

Issued November 12, 2024

DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
*****SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES*****
THURSDAY, OCTOBER 24, 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, Liz Pang & Jenna McClure Alternate: David Hines

ABSENT: Jim Lawler

Staff: Todd Dumais, Town Planner, Brian Pudlik, Senior Planner & Robert Gosselin, Associate Planner

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **1800 Asylum Avenue** – Study session preparatory to the submission of a potential new Special Development District application for the redevelopment of the western portion of the former UConn campus located at 1800 Asylum Avenue. The applicant contemplates the redevelopment to include the demolition of all existing buildings and the construction of eleven (11) new buildings, including commercial / mixed-use and residential, a new private roadway and surface parking lots along with associated site improvements, including landscaping pedestrian pathways and site drainage. *(Most recent prior study session on 8-29-24)*

T. Dumais – Town Planner - Provided a very brief statement on the item and noted that the goal of the meeting is for the design team to present the changes that have been made to the plan in response to the DRAC’s written comments.

L. Gilmore – Project Architect – In response to the written comments provided by the DRAC to the design team, Ms. Gilmore made the following comments:

- ***Made adjustments throughout the presentation materials to align rendered images to proposed material sample images.***
- ***Building 7E/F, formally the easternmost townhome building on Asylum, has been eliminated.***
- ***Alignment of crosswalks were adjusted on the plans to better line up with sidewalk ramps.***
- ***Regarding the step down in the plaza behind building 3, the team reviewed any potential code issues and found none. They are reviewing options for ADA access to the lower level of the plaza, in addition to options for making the step down more visible.***
- ***In response to the DRAC’s concern that a kitchen may be located behind the glass wall at the northeast corner of building 3, the team noted that there are no plans to locate the kitchen there and the glass wall depicted in the renderings would remain.***
- ***Clarified the proposed parking configuration in the southwest parking area, due to the apparent presentation of alternate options in the plans reviewed by the DRAC. Mr. Bruton, Project Engineer, stated that the site is under-parked based on zoning requirements, therefore***

the depictions of parking layouts with fewer parking spaces will not work. Mr. Bruton did note that the overall square footage of the proposed parking area has been reduced through reduction in parking space depths and reduced drive aisle widths.

- *In response to a DRAC comment on the location of proposed mechanical equipment for building 3, Ms. Gilmore stated that all equipment will be located within enclosed rooms and not visible.*
- *Regarding the roof material for the lower portion of building 3, Ms. Gilmore stated that they are reviewing options to address the concern of a dirty EPDM roof being visible from upper-level apartments of building 2.*
- *Clarified that the landscaping in front of the Lawler and Asylum townhomes planted with ornamental plants only in the area immediately adjacent to the sidewalk. The remainder of the yard will be grass, which is consistent with existing homes across the street.*
- *Regarding options presented for building 6, Ms. Gilmore stated that the team prefers “option B”, which is consistent with the DRAC’s preference to provide glazing at all amenity areas. Ms. Gilmore also stated that the plans have been updated to show signage above the main entry door.*
- *In response to a DRAC comment regarding ensuring that the structure of the townhomes is designed so water does not penetrate into the walls, Ms. Gilmore stated that the team will review the wall section carefully at the construction drawing stage.*
- *Regarding a concern raised about window sizes on buildings 7A/B, Ms. Gilmore stated that they reviewed all windows to ensure correct sizing. In addition, the rendering was corrected to show the roof color as light grey, consistent with the material palette.*
- *For building 7C/D gables were added across the front and siding colors on the left and right side of the building now match. Trees were also added east of building 7 C/D where building 7 E/F was located.*
- *For building 1, the grocery store, the team is reviewing the color palette to ensure it is not overly dark. Also, regarding the grocery store, Ms. Gilmore indicated that an 8-inch stone base is proposed to protrude beyond the primary wall, which will prevent grocery carts from damaging the siding material.*
- *On building 3, the DRAC questioned why a roll-up door was shown on the west side of the building. Ms. Gilmore stated they swapped out the roll-up door with a standard door and show it being painted to match the building. On the same building, in response to a DRAC comment on the proposed signage located on the northerly portion of the westerly façade, Ms. Gilmore indicated that they are only identifying potential sign placement locations and the initial intent is for this to be a single-tenant building.*
- *In response to the DRAC’s comment on ensuring durable materials being used in all reach-zones around buildings 3 and 4, Ms. Gilmore stated that landscaping will be provided around the perimeter of both buildings, which will prevent frequent contact of the buildings. Also, regarding buildings 3 and 4, in response to the DRAC’s question on whether the mullions shown would be large enough to support the large glass openings, Ms. Gilmore stated that they confirmed feasibility.*
- *Regarding a DRAC question on the proposed material for louvered areas, Ms. Gilmore stated that all louvers would be extruded aluminum.*

- *In all locations, the plans have been updated to differentiate between transformer pads and HVAC pads.*
- *In response to the DRAC's question on meter locations for buildings 7A/B, Ms. Gilmore stated that meters would be located on the west and east building elevations, respectively.*
- *In response to the DRAC's concern on placement of the primary tenant monument sign at the Trout Brook Drive site entry, Ms. Gilmore stated that it will be located 70-feet back from Trout Brook Drive, which is far enough that it will not cause traffic issues. In addition, the internal, smaller tenant signs have been reduced in size.*

H. Schweitzer – DRAC member – Questioned whether something could be added to the large gable ends on buildings 7A/B to break up the large expanse of siding. Ms. Gilmore stated that they will explore options for a vent or similar element.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Regarding the stepped-down element in the plaza behind building 3, questioned how the edge condition can be made safer to prevent risk of falling. Ms. Gilmore stated that they are working with the Landscape Architect on possible options to address the concern. She further stated that she is aware of similar elements that have been successfully incorporated into other projects, therefore a version of what is being proposed should be possible.

J. McClure – DRAC member – Stated that the landscaping proposed along the Lawler Road and Asylum Avenue frontages still appears formal and out of place relative to existing conditions. The proposed landscaping appears to separate the proposed development from the neighborhood rather than stitching it together. Regarding the building 3 kitchen location, Ms. McClure asked whether a location had been determined. Ms. Gilmore stated that it is likely to be located beneath the proposed mechanical room, but the plans are not final yet.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Questioned whether buildings 7A/B could be separated into four buildings and spread out in order to reduce their massing on Asylum. Ms. Gilmore stated that doing so would result in the loss of units and would push the buildings closer to wetlands.

Ms. Pang also asked whether evergreen trees are proposed within the development, as none are currently depicted on the renderings. Mr. Bruton confirmed that evergreens are proposed within the development and Ms. Gilmore stated she would work with Mr. Bruton to identify locations and update the renderings accordingly.

D. Hines – DRAC member – Questioned whether the proposed westerly extent of the southwest parking area is inside of or consistent with the existing developed area. Mr. Bruton stated that the proposed parking area is slightly inside of the existing hardscape footprint. Mr. Hines indicated that he is satisfied with that. He also indicated that he is pleased with the elimination of building 7E/F.

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Requested that additional details be provided for the trash/recycling enclosures. Ms. Gilmore stated that they will make sure to provide them in the next package.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Asked whether building 7 C/D could be shifted slightly further east to allow buildings 7 A/B to get moved further from the entry drive. Ms. Gilmore stated that they are currently proposed at 32 feet and believed that it is a sufficient distance. Mr. Flemming agreed.

Laura Gilmore – Project Architect – stated that the team has been asked by the proposed grocery store tenant to modify the front of the store to allow for a dedicated entry door and an exit door. She went on to present two options, both introduce additional glazing to the front of the building, but one is wider and bulkier, while the other is narrower and offers space for outdoor seating on the west side of the expanded entry. Both the DRAC and the design team expressed a preference for the narrow option with an outdoor seating area.

The final portion of the meeting was spent reviewing material samples.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

2. Minutes from the August 29, 2024 Special Meeting: ***Motion; McClure/Second; Schwseitzer. Approved***

COMMUNICATION

4. None

TOWN PLANNER'S REPORT:

5. None

ADJOURNMENT: 5:45 PM

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

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Leon Davidoff, Town Clerk