



TOWN HALL
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002-2351

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
(413) 259-3040
(413) 259-2402 [Fax]
planning@amherstma.gov

September 14, 2016

DRB MEMORANDUM

Memo to: Rob Morra, Building Commissioner
Christine Brestrup, Planning Director
Jennifer Gannett, Permit Administrator
From: Jonathan Tucker, Senior Planner
Subject: DRB Recommendations of September 13, 2016

The Tuesday, September 13, 2016 meeting of the Design Review Board began at 7:00 p.m. in the Conservation and development Library, second floor, Town Hall.

Design Review Board members Michael Birtwistle, Janet T. Marquardt, and Catherine Porter, were present, along with Senior Planner Jonathan Tucker. Others present included Architects John Kuhn and Brad Hutchinson, and property owner Barry Roberts.

Applications

DRB 2017-3, 236 North Pleasant Street/12 Hallock Street – New four story office building.

After receiving a presentation and extended discussion, the Board offered the following recommendations with respect to the design of the proposed new building:

Positive Comments/Support

- The Board supported the architectural design of the proposed building as a stand-alone structure.
- The variation in materials and colors and window types employed for different parts of the building helped to break the building up visually, create design interest, and lessen the visual impact of its size.
- The use of clapboards helped to relate the building to the residential architecture in its surroundings.
- The northeast tower was a useful and attractive feature.
- The relationship of the building to the front setback and the sidewalk along North Pleasant Street worked well and echoed the setbacks of other buildings in the streetscape.

Negative Comments/Concerns

- Four (4) stories feels slightly excessive and out of scale in the context of the height of other adjacent buildings in the immediate vicinity.
- The use of brick for the first floor echoed other buildings across the street and elsewhere in the downtown, but it also introduced a more urban design element that did not occur in buildings in the immediate vicinity on the same side of the street.
- The Board was concerned that the degree of change this building introduced in terms of its height, proportions, and scale (massing) was out of character with existing buildings in its immediate surroundings and the residential neighborhood to the west.
- Because of these size-related concerns, the proximity of the proposed building (approx. 20 feet) to the abutting mixed-use building to the south raised questions about whether different landscape treatments between the two buildings might mitigate their size difference.

In making these comments, the Board understood and acknowledged the significant limitations placed on the range of possible building design by the dimensional regulations of the Limited Business (B-L) District, as well as the economic imperatives of scale and efficiency under which the applicants were operating.

In summary, the Design Review Board members all expressed support for the design of the proposed building as a stand-alone structure, and for the proposed landscape treatment—the Board’s principal concerns revolved around how a proposed building of this size would interact with the scale and residential design character of structures in its immediate surroundings on the west side of North Pleasant Street. It should be noted that there was not unanimity among the members on how the positive and negative attributes of the proposal were to be balanced—some members felt that some negative concerns were more significant than did other members.

DRB 2017-5, 62 Main Street, Formosa Chinese Restaurant – New doors and signs.

Recommend approval as proposed.

After hearing a presentation and discussion, the Board voted unanimously (3-0) to recommend that the design of the new doors and signs be approved, as proposed.

The Board discussed the need to complete its membership.

The next meeting was set for October 18, if needed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8: 52 p.m.