

From: Lois Laczko November 1, 2010 4:14:39 PM
Subject: Design Review Board Minutes 08/10/2010 ADOPTED
To: SimsburyCT_DesignMin
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ADOPTED

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
MINUTES – SPECIAL MEETING
AUGUST 10, 2010

Project: THE HOP BROOK DEVELOPMENT -
WEST STREET & GRIST MILL ROAD

PAD Phase: PRELIMINARY PLAN DEVELOPMENT

A. SITE AND LANDSCAPE ORGANIZATION

1. Ecological Context

Identify and preserve significant natural features and views.
Maintain visual privacy between public and private spaces.
Protect places with unique character.
Avoid development on ridgeline or hilltop.

The Hop Brook Development builds on existing significant natural and historic features by organizing around two ponds, creating a linear park as a buffer between West Street and the new townhouses, incorporating new work adjacent to an existing open space and a commercial building and by preserving mature trees where possible.

Recommendation: Identify a Contract Limit Line on the Site Plan for tree removal along the north edge of the townhouses for approval.

2. Cultural and Historic Context

Continue pre-existing cultural/historical patterns.
Separate incompatible uses with large open space or natural

buffers.

Allow a mix of uses.

The Development continues pre-existing patterns in terms of building composition and disposition and protects important views along West Street while introducing more desirable density close to Simsbury Center. New mixed-uses however are not fully integrated since the predominant component is residential.

Recommendation: None

3. Traffic Circulation

Minimize conflicts between pedestrian and vehicle movement.
Minimize traffic lane widths while allowing for vehicular

manoeuvring.

- Incorporate landscaping and scenic views along circulation system.
- Provide safely textured and decoratively patterned walking surfaces.

- Maintain fire and emergency vehicle access.

The Development utilizes the two main existing streets for fronting the new structures and introduces sidewalks along each that connect eventually with existing sidewalks along West Street. The connection is made more interesting by passing over the wooden bridge and through an historic building. The Developer intends to elaborate on and improve the pedestrian experience at the intersection of Mill Pond Land and Grist Mill Road.

Recommendation: None

4. Off Street Parking

- Locate the majority of parking at the rear and remainder at the side yard.

- Screen (with landscaping, berms, fencing, etc.) parking area from street view.

- Protect end row parking with curbed landscaped areas.

- Provide a landscaped divider no more than ten parking spaces in a row.

- Landscape areas between the parking and the building.

- Provide space for snow placement or removal.

In general off street parking is managed by breaking up the numbers of spaces into smaller groups and by locating most behind buildings. The townhouse development has minimal parking with two driveway spaces for guests and two garage spaces per dwelling unit.

One of the concerns voiced by DRB members is the excavation for new parking between the Grist Mill and West Street including construction of a new retaining wall. The elevation differences between the parking level and the street require a retaining wall of approximately the same height as the existing wall but located much closer to West Street. There will be a protective fence required at the top of the wall to meet building codes. The Developer stated that the wall will have a stone veneer facing the parking area rather than concrete and the fence will be ornamental metal, not chain linked.

Recommendation: A drawing section from West Street through the retaining wall to the Grist Mill façade would be helpful to evaluate the issues of screening parking and also the amount of paving. Attention should be given to landscaping and lighting in this area as well.

5. Public Spaces

- Encourage facilities for public gathering and passive recreation.

- Locate active recreation open space convenient to roads and public parking.

- Place spatial elements to establish neighborhood landmarks.

- Utilize peripheral green belts separating individual neighborhoods.

- Use greenways and trails to encourage active recreation.

The Development has provisions for connecting to a trail system for active recreation as well as the linear park/sitting area for public gathering. The Mail Center is the primary Public Space placed as a “gateway” element. The developer anticipates elaborating on the design for this area.

Recommendation: Study options to give more design importance to the gateway element with landscaping and/or streetscape elements.

6. Landscape and Street Tree Plan

Integrate mature vegetation into the design.

Use plant material as design features and not exclusively as buffers.

Utilize plant material as transitional edges between dissimilar land uses.

Create identifiable places utilizing open space and vegetation.

Balance the quantity of landscaping with the scale of the development.

Landscape around buildings.

Create tree canopies for environmental and spatial impact at maturity.

Protect and incorporate significant quantities of existing trees.

DRB members encourage the developer to identify as many mature trees as possible before site clearing begins in order to protect and preserve as many important ones as possible. Where removal is unavoidable then the developer should attempt to replant areas especially exposed to West Street to maintain the natural buffer.

Recommendation: Integrate as many existing mature trees with new as possible and practicable.

7. Site Lighting

Avoid relative brightness differences with adjacent dissimilar land uses.

Use lighting fixtures with shielding devices or sharp cut-off refractors.

Select from a “family” of standards for specific character areas.

Coordinate lighting fixture assembly with architecture it serves.

Site lighting is not developed in any detail on the site plan at this phase of the drawings.

Recommendation: Choose a lamp fixture style that compliments the architecture and a luminaire that has a true color-corrected source.

8. Streetscape Components

Use sidewalks as organizing elements.

Include benches and/or low walls for pedestrian use.

Enliven street with fences, kiosks, stone walls, planting beds, sculpture, etc.).

Install trash receptacles at assembly areas.

Illuminate assembly areas and street for visibility and safety.

With the exception of sidewalks and crosswalks the streetscape detailing is not fully developed at this stage of the drawings. The developer intends to

study more detailing at the pond closest to the Pondview at Hop Brook units.

Recommendation: None

B. ARCHITECTURE

1. Site Context

Organize architecture with prominent natural site features.
Balance the proportions of the building scale with the site.
Orient building (horizontal or vertical) to flow from related

landforms.

Design a visible main entrance from the primary public vantage points.

Provide a logical and visually appealing approach to the entrance.

The general schematic organization and distribution of architecture for the two main areas follow from and blend with the various site features. The Development works with rather than works against the site contours.

Recommendation: None

2. Historic Context

Preserve and/or enhance natural views and features of historical importance.

Incorporate historic cultural landmarks into new development.

Preserve and reinforce historic scale, massing, and proportion.

The general design references the appropriate historic sources including the Grist Mill and pond features very well. Any additional detailing to be designed should be consistent in style.

Recommendation: None

3. Form and Space

Create interesting and proportional outdoor spatial relationships.

Establish building rhythms with adjacent building forms for visual continuity.

Create variety using building clustering, surface recesses, and projections.

Avoid long and large unarticulated structures.

Use open spaces to provide clear boundaries between different land uses.

Establish visual and functional focal points.

The repetition of the designs and number of units placed linearly in the Overlook at Hop Brook borders on monotonous. The significant grade changes along Mill Pond Drive also will require a study of the building floor relationships and roof designs and should be studied in detail to minimize grade transitions between buildings that might require a retaining wall. The Pondview at Hop Brook does not pose the same concern because of placement of smaller units between the two main structures along Grist Mill

Road and also the partial obscurity of those remaining buildings in the rear.

Recommendation: Study design options for the townhouses along Mill Pond to vary the number of units in each building and/or increasing the number of design models to create variety.

4. Scale, Massing and Proportion

Balance building bulk and size with its site.

Break larger building volumes into smaller forms.

Maintain prevailing building height, length and width standards.

Create variety through compatibility rather than conformity.

Strive for visual simplicity rather than unnecessary complexity.

DRB members are generally satisfied with the building height-separation relationships on the entire site. The overall sections show a building to street to building relationship that works without being confined. Once again it is important to create variety through compatibility rather than conformity wherever possible.

Recommendation: None

5. Rooflines, Facades and Entrances

Reference adjacent façade detail elevations and rhythms.

Apply consistent and historically correct architectural detailing throughout.

Build elements to human scale at sidewalk level.

Define and accentuate entrances for individual separate tenants.

Create an agreeable pedestrian environment for comfort and safety.

Observe historic precedents wherever possible.

All rooflines and facades are unified within the historic context of the site. The building architectural elements provide human scale throughout the site. However, some DRB members are concerned about entrances not being located on what appears to be the building frontage along Grist Mill Road. Sidewalks pass between buildings to side entrances for the bottom level suites.

Recommendation: Study whether the two bottom level units in the three buildings along Grist Mill Road could be accessed directly from the street elevation.

6. Surfaces

Avoid visual overload from too many materials and colors.

Create visual variety using proportional architectural elements.

Select natural materials where possible over vinyl, aluminum, or

EIFS.

Coordinate building color, materials, architectural form, and detailing.

The overall use of materials and detailing is consistent and appropriate to the general context. The developer has chosen vinyl siding and trim for practicality and economy. That reasoning is acceptable given the size and nature of this project. The architect intends to have a monochromatic color scheme to match the existing Grist Mill building and roof but may introduce

additional colors later in the process.

Recommendation: None

7. Service Areas

Screen all ground or concrete pad-mounted equipment.

Locate and screen accessory buildings and functions.

Conceal garage doors and loading areas from view from surrounding streets.

The service area is well screened from the right-of-way by landscape buffering.

Recommendation: None

GENERAL COMMENT:

A flow chart outlining the stage by stage process and requirements within that stage for each Board and Commission involved for this and any PAD Application would be very helpful for both the members and the applicant.

Kevin Gray made a motion that the Design Review Board has reviewed the proposed Hop Brook development plan and finds the concept generally consistent with our Guidelines for Community Design. We refer this matter to the Zoning Commission with our recommendation that the project be approved for further consideration of the Final Site Plan under the Planned Area Development Zoning Regulation. The motion was seconded by John Stewart and passed unanimously.

Present were: Emil Dahlquist, Kevin Gray, Charlie Stephenson, Rich Schoenhardt, John Stewart, John Carroll, Bill Gardner, Mark Naccarato, and Tony Drapelick.