



Issued June 11, 2024

DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*****SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES*****
THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2024
ROOM 400, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT

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

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chair, Ray Giolitto; Committee Members: Hugh Schweitzer, Brian Flemming & Jenna McClure & Liz Pang; Alternate: Jim Lawler

ABSENT: David Hines

Staff: Brian Pudlik, Senior Planner

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **1445 New Britain Avenue** – Study session preparatory to the submission of a potential Special Development District (SDD) amendment to existing SDD #6 located at 1445 New Britain Avenue and more commonly known as the Corbin Collection. The applicant contemplates proposed façade, signage and site improvements.

B. Pudlik – Senior Planner - Provided some background on the shopping plaza where the work is proposed in addition to a brief summary of the proposed changes.

M. Hope – Project Attorney – Provided an introduction and site orientation. Stated that the changes being contemplated are to support a new tenant, Level 99, who will be occupying the vacant 41,000 square foot tenant space on the second floor of the existing building. Ms. Hope noted that the parking for this tenant will be located predominantly in the area to the west of the building and the changes proposed are to improve pedestrian safety from the parking lot to the building and to promote visibility of the business.

J. Bord – Project Engineer – Stated that the civil work is limited to adding a crosswalk across the westerly drive aisle in order to improve pedestrian safety, in addition to adding pedestrian crossing signs. Further stated that they are proposing to add a colored stamped concrete treatment to the sidewalk in front of the tenant space entry, possibly adding dimly lit light bars that are recessed into the sidewalk and installing a grease interceptor to accommodate the restaurant aspect of Level 99's business.

A. Hidalgo - Property Owner Representative – Provided a synopsis of the additional proposed exterior building changes, which includes a new 200 square foot sign on the northerly façade where the tenant entry is located, a 60 square foot sign on the westerly façade, adding a sign to the existing multi-tenant sign on the westerly façade and a new sign within the existing monument sign. Regarding the façade treatment, they propose to paint the existing tan-colored EIFS on the top and left side of the building

entry a navy blue color and replace the existing metal paneling to the right of the building entry with a grey-colored thin brick with an integrated artistic mural.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Asked whether a STOP sign is proposed for vehicles traveling south from the plaza entry. Ms. Pang noted that vehicles travel quickly in this area of the plaza and a STOP sign will be critical to improve pedestrian safety. Mr. Bord stated that they would be adding a STOP sign.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Asked whether speedbumps are being considered due to the speed of traffic in the plaza. Mr. Bord indicated that they would consider options, but speedbumps are not typical in shopping centers like this one and they are hoping the improved crosswalk and signage will adequately improve pedestrian safety.

R. Giolitto – Stated that the recessed light bars in the sidewalk would not be possible because they cannot be made Dark Sky compliant. Mr. Bord stated they consulted with a lighting professional who indicated that the lights are so dim that they would not even register on a photometric plan. However, if the Town's position is that they are impermissible, they would use only the stamped concrete treatment discussed earlier.

A. Hidalgo – Property Owner Representative – In response to the dialogue regarding the light strips, noted that the team is looking for ways to draw people into the business by bringing elements of the tenant's colors out into the pedestrian zone on the west side of the building where people will be walking from the parking lot towards the building.

J. McClure – DRAC member – In reference to the colored rendering of the storefront, noted that the colors shown are not true to life and the existing metal paneling to the left of the storefront is actually quite a bit darker than what is shown in the rendering.

B. Pudlik – Senior Planner – In response to Ms. McClure's comment, showed the group a modified image of the façade, which better depicts how the proposed blue color will look next to the existing panel color. The image showed substantially less contrast between the two colors than the rendering showed. This led to a discussion among the applicant team that they had to go reevaluate the colors to ensure accuracy.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Asked what the imagery was in the proposed mural. Mr. Goff, a representative for Level 99 stated that the rendering currently shows sample imagery and that the final imagery would be determined once they established the brewery they would partner with.

B. Pudlik – Senior Planner – Reminded Mr. Goff and the team that the zoning ordinances prohibit the display of signage for another business that is not formally located on-site. The only way to advertise for the partner brewery would be if that business actually operated in some capacity at this location. Mr. Goff stated that Level 99 would be running the food and beverage program exclusively and the partner brewery's product would simply be featured in the restaurant. Mr. Pudlik stated again, that

under that scenario, there is not an opportunity to have signage for that partner business. He went on to suggest that the team set up a meeting with staff to discuss the matter in greater detail.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Noted that this is a challenging area for pedestrians given vehicle speeds and questioned whether the team had considered necking down the drive aisle at the proposed pedestrian crossing to shorten the crossing distance. Mr. Bord indicated that they had not considered that.

R. Giolitto – DRAC member – Stated that the primary sign being proposed is too big in the context of the façade it is located on and that the team should considered a slight reduction.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Stated that he is in agreement on the size of the primary sign – that 200 square feet is too large.

A. Hidalgo – Property Owner Representative – Stated that Level 99 will be largest tenant in the building, but does not have the benefit of being a ground floor tenant space, so the team is interested in maximizing signage in order to ensure customers will be able to find the business.

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Asked whether any of the glass façade is spandrel glass or it is all transparent. Ms. Hidalgo stated that first (lowest) row of glass panels would be spandrel, but the second and third rows would be transparent.

R. Goff – Level 99 Representative – Stated that the view of the space directly behind the glass wall would be of the restaurant, so lighting will be more subdued than in some of their other locations.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

2.
 - a. February 22, 2024 – **Motion: Lawler; Second: McClure – Approved**
 - b. May 9, 2024 – **Motion: McClure; Second: Lawler – Approved**

COMMUNICATION

3. None

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

4. None

ADJOURNMENT: 5:35 PM

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

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Leon Davidoff, Town Clerk