greater root depth and removal of the support ties.

T. Dumais – Town Planner – Suggested that parking space depth and drive aisle widths could be reduced to allow buffer planting space between the parking area and the ground-floor units.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Questioned whether exterior lighting has been considered yet for the project. Mr. Gosslin noted that they have not gotten to that point in the design process, but will ensure that any proposed lighting is tasteful and in keeping with the architecture.

J. Lawler – DRAC member – Suggested that the team consider raising the first-floor elevation slightly to eliminate issues with parking lot buffering. Mr. Gosslin indicated that they would review this option.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Made a motion to recommend approval of the project to the Town Council. Second by H. Schweitzer. Noted that the DRAC finds the design of the project to be respectful of the existing architecture and. The DRAC also appreciates the design team’s willingness to work collaboratively with the Committee. Lastly the DRAC notes that the team should review the following elements: Exterior lighting, signage, landscaping, reducing drive aisle and parking space dimensions to allow for greater planted buffers.

Vote: 6-0

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

2.

- a. August 17, 2023 – **Motion: Parsons-Whitaker/Second: Lawler – Vote: 5-0**
- b. September 7, 2023 – **No action taken**

TOWN PLANNER’S REPORT:

- 3. **Special Development District Administrative Amendments** - Updates and feedback on pending / potential SDD Administrative Amendment Applications.

T. Dumais – Town Planner – Provided a summary of the minor architectural changes being proposed as part of an SDD Administrative Amendment application for 950 Trout Brook.

ADJOURNMENT: 5:40 PM

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

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Leon Davidoff, Town Clerk