

Draft Meeting Minutes
Hartford Design Review Committee
May 11, 2016

Members Present: Michael Davidson (via phone), Jonathan Schechtman and Chair Denise Welch-May.

Staff Present: Lori Hirshfield

Others Present: Lou Becker, Jay Barrett, Cynthia Silvey, Brooke Ciardelli and Byron Hathorn representing Rio Blanco.

A meeting of the Design Review Committee (DRC) was held on Thursday, May 11, 2016 at the Hartford Town Hall, 171 Bridge Street in Room 1. Denise Welch-May called the meeting to order at 8:15 a.m.

1. Design Review Application by Main Street Renaissance, LLC for construction of an Assisted Living Facility on Gates Street in White River Junction, Lot 45-0810-000.

Lori Hirshfield introduced the application noting that this was the formal application public hearing follow the sketch plan review discussion at the March 29, 2016 Architect Lou Becker and landscape Architect Cynthia Silvery presented the application. Mr. Becker spoke about the historical perspective of the site, the irregular lot size and the context of the property in relationship to the varying scales of buildings along Gates Street, and the surrounding commercial and residential uses. He noted that the architecture is reflective of these properties, i.e. the front porch, hearth, back yard, and the built environment. He reviewed the varying heights of the building. It is lower and pulled back from the street, with the higher sections and building mass up against the hillside.

Ms. Silvery reviewed the landscaping plan which reflects the natural plantings along the hillside and moving into a more urban design along the street more tolerant to salt. Along Gates Street, the building design and landscaping are reflective of the front porch experience, with different outdoor spaces and “vertical landscaping” on the various floors and sides of the building to meet different needs.

Mr. Becker spoke about the form, massing and scale of the building in relationship to the slope. He pointed to patterns of front porches, lanterns and lighting found in structures within the community, and how these are reflected in the building design. He also reviewed the various building materials and colors shown in the application submittals. He discussed the windows, doors, trims, support bracing, stonewalls, metal work, interior and exterior lighting, and how these fit into the overall building design themes.

In response question, Mr. Becker noted that the color renditions on the paper handouts more closely reflected the true colors than the PowerPoint presentation. Denise Welch-May also asked about Metal Panel 3 which looked two-tone. Mr. Becker clarified that it is not, and the drawing was intended to reflect shadowing. He noted that he has sample building materials on order. Ms. Welch-May noted that the Committee would want to see these. Ms. Welch-May also asked about the aging process for the wood trim, concerned it could be blotchy for quite a while and inquired about treatments that could minimize this. Mr. Becker will look into this option.

Mr. Becker noted that the signage for the building has not been finalized, but will be subtle and integrated into the building.

Ms Welch-May stated that the proposed building design does a good job of integrating the material, defining the form and providing detailing that keep it from looking monolithic. It very successfully divides the spaces and provides details, including the streetscape, that invite people to look at it and enjoy what they see. Jonathan Schechtman stated that he concurs, noting that it is a very inspired design which solves most problems with the selection of materials. Mike Davidson agreed, adding that he appreciates how the design integrates Currier and Gates Streets into the downtown. All Committee members want to review the material samples and details for windows, doors and signage.

The meeting then opened for public comment.

Mike Morris asked if the building would be open to the public. Mr. Becker responded, as this is peoples' homes. However, there would be a sense of interaction between the street and the residents sitting outside, similar to a residential front porch. Also, people visiting residents could eat at the café as a guest.

Jonathan Schechtman noted that there was a letter from the public submitted and asked how to address it since some of the comments didn't appear to be within the jurisdiction of Design Review. The person submitting the comments chose not to present them Lori Hirshfield clarified that the Committee could comment on the design of the improvements needed to accommodate a particular use but not on the use itself.

Ms. Welch-May noted that she believes that the building would contribute to the overall design of the downtown and allows for connections with people in the downtown.

Jonathan Schechtman made a motion to approve the application as submitted, with the condition that the details on the material, light fixtures, windows, doors and signage be provided to the Design Review Committee for approval at a future special meeting. Denise Welch-May seconded the motion which then was approved unanimously.

The meeting concluded at 9:45 AM