

Town of



AMHERST

Massachusetts

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July 26, 2016

DRB MEMORANDUM

Memo to: Rob Morra, Building Commissioner
David Ziomek, Asst. Town Manager
Christine Brestrup, Planning Director
Jennifer Gannett, Permit Administrator
Ruth Taylor, Administrative Assistant
From: Jonathan Tucker, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Meeting – July 25, 2016

The Monday, July 25, 2016 meeting of the Design Review Board began at 7:05 p.m. in the Lower Level Meeting Room of the Bangs Community Center.

Design Review Board members Michael Birtwistle, Jan Marquardt, and Catherine Porter, were present, along with Senior Planner Jonathan Tucker.

Applicants present included Jennifer DeForge (designer), Peter Wells (landscape architect), You-Pantzen (owner/applicant), David Williams (developer/designer), and Kyle Wilson (developer/architect).

Applications

DRB 2017-00001, 60-62 Railroad Street – Renovations and additions to historic house (advisory review for ZBA).

Recommend approval as proposed, with one condition.

Mr. Tucker summarized the application, and described the history of the small vernacular house built (c. 1860-1873) for railroad and factory workers. He reported that the Historical Commission had declined to hold a demolition delay public hearing, thereby constructively granting the small amount of demolition involved with the project.

Ms. DeForge and Mr. Wells presented exterior designs, site plans, and photographs for the renovation and addition of the house. Mr. Wells reported that the Conservation Commission had determined that no Notice of Intent was required with respect to the wetlands to the east. Mr. DeForge noted the ways in which the proposed renovations and addition would be proportioned and detailed like other similar buildings in the neighborhood. The exterior would be treated with white vinyl clapboard siding in

keeping with surrounding houses. The new addition would be roofed with architectural shingles, while the existing slate roof on the original house would be left intact. Two versions of elevations were shown, one with black shutters and one without.

Mr. Wells described the site plan improvements, including new paved parking, drainage, tree plantings, and building and site lighting—all of which would be dark sky compliant.

The history of the neighborhood's development was discussed.

Ms. Porter said that the option with shutters would add character to the house. Ms. Marquardt agreed, saying that they would enhance the building's historic character. There was a consensus that the building and landscape treatment were a significant improvement over current conditions. Ms. Marquardt noted that adding shutters to the front house (not part of the application before the Board) would help tie the two buildings together and improve their overall appearance. The front building was the one that was most visible from the road.

Mr. Tucker asked if provision had been made for identifying street addresses at the road edge, since there were two residences being accessed via the same driveway. There was discussion of requesting Fire Dept. address posts.

Ms. Porter moved to recommend approval of the design as proposed, with the condition that shutters be added as shown. Ms. Marquardt seconded, and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

DRB2017-00002, Archipelago Investments, One East Pleasant Street – Building and landscape design modifications.

Recommend approval as proposed.

Mr. Williams presented elevation renderings, building and landscape plans for modification of the design of the previously approved 5 story mixed-use building. He provided an update on the status of the project, noting that a contract had been signed with the mural artists to replicate the Amherst Community History Mural currently located on the back of the Carriage Shops building. The artists had completed his documentation of the mural, and the applicants had had a photographer record it as a back-up.

The surface upon which the replicated mural would appear had changed to brick, and that had necessitated changing the proportion of brick to wood on the east façade and the interior courtyard façade, resulting in both cases in extending the brick up to the fourth floor. Windows were also more recessed, adding detail to the building's appearance.

The landscape of the interior courtyard had been changed to include more unpaved planted area, including some significant trees. To compensate for that lost surface, more parking had been moved into the basement level of the eastern portion of the building. Parking was strictly for building residents, but was not reserved for individuals, being available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The appearance of the courtyard for the residents of upper floors would be significantly improved and greener. There were green roof 'shades' above the outdoor parking spaces, and the landscaped area would also help with recharging stormwater on-site and reducing off-site drainage.

Ms. Porter asked if there would be seating in the landscaped portion of the courtyard. Mr. Wilson said that there would not—seating would be added to the public way along the street frontage of the building.

Ms. Porter asked if there would be a sidewalk installed along the east side of the building allowing visitors closer proximity to the mural. Mr. Williams said that the muralist, David Fichter, had not designed the mural for viewing from close range. Ms. Marquardt agreed, saying it was designed to be seen from a modest distance. Mr. Tucker said that a pedestrian connection behind the buildings would be something to discuss, but that it would raise security issues for the mural itself. Mr. Wilson said it would be maintained as a mown grassy area for the time being. Some trees would be planted, in consultation with the muralist.

Mr. Williams described the pavers being employed as surfacing in the woonerf (shared pedestrian/vehicle drive) along the north side of the building.

Mr. Williams spoke at length about the need to better use the community's historic and cultural resources (such as the mural) as a draw for tourism. Mr. Wilson said that the signage for the building and the mural were still in discussion and would be brought back. Mr. Williams described the phased approach they used for completing the design of elements of the building and its setting. He described how that was proceeding with the Kendrick Place project.

It was noted that the Planning Board had approved the Site Plan Review for the project, but had conditioned it on the DRB's approval of the design.

Mr. Birtwistle asked the applicants to describe in greater detail the changes in façade material, elevation by elevation, which they did. Mr. Wilson said that the principal changes were there extent of brick on the east façade and in the courtyard, which had previously been clad entirely in white cedar.

Mr. Birtwistle said the building was very similar in basic design to Kendrick Place, which he thought an attractive building. Both would be visible from the park across the street. He wondered if it might not be better if they were more distinct from one another in their design. It would be better if they looked different. Mr. Wilson explained the differences in design between the two. Mr. Williams said that the two buildings were giving the area around the park a signature. Mr. Birtwistle said he hoped that the future infill between the two buildings would be different in appearance.

Mr. Wilson noted that Archipelago would be coming in soon with a new building elsewhere in the downtown that would be of distinctly different design, including gable roofs. The buildings were not all the same. He said that while the same materials were being used on this building, the details were different. On some facades of this building arched vaults were being pulled up to the second floor. The patterning of brick and white cedar was different. Different, deeper recessing with greater detailing was being used on the windows.

Mr. Tucker pointed out that the 19th century commercial blocks lining the central common shared the feature typical of the time of being essentially brick boxes which variations in ornamental and proportion. Development over time added variation.

Ms. Marquardt asked if the treatment of the façade of the inner courtyard might not work better with all white cedar cladding. Mr. Wilson said they had looked at it both ways. The brick affects the visible scale, making it seem shorter and more solid. Mr. Williams noted that the courtyard would include significant trees, which would change its appearance.

Referring to the landscape plan, Ms. Marquardt asked if honeylocust (*Gleditsia triacanthos*) were the only large trees being proposed. Mr. Tucker said that the plan also showed shadbush (*Amelanchier spp.*) being planted along the north side of the woonerf. At maturity, they can reach 20-30 feet in height. Mr. Wilson said they would be consulting with Tree Warden Alan Snow about which species to use for the significant trees. Honeylocust were known to be capable of surviving urban conditions. Mr. Williams said that they had first been used in the Quincy Market development in Boston, in which he had been involved.

There was extensive discussion by Mr. Williams and Mr. Wilson of the rapidly moving trends in downtown housing, lodging, office, and retail markets that this and other Archipelago projects were trying to accommodate.

After further discussion, Ms. Porter moved to recommend approval of the design as proposed. Mr. Birtwistle seconded, and the motion passed unanimously (3-0).

The Board set its next meeting for Tuesday, August 9.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:29 p.m.