

ZONING COMMISSION MINUTES

**CITY OF NORWALK
ZONING COMMISSION
SPECIAL MEETING
MARCH 26, 2008**

PRESENT: Jackie Lightfield, Chair; Andrea Light; James White; Bob Keyes; Larry Bentley; John Tobin; Adam Blank

STAFF: Mike Greene; Mike Wrinn

OTHERS: Attorney Andrew Glickson; Kim Morque; Richard Yancey; Joe Balskus; Phillip Katz; Susan VanBenschoten; Al Ziedens; Gordon Sweeney; Edward J. Musanti, Jr.; Mark Wilson; Nick Pacella

I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Lightfield called the meeting to order at 7:30 pm.

II. ROLL CALL

Mr. Greene took the roll call.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

a. #2-08SPR/#2-08CAM—95/7 Ventures LLC—105-141 West Avenue/3-11 Reed Street/1-41 & 62-64 Putnam Avenue—North of Reed Street--+ 605,000 square foot mixed use development (Phase 1) in a Design District Development Park

Ms. Lightfield opened the public hearing. Ms. Light read the legal notice. Ms. Lightfield went over the ground rules of a public hearing. The Commission agreed to consider Items III a. and III b. together.

Attorney Glickson, representing the applicant, discussed the “unified design park master plan.” He added that conformity is determined on a site-wide basis. He stated that traffic and drainage are the remaining issues regarding the site, which is located in a coastal zone. Attorney Glickson turned in the green cards.

Mr. Morque introduced his development team. Mr. Yancey, an architect, showed slides of an overview of the project, including the seven proposed buildings and a landscape plan. He discussed the phases of the plan, indicating that phase one is retail; phase two is residential; and phase three is hotel, yet its not part of this application. He discussed the

pedestrian-friendly nature of the proposal, pointing out the tree-lined streets and the public open space areas. He explained the details of a seasonal water feature and mentioned the site's possibilities as far as seasonal use.

Mr. Katz, a civil engineer, discussed the drainage system. He explained that there were two drainage systems, one north of Reed Street and one south of Reed Street. He described how green roofs would help reduce run-off and how the applicant planned to improve storm water quality by installing drains and sediment traps.

Ms. VanBenschoten, a traffic consultant, summarized the traffic study, explaining that the seven intersections in the area were expected to operate at an acceptable "level of service." She discussed other amenities, such as open-space, paved crosswalks and pedestrian connections to adjacent commercial areas, parks and neighborhoods. Ms. Lightfield asked for a picture indicating these pedestrian connections.

Mr. Balskus, a traffic engineer, showed two boards, one with off-site and one with on-site improvements. There was a discussion of peak volume of traffic near the site. Mr. Balskus discussed the new signals, the synchronized system, and video detection planned for the site. Mr. White asked if the Commission would have any input about whether synchronization would be required and whether there would be a review of traffic on Route 7. Mr. Wrinn stated that there must be some input on the part of the state, not just the city. He said that the Commission could add such a recommendation.

Ms. VanBenschoten discussed the traffic calming features of the plan, pointing out that texturized and colored sidewalks and crosswalks will help to slow down drivers and reduce jay-walking. She also discussed transit in the area, included proposed shuttle connections to the Norwalk train station, as well as an all day shuttle bus service. Mr. White asked about the buses' ability and willingness to pull all the way out of traffic. A discussion followed. Ms. Lightfield stated that a mandatory bus pull-off would be a condition for approval.

Ms. Lightfield asked who would be responsible for the common areas of the site, including snow-removal and trash-removal services. Mr. Morque stated that a community association would be formed when multiple owners are in place. There was a discussion of the access road behind the buildings near the railroad tracks. Mr. Yancey discussed the fire department's perspective on this access road.

Mr. Blank asked if the hotel and the residential buildings would both have green roofs. Mr. Yancey discussed the green roofs with relation to storm water runoff and surface parking lots. A brief discussion of parking at the site followed.

Ms. Lightfield opened the public hearing to members of the public.

Al Ziedens, of Pine Street, read a letter in support of the project. He mentioned the neighborhood association's concerns regarding traffic patterns at the site.

Gordon Sweeney, of Outlook Drive, stated his concern with traffic in the area, adding that there is not a pedestrian signal on his street and that Garner Street is too narrow to accommodate traffic.

Edward J. Musanti, Jr., of the Greater Norwalk Chamber of Commerce, spoke in support of the proposal, adding that the project is a significant image-builder to the city, especially from the highway.

Mark Wilson, of Washington Street, stated his concern about traffic, especially on West Avenue. He added that I-95 is also a concern, if it backs up. He also stated that the public plaza on the site does not seem like a public space.

Nick Pacella, past president of the South Norwalk Business Association, supported the application, stating that the site will link together a network of roads that have gone nowhere for years. He added that the proposal was exciting from a business perspective.

Mr. Balskus addressed the public's concerns regarding peak hours and other traffic concerns.

Mr. Glickson added that the applicant is under "triple restraints" regarding the site. He cited letters from both the Maritime Aquarium and the Golden Hill Association in support of the proposal.

Ms. Lightfield closed the public hearing.

b. #3-08SPR/#3-08CAM—95/7 Ventures LLC—51-63 West Ave/15-25 Putnam Avenue/Reed Street—South of Reed Street—District 95/7 SoNo + 106,500 square foot mixed use development (Phase 1) in a design district development park

This item was considered together with Item III a.

IV. REPORT OF PLAN REVIEW COMMITTEE, JAMES WHITE, CHAIR

a. Action on Item III a.

The Commission discussed condition #5 with regard to a bus pull-out condition.

**** MR WHITE MOVED: RESOLVED** that site plan application #2-08SPR and coastal site plan application #2-08CAM; 95/7 Ventures, LLC - 105-141 West Avenue/3-11 Reed Street/1-41 & 62-64 Putnam Avenue - ±605,000 square foot mixed use development (Phase 1) with 507,596 sq ft office, 88,094 sq ft of retail (including 15,000 GSF of restaurant space) in 4 new buildings within a design district development park as shown on a set of plans entitled "District 95/7 South Norwalk, Site Plan Review Submission" by Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, LLP; MPFP; and Stantec Consulting, dated

January 17, 2008 as revised to March 13, 2008, be approved, subject to the following conditions:

1. That the landscaping plan as revised to show City standard street lights on Reed Street, moveable seating with 36 tables and 144 chairs distributed among three plazas, and the Phase 1 parking and landscape plan for the East parcel, be made a part of this approval; and
2. That the final design for the retail stores located on West Avenue (NW & West buildings) providing multiple entrances to accommodate multiple tenants and providing visual and physical access to and from West Avenue be submitted to the Zoning Commission for review and approval; and
3. That the applicant's Connectivity Plan to improve pedestrian connectivity along Crescent Street walking north under I-95 to Mathews Park be made a part of this approval; and
4. That all site improvements shown on the above-referenced plans (including any item not shown as part of the City's plans BR 2007-2 for Reed St underpass & RD 2008-1 for West Ave) are the applicant's responsibility including sculptures, water features, and any street improvement upgrades; and
5. That the final design of the bus shelter (with no advertising) and a bus pull-out designed with pavers and bollards along West Avenue be submitted to the Zoning Commission for review and approval; and
6. That a stormwater maintenance plan, including an annual maintenance schedule, be submitted prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance to verify that the proposed subsurface infiltration system will be maintained; and
7. That a green roof maintenance plan be provided prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance; and
8. That any modifications to the approved plans (including any changes to the approved site details such as granite curbs, bike racks, water features, sculptures, plaza improvements, bus shelters, etc) or any changes to the design district development park (including #3-08SPR) be submitted to the Zoning Commission for review and approval; and
9. That the proposed helicopter landing site (NE building), proposed generators (NE and NW buildings) and proposed signage shown on the above plans are not part of this approval and will be submitted in the future as a separate application; and
10. That all soil and erosion controls be installed prior to the start of any construction or site work; that silt sacks be installed in all existing and proposed catch basins, and that additional controls be installed at the direction of the Commission's staff, as needed; and
11. That any graffiti on the site, now or in the future, be immediately removed; and
12. That a surety (in an amount to be determined by staff) be submitted to guarantee the installation of the required improvements and that a Connecticut licensed engineer certify that the required improvements were installed to City standards; and
13. That all traffic improvements be complete prior to the issuance of a final certificate of zoning compliance (CZC) and that within six months of the issuance of the CZC, a follow-up traffic study be submitted; and
14. That a permit from the State Traffic Commission and all CEAC signoffs be submitted prior to the start of construction; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reason for this action is that this application complies with applicable coastal resource and use policies; and
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this application complies with Section 118-502 Reed-Putnam Design District Design District Development Parks in Subareas A & B and with the applicable sections of the Building Zone Regulations for the City of Norwalk.
BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the effective date of this action be April 4, 2008.

** MS. LIGHT SECONDED.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

a. Action on Item III b.

The Commission discussed how to assure that the items in condition #9 are regulated. The Commission also discussed condition #12. Ms. Lightfield agreed to add language regarding the Southeast building landscape plans.

** MR. WHITE MOVED: RESOLVED that site plan application #3-08SPR and coastal site plan application #3-08CAM; 95/7 Ventures, LLC - 51-63 West Avenue/15-25 Putnam Avenue - ±106,500 square foot mixed use development (Phase 1) with 98,230 sq ft office, 8,000 sq ft restaurant (with 4,000 sq ft active area) within a design district development park as shown on a set of plans entitled "District 95/7 South Norwalk, Site Plan Review Submission" by Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners, LLP; MPFP; Studio ABK; and Stantec Consulting, dated January 17, 2008 as revised to March 13, 2008, be approved, subject to the following conditions:

1. That the revised plans for the restaurant (SE building) providing physical and visual access to and from Reed Street, providing pedestrian amenities and seating along Reed Street and showing decorative pavers and bollards for the service drive to limit vehicular access, be made part of this approval; and
2. That all site improvements shown on the above-referenced plans (including any item not shown as part of the City's plans BR 2007-2 for Reed St underpass & RD 2008-1 for West Ave) are the applicant's responsibility including the grand staircase, sculptures and water features, and any street improvement upgrades; and
3. That a stormwater maintenance plan, including an annual maintenance schedule, be submitted prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance to verify that the proposed subsurface infiltration system will be maintained; and
4. That a green roof maintenance plan be provided prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Zoning Compliance; and
5. That any modifications to the approved plans (including any changes to the approved site details such as granite curbs, bike racks, grand stairway, water features, sculptures, plaza improvements, etc) or any changes to the design district development park (including #2-08SPR) be submitted to the Zoning Commission for review and approval; and
6. That the proposed generator (SE Building) and proposed signage shown on the above plans is not a part of this approval and will be submitted in the future as a separate application; and
7. That all soil and erosion controls be installed prior to the start of any construction or site work; that silt sacks be installed in all existing and proposed catch basins, and that additional controls be installed at the direction of the Commission's staff, as needed; and
8. That any graffiti on the site, now or in the future, be immediately removed; and

9. That a surety (in an amount to be determined by staff) be submitted to guarantee the installation of the required improvements and that a Connecticut licensed engineer certify that the required improvements were installed to City standards; and
10. That all traffic improvements be complete prior to the issuance of a final certificate of zoning compliance (CZC) and that within six months of the issuance of the CZC, a follow-up traffic study be submitted; and
11. That a permit from the State Traffic Commission and all CEAC signoffs be submitted prior to the start of construction; and
12. That the revised landscape plan for the SE building be incorporated into the plans; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the reason for this action is that this application complies with applicable coastal resource and use policies; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this application complies Section 118-502 Reed-Putnam Design District Design District Development Parks in Subareas A & B and with the applicable sections of the Building Zone Regulations for the City of Norwalk.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the effective date of this action be April 4, 2008.

** MR. BENTLEY SECONDED.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. COMMENTS OF DIRECTOR

Mr. Greene reiterated support for the plan.

VI. COMMENTS OF COMMISSIONERS

There were none tonight.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

** MS. LIGHTFIELD MOVED TO ADJOURN.

** MS. LIGHT SECONDED.

** MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 pm.

Respectfully submitted by Charlene Smith.