



TOWN HALL  
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October 21, 2009

**DRB Memorandum #2009-10**

**Memo to:** Bonnie Weeks, Building Commissioner  
Jonathan Tucker, Planning Director  
**From:** Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner  
**Subject:** DRB Meeting – October 20, 2009

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The Tuesday, October 20, 2009, meeting of the Design Review Board began at 6:37 p.m. in the First Floor Meeting Room of the Town Hall.

Design Review Board Members Janet Winston (Chair), Jonathan Salvon, Kathryn Grandonico, Anita Licis and Jim Wald were present.

Also present were Christine Brestrup, Senior Planner; Jason Skeels, Town Engineer; Peter Lillya of the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee; Terry Franklin, advocate for people with disabilities; Dave Williams of IAT Partnership LLP; Judy Teraspulsky of Judie's Restaurant; Kyle Wilson of Archipelago Investments, LLP; John Holmes and Alan Jones of Holst Architecture

**DRB 2010-00002, 43-51 North Pleasant Street, Archipelago Investments, LLP for Boltwood Place – construction of a new, mixed-use, LEED-certified building in downtown Amherst on the lot with Judie's Restaurant; ground floor to be retail/commercial with eleven (11) residential units above.**

*The Board did not choose to make a formal recommendation at this time; however Board members offered comments on the proposed building design. The Board members and the developer agreed that they would like to continue to meet to refine the design of this building, including materials, façade treatments, signs, lighting and landscaping, as the project moves forward.*

Dave Williams began the presentation for the applicant. He stated that the developers had chosen an architectural firm from Portland, Oregon, for the following reasons:

- LEED certification – the firm has extensive experience in obtaining LEED certification for projects, including gold and platinum certification;
- Infill – the firm has extensive experience with urban infill projects, fitting buildings into tight spaces in developed neighborhoods;
- Sensitivity – the firm has extensive experience with historically-referenced buildings, fitting new architecture into existing communities.

Mr. Williams described the site and its history. When the Boltwood Parking Garage was built it was intended to transform Boltwood Walk into a more vibrant downtown destination. Judie's Restaurant was expanded into the former Barselotti's property in 2006-2007. New buildings, including the Bistro 63/Monkey Bar and Restaurant and the Knights of Columbus building have been constructed, facing the new parking garage. The property where the proposed building will be constructed represents the only development site available in downtown Amherst that can be built upon without demolishing an existing building.

The building will be a mixed-use structure. It is located in the B-G (General Business) Zoning District, which allows mixed uses. The developers plan to return to the Design Review Board at a later date with detailed information about the building, including lighting and signage.

John Holmes and Alan Jones presented information about their firm and the architecture of the building.

Mr. Holmes stated that there are three parts to older buildings – the base, the main body and the top or cornice. This building follows that pattern. The base is meant to be inviting and pedestrian-friendly. The building will be pulled back from the property line on the south side, to provide a plaza-like space to draw pedestrians to the back door of Judie's and to the entrance for the new building. The building will have a "formal" front (the side facing Boltwood Parking Garage), but the sides of the building will be different in design and materials, to break down the mass of the building.

Mr. Jones described the materials. There will be several different materials on the faces of the building. This part of downtown Amherst contains buildings of red brick, stone, stucco, concrete and clapboard. The use of clapboard, painted a light color, was considered because a brick building of this height and width, on this site, would feel too heavy.

The south side of the building has more framework on display than does the front of the building. The parts of the building that are concrete will be clad with stucco from Rutland, Vermont. One of the possible materials for the windows will be aluminum-clad wood. There will be a custom color chosen for the window frames. The "storefront" will be finely-crafted wood. There will be a stucco coating on the concrete piers on the ground floor. The roof will be white TPO (Thermo-polyethylene Overlay) to reflect the light rather than absorb it, thus keeping the area cooler in summer. The guardrails for the balconies will be stainless steel.

Mr. Wilson gave a summary of LEED certification criteria, which include credits being given for:

- Sustainable siting of the building;
- Water efficiency;
- Efficiency in energy use;
- Materials and resources from local sources;
- Management of waste;
- Indoor environmental quality.

Ms. Licis and Mr. Salvon asked about the materials to be used on the building on the North Pleasant Street (west) side and on the north side. Mr. Williams stated that there would be a stairway on the west

side which must be entirely enclosed, with no windows and no penetration of any sort. The architects suggested that a vine growing on cables or a “natural green wall” might be used to enliven the blank north and west facades. Mr. Williams pointed out that vines grow on the north walls of the buildings at Amherst College.

Mr. Salvon expressed concern about the blankness of these walls and the materials proposed for the remainder of the building. He asserted that clapboards have a domestic scale which may not be appropriate for this building. He expressed concern about viewing a white and gray cube on the approach from the north.

Mr. Wald asked about the height of the proposed building and noted that the average height of the existing buildings in the vicinity was not as tall as the proposed building. Mr. Wilson stated that the building would be under the height limit of 50 feet required by zoning. Mr. Williams stated that although the buildings along North Pleasant and Main Street have fewer stories, each story is 13 to 14 feet, and therefore the existing buildings are not considerably shorter than the new building.

Mr. Wald referred to the Master Plan, noting that the town would like to move towards form-based codes. He stated that form-based codes require that new buildings fit in with the design [massing, scale, height] of the existing neighborhoods. He asked what effect such a high structure would have on the streetscape. He stated that the Historical Commission [of which he is chair] is in favor of infill, but is concerned about scale, mass and materials.

Mr. Salvon expressed concern about whether that the materials, textures and fenestration of the proposed building were working. He noted that the Design Review Board has the responsibility for helping to fit modernity into an older town fabric.

Ms. Licis stated that she is excited to see a modern building coming to downtown Amherst, and that perhaps the new building might be subdued in its height and in color. She noted that there are modern buildings in the vicinity (the Monkey Bar and the Knights of Columbus buildings).

Mr. Salvon stated that he finds the façade facing the garage to be acceptable, he would like the designers to try to integrate brick into the design, and there is a need to modulate the design on the north and west sides of the building.

Ms. Licis suggested scoring the plane of the north and west facades, adding texture and using light to break up the blankness.

Ms. Winston agreed with the comments of Mr. Salvon and Ms. Licis. She agreed that the façade facing the Boltwood Garage is acceptable, but finds that there is too much white. She suggested adding brick. She also suggested that brick might help the north and west sides, to tie the new building in with the existing buildings.

Mr. Williams stated that he is not in favor of using brick.

Mr. Wald stated that he agrees with [the concept of] modern architecture and that the Master Plan calls for infill, mixed use and verticality in the downtown area.

Mr. Holmes suggested that the architects would be willing to look at other materials but would like to maintain the “lightness” of the building.

Mr. Wald suggested that the architects look at the Helen Hunt Jackson House on South Pleasant Street for an example of different façade treatments being used successfully on the same building.

Ms. Winston suggested that the penthouse wall needed a façade change and some vertical texture.

Ms. Licis asked about the building’s relationship to the street level [Boltwood Garage side]. She suggested deepening the overhang at the first floor level to create a more protected outdoor environment. Mr. Jones noted that an extended overhang would need to be negotiated with the town because the building is currently designed to come up to the property line.

Mr. Wilson discussed the town sewer easement that runs through the site and noted that the Town Engineer had agreed that the sewer easement could be relocated.

Mr. Salvon and Ms. Licis noted discrepancies between the floor plans and the elevations.

Mr. Williams stated that the residential units will be apartments, because condominiums have not succeeded recently. The plan is to open the building in the spring of 2011, with a start of construction in the spring of 2010.

Ms. Licis asked about lighting. Mr. Williams stated that all of the exterior lighting will be incorporated into the building. The applicant plans to return to the Design Review Board with information about graphics, signage lighting, and landscaping.

**DRB 2010-00003, Department of Public Works for Pomeroy Village Intersection – Construction of streetscape improvements for the intersection of Pomeroy Lane and Route 116/West Street, including addition of turning lanes north and southbound, construction of sidewalks and curb cuts for ADA accessibility, installation of streetlights, street trees, bus stops and crosswalks.**

***Recommended approval with revisions to bus stop landing strips, to be worked out between DPW and UMass Transit, and the addition of a crosswalk at Glendale Road.***

Ms. Brestrup gave an introduction and described the history of the project and the Design Review Board’s involvement. She stated that the Department of Public Works would be assuming responsibility for the project as it moves forward, at the direction of the Town Manager. The Town Manager would like to have one entity (the DPW) to go to for information about the entire Route 116 corridor, from Amherst Farmers’ Supply to the Notch. At this time the Design Review Board was being asked to review and recommend approval of the plan that had been prepared as a joint effort between the Design Review Board and the Department of Public Works for redesign of the intersection. This plan is entitled

“Pomeroy Lane at West Street (Route 116) – Conceptual Intersection Design w/ Bus Stops Moved North & Multi-Use Path” and is dated January 23, 2009.

Mr. Skeels gave a summary of the work shown on the above-referenced plan.

Mr. Lillya asked if the lights would be downcast. Mr. Skeels stated that the streetlights would be the same as those used in the downtown area. These lights are shielded on top.

Mr. Wald asked about the materials for the crosswalks. Mr. Skeels stated that the crosswalks will be concrete with brick edging, as they are in the downtown area. He also noted that the multi-use path will be bituminous concrete (asphalt). Ms. Licis suggested that the DPW could paint the symbol of a bicycle on the path.

Mr. Skeels stated that there will be traffic-calming devices, such as narrowing of the road and installation of splitter islands. There was discussion about installation of signs in the middle of the road at the crosswalks.

Mr. Forrest made several comments and suggestions about redesign of the bus stop landing areas. Mr. Skeels will discuss this issue further with Mr. Forrest and will contact UMass Transit and to discuss these suggestions with Glen Barrington and incorporate the suggestions if they are in accordance with accepted standards.

Ms. Licis left at 7:52 p.m.

There was discussion about access to the bus stop through the parking lot serving the old apple storage building on the property of Jerry Gates.

Mr. Forrest offered to research another method of handling tactile strips at the bottom of curb cuts and ramps so that they would be more comfortable and safe for people in wheelchairs.

Mr. Salvon MOVED to recommend approval of the plans prepared by the Department of Public Works and the Design Review Board, dated January 23, 2009, with the recommended amendments to the bus stops and with a crosswalk installed at Glendale Road. Ms. Grandonico seconded and the vote was 4-0 to recommend approval.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 p.m.

**Future Meetings**

Tuesday, November 3

Tuesday, November 17

Tuesday, December 1

Tuesday, December 15

Cc: Anita Licis, DRB  
Janet Winston, DRB  
Jim Wald, DRB & HC  
Jonathan Salvon, DRB  
Kathryn Grandonico, DRB  
Jeffrey Bagg, Senior Planner  
Nate Malloy, Associate Planner  
Aaron Hayden, Select Board Liaison  
Larry Shaffer, Town Manager  
Jason Skeels, Town Engineer  
Guilford Mooring, Superintendent of Public Works  
Peter Lillya, Public Transportation & Bicycle Committee  
Kyle Wilson, Archipelago Investments, LLP