

ARCHITECTURAL AND SITE DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE
MINUTES OF THE MAY 11, 2022 REGULAR MEETING

The meeting commenced at 4:30 PM Meeting Room A and via Zoom.

1. ROLL CALL

Present: Brian Davis, Chairman; Debra DeVries-Dalton, Vice Chairman; Mark Branse, Secretary; David Flinchum; Jeff Kamm; Amy Luzi and Robert Shipman; Rebecca Augur, Director of Planning & Land Use Services, Gregory Foran, Parks Superintendent/Tree Warden and Jonathan E. Mullen, AICP, Planner

Chairman Davis called the meeting to order at 5pm.

400 HEBRON AVENUE – in connection with proposed change of use to specialty grocer, construct appurtenant delivery/refuse area and employee parking for grocer on west side of building utilizing 366 Hebron Avenue & 7 Linden Street – Town Center Zone – Jonathan Sczurek, Megson, Heagle & Friend, C.E. & L.S., LLC – Mark Vertucci, Fuss & O’Neill, Inc. – Andrea Gomes, Hinckley, Allen & Snyder LLP - H374, LLC (Allan Schwartz), applicant –

Review Formal Recommendation

The Committee approved the following motion:

MOTION - The Architectural and Site Design Review Committee (ASDRC/the Committee) forwards the following recommendation to the Town Plan and Zoning Commission regarding application of H374, LLC for a Section 12 Special Permit With Design Review– 400 Hebron Avenue, 366 Hebron Avenue and 7 Linden Street

UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED 05-11-22

Statement:

The ASDRC has reviewed the proposal for 400 Hebron Avenue and finds that the proposed project is not appropriate for this location within the Town Center Village District (TCVD/the District) for the reasons outlined below

1. **The project is inconsistent with the existing building and streetscape.**
2. **The site access is inconsistent with the TCVD guidelines.**
3. **The proposal is inconsistent with the pattern of open spaces and buildings in the TCVD.**
4. **The proposed landscaping does not promote a pedestrian friendly use or activity.**
5. **The proposal is not an appropriate scale, proportion, massing and detailing of for the District. It also does not continue the rhythm of the built environment.**

Summary

- 400 Hebron Avenue’s current design was approved a few years ago, and at that time was consistent with the current objectives of the TCVD design initiatives in the following ways:
 - The building setback was appropriate for enhancement of village character

- Parking located at the rear of the building was appropriate
- Street activity along Hebron Avenue was enhanced by doors, windows, restaurants, dining patios sidewalks and landscaping
- Materials and scale were in keeping with TCVD objectives
- The development maintained the very important corner of Hebron Avenue & Linden Street for redevelopment of additional, community-enhancing improvements.
- However, the building at 400 Hebron Avenue, as approved a few years ago, was inconsistent with the current objectives of the TCVD design initiatives in the following ways:
 - The building massing and detail did not recognize or respond to the importance of the Hebron Avenue / Sycamore Street corner – an important gateway to the community. (fails to “reinforce existing buildings and streetscape pattern of buildings”)
 - Introduction of a flat roof is inconsistent with any building rooflines visible from the site, with most buildings in the TCVD, nor reflects objectives of the TCVD. (fails to “reinforce existing buildings and streetscape pattern of buildings”)
 - The long and low proportions of the building reflect common commercial strip mall development, not traditional village streetscape development. (“adverse impact on the district”)
- **The proposed new construction and changes to the existing building further the inconsistency with current objectives of the TCVD design initiatives in the following ways:**
 - Doors and windows have been removed and replaced with fake windows. Dining patios are no longer for dining, and have been reduced in size, and lack access to the building (“adverse impact on the district”).
 - The high-value Hebron Avenue/Linden Street corner is proposed to be demolished and converted into a loading facility and employee parking (“adverse impact on the district”).
 - The long, low inappropriate (strip mall) proportions of the existing building are proposed to be made longer and lower (“adverse impact on the district”).

Context

Every development site in Glastonbury is important and plays a significant role in establishing the physical character and image of our town. However, it is important to recognize that not all sites are equal and that some are more contributory to the definition and establishment of our character than others. For commercial development, ranked criteria that define the value of particular properties include:

- 1) Location - relative proximity to the Village Center
- 2) Visibility - defined by number of passers-by that will visibly experience the development
- 3) Gateway - location and visibility relative to major points of entry into town

A simple evaluation of 400 Hebron Avenue quickly identifies the property as ranking extremely high in importance regarding establishing and reinforcing Town character - arguably one of the most important (remaining) commercial development sites in Town, as illustrated relative to the criteria outlined above:

- 1) 400 Hebron property lies in what is considered the heart of the Town Center
- 2) Hebron Avenue and its associated traffic makes it one of the most visible sites in Town
- 3) The Downtown Glastonbury Route 2 exit ramp, and Hebron Avenue westbound traffic make this location one of the most notable and valuable opportunities to make a first impression for visitors to town, and the welcome home to our residents

It for these reasons, and many more that the ASDRC is resolute about providing design recommendations for 400 Hebron Avenue that appropriately reinforce the goals and objectives of the Village Center guidelines, and further, shall not adversely impact the district.

Background

400 Hebron Avenue's current design was approved a few years ago, and at that time was consistent with the current objectives of the TCVD design initiatives in the following ways:

- The building setback was appropriate for enhancement of village character
- Parking located at the rear of the building was appropriate
- Street activity along Hebron Avenue was enhanced by doors, windows, restaurants, dining patios sidewalks and landscaping
- Materials and scale were in keeping with TCVD objectives
- The development maintained the very important corner of Hebron Avenue & Linden Street for redevelopment of additional, community-enhancing improvements.

However, the building at 400 Hebron Avenue, as approved a few years ago, was inconsistent with the current objectives of the TCVD design initiatives in the following ways:

- The building massing and detail did not recognize or respond to the importance of the Hebron Ave. / Sycamore corner – an important gateway to the community. (fails to “reinforce existing buildings and streetscape pattern of buildings”)
- Introduction of a flat roof is inconsistent with any building rooflines visible from the site, with most buildings in the Village, nor does it reflect objectives of the TCVD. (fails to “reinforce existing buildings and streetscape pattern of buildings”)
- The long and low proportions of the building reflect common commercial “strip mall” development, not traditional village streetscape development. (“adverse impact on the district”)

Revised Proposal

The proposed changes to the existing building are further inconsistent with current objectives of the TCVD design initiatives in the following ways:

- Doors and windows have been removed and replaced with fake windows. Dining patios are no longer for dining, and have been reduced in size, and lack access to the building. The initial Owner's objective has been eliminated in current proposal. (“adverse impact on the district”)

- The high-value Hebron Avenue/Linden Street corner structures are proposed to be demolished and converted into a loading / trash facility and employee parking. (“adverse impact on the district”)
- The long, low inappropriate (strip mall) proportions of the existing building are proposed to be made longer and lower. (“adverse impact on the district”)

Note

Though the character of the existing building is inconsistent with the design guidelines of the TCVD (and architecture/planning best practices), the negative aspects were partially mitigated by the proposed activities, i.e., restaurants and mixed use - suitably activating and reinforcing the Hebron Avenue character with store front, patios and landscaping. The Owner claims that this approved concept is no longer feasible (in the near term) because of the impact of Covid-19 on the hospitality/restaurant sector. To meet their financial objectives, the developer suggests changes to the complex to accommodate a specialty grocer. In doing so the current proposal turns its back on Hebron Avenue, demolishes existing buildings at high-value corner, and replaces them with a loading/trash/parking facility. Though the committee recognizes and sympathizes with the proposer regarding current market conditions, we cannot recommend a proposal that fails to “reinforce existing buildings and streetscape patterns, and causes adverse impact on the District...” for decades to come.

Findings

The Architectural and Site Design Review Committee (ASDRC/the Committee) agrees that the applicant should have withdrawn their application for a Section 12.9 for Minor Change and refiled as a Section 12 Special Permit with Design Review. The proposed demolition of two existing buildings and the location of a parking lot and loading dock at the corner of Hebron Avenue and Linden street, and the lineal extension of what is already a long flat wall and roof line are very major changes and require the full review process of a Special Permit with Design Review. This is also the Town Plan and Zoning Commission’s first application under Section 4.19, Town Center Village District Overlay Zone, which entails an entirely new level of, and scope of, review, with its own separate criteria and jurisdiction. Part of that jurisdiction expressly includes review of demolition of existing buildings, as well as color.

The Committee finds that the entire site is under review per Section 12, and not just the proposed building addition and its surrounding area. While the ASDRC realizes that it would be unreasonable to require substantial change to a completed site, there are improvements that can and should be made to the site to bring more into conformance with the objectives of the TCVD and Section 12.

The applicant has excluded signage. The Committee shall review a sign package when proposed.

Recommendations Concerning Applicable Zoning Regulations Sections:

Town Center Village District Overlay Zone Criteria:

4.19.4 Objectives

All development in the TCVD shall be designed to achieve the following objectives:

a. The building and layout of buildings and included site improvements shall reinforce existing buildings and streetscape patterns and the placement of buildings and included site improvements shall assure there is no adverse impact on the district;

- **The proposal is inconsistent with existing buildings, streetscape patterns, and the placement of buildings and proposed site improvements adversely impact the District.**

- *Commentary:*

The demolition of 366 Hebron Avenue, and the substitution of a large gate, 3 large curb cuts, and parking; plus the linear extension of the flat wall and roof of the existing does not reinforce the desirable building and streetscape patterns, and it will clearly have an adverse impact on the District. This ASDRC was formed in part due to the public reaction to this "gateway" location that welcomes residents and visitors to the Town. This building could be located anywhere in the country and is not in keeping with what we would have wanted if we were reviewing it in advance. This is an important corner on an important street, and one of the most important locations in Town, with a marginal design. Now, the applicant seeks to take another corner site and turn it into a loading dock, trash storage area, and parking lot. This is not the kind of architecture or planning that would be allowed in any traditional village in New England. What's done is done as far as what exists, but this proposal will make it worse.

The applicant's own presentation shows the façade of Highland Park Market, which is far more compatible with Glastonbury's traditional architecture. The existing and the proposed building display none of that. This is a strip mall building in a town that is not a strip mall town. While recognizing that the building exists, it is not appropriate for its location, so the challenge is to make a small addition compatible with a building that is not compounding a mistake that has already been made. The house at the corner of Linden Street and Hebron Avenue could be a gem of a retail use, and it provided interest for the westerly side of the site. Two things that this site had going for it was the corner building and Linden Street and the street life that restaurants could provide, but now both of those elements are proposed to be removed. The Committee notes that the landscaping has been a focus because we are trying to screen something that should not be at the corner to begin with. A gate is not welcoming and we question if it will remain functional

- **The Committee finds that while the revised proposal is an improvement the Committee still finds the changes inappropriate and inconsistent with the District.**
- **The applicant should reevaluate the proposed site access and configuration from Hebron Avenue and Linden Street.**

- *Commentary*

A commercial loading facility is a completely inappropriate use for this important location and runs counter to the design criteria so clearly defined in the TCVD. Recommend smaller size delivery vehicles be used for the proposed .29 acre area to facilitate circulation.

- **A sightline study shall be performed to illustrate motorist and pedestrian views from public spaces, particularly from the traffic circle, and in terms of not only rooftop HVAC but also the Linden Street/Hebron Avenue corner, the Route 2 off ramp and other key locations.**

b. Open spaces within the proposed development shall reinforce open space patterns of the district, in the form and siting;

- **The proposal is inconsistent with the open space patterns of the District in form and in siting, and proposed site improvements adversely impact the District.**

- *Commentary*

The corner of Hebron Avenue and Linden Street should accommodate a building consistent with the architecture and the rhythmic patterns of the street (Hebron Avenue westward) and not an open space / parking and loading facility. The applicant stated that the site is very tight for a grocery store, but applicant needs to design in accordance with the District objectives and the criteria of Section 12.

c. Locally significant features of the site such as distinctive buildings or sight lines of vistas from within the district, shall be integrated into the site design;

- **The proposed improvements do not reflect locally significant features of the site such as distinctive buildings or sight lines of vistas from within the district, and are not integrated into the site design.**

- *Commentary*

The removal of the existing building at 366 Hebron Avenue will erode the fabric of the street, i.e. traditional rooflines, scale, rhythm, texture and character. It opens the loading and parking area to public view despite the proposed landscaping.

- **Although the Committee is not in favor of the proposed loading / parking / trash use, should the proposal be approved the Committee recommends significant landscaping and hardscape from all public views. Any gate solution should not look like a fence.**

- *Commentary*

The rolling fence will not screen the view from Hebron Avenue and the two overly wide curb cuts on Linden Street will not allow screening from that street for west-bound traffic on Hebron Avenue. The view from Hebron Avenue will be of a gate and not the existing retail building that was an adaptive reuse of an existing home that is part of the Hebron Avenue streetscape that leads people to the Town Center.

d. The landscape design shall complement the district's landscape patterns;

- The proposed landscaping does not promote pedestrian friendly use or activity or a village feel.

- *Commentary*

The landscaping should support a rhythmic pattern of shade trees supplemented with ornamental trees and other plant material. Consider providing pedestrian amenities such as street furnishings.

The existing modular block retaining wall is imposing and austere. The Committee recommends some kind of climbing or trailing plant material; and the striped area at the southerly area of the parking lot could and should be landscaped.

e. The exterior signs, site lighting and accessory structures shall support a uniform architectural theme if such a theme exists and be compatible with its surroundings; and

- **The applicant has yet to submit a sign application package.**

f. The scale, proportions, massing and detailing of any proposed building shall be in proportion to the scale, proportion, massing and detailing in the district.

- The proposed project is not of appropriate scale, proportion, massing and detailing for the District.

4.19.5 TCVD Design Guidelines

The Town Council shall develop Village District Design Guidelines for review by the Commission and ASDRC, and adoption by the Council. Such Guidelines may establish sub-districts. The Guidelines shall include design criteria to achieve the compatibility objectives stated in Section 4.19.4.]

- **Not applicable yet**

4.19.6 General Requirements

The following shall be considered in all development proposals requiring a zoning permit, site plan approval or special permit and in accordance with Section 4.19.3 within the TCVD:

- a. That proposed buildings or modifications to existing buildings be harmoniously related to their surroundings, and the terrain in the district and to the use, scale and architecture of existing buildings in the district that have a functional or visual relationship to a proposed building or modification;
 - **The proposed buildings and modifications are not harmonious with their surroundings or the terrain of the site i.e. rooflines, proportions, contextual rhythms, scale etc.**
- b. That all spaces, structures and related site improvements visible from public roadways be designed to be compatible with the elements of the area of the village district in and around the proposed building or modification;
 - **The lack of a Hebron Avenue building entrances discourages pedestrian circulation along the street.**
- c. That the color, size, height, location, proportion of openings, roof treatments, building materials and landscaping of commercial or residential property and any proposed signs and lighting be evaluated for compatibility with the local architectural motif and the maintenance of views, historic buildings, monuments and landscaping;
 - **See comments above.**
- d. That the removal or disruption of historic traditional or significant structures or architectural elements shall be minimized.
 - **The proposed design removes a traditional structure from a very visible corner at the gateway to the District. Considering the applicant has surplus parking and vacant building area the Committee recommends the applicant pursue alternative loading strategies that maintain the Linden Street corner.**

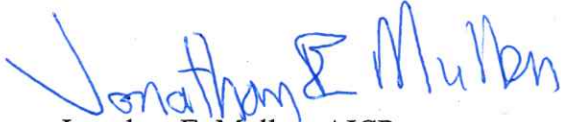
OTHER COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Changing from a restaurant use to a grocery store is a change that triggers design issues, and that is why the Committee is addressing it. This change of use will change the feel along Hebron Avenue.*
- *To add vibrancy to the Hebron Avenue streetscape windows shall accommodate displays (but should not simply become a vehicle for signs).*
- *Illuminated awnings shall be reviewed as part of the signage package.*
- *Screening from neighbors along Linden Street should be composed of a mix such as Vanderwolf Pine, American Holly, White Spruce or Blue Spruce. All plant materials should consider salt and wind tolerance.*

- *The applicant should develop a maintenance plan for all landscaping.*
- *Explore opportunities to plant trees along the block wall.*
- *Invasive plant species shall not be included in the project plant list (such as Vinca).*
- *The Committee recommends a tree assessment for the existing maple on Linden Street to determine the most appropriate course of action.*
- *Area residents will shop here, but they will have to walk entirely around the building because there is no door on Hebron Avenue. The Committee recommends access to the building from Hebron Avenue.*
- *The planting and screening along Linden Street is inadequate. While the Committee is not charged with reviewing traffic flow, that flow and the requirements for the assumed delivery vehicles have created a situation where the desired screening is not feasible on this site.*

Meeting adjourned at 6:30 pm

Respectfully submitted,



Jonathan E. Mullen, AICP
Planner