

MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
CITY OF STAMFORD, CONNECTICUT
URBAN REDEVELOPMENT COMMISSION
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 10, 2008

1. At 10:06am, Chairman Stephen C. Osman called the meeting to order. The following were in attendance:

Commissioners:

Stephen C. Osman, Chairman
James I. Nixon, Vice Chairman
Joel P. Mellis, Secretary/Treasurer
Robert S. Robins
Jackie Heftman

Staff:

Christopher L. Bergstrom, Executive Director
Rachel A. Goldberg, General Counsel
Durelle Alexander

Other:

Attorney Donald R. Gustafson, Shipman & Goodwin
Attorney Brian W. Blaesser, Robinson & Cole
Daniel Doern, Vice President-Development, Archstone
Eve Michel, Vice President, Archstone
Niv Rotem, Development Manager, Archstone
Herbert S. Newman, Newman Architects
Jacek Stachowiak, Newman Architects

2. Southeast Quadrant

- (a) **Park Square West Phase II** – There was no action taken on this agenda item.
- (b) **Re-Use Parcel 36** – Attorney Goldberg noted that a draft Settlement Agreement and mutual releases, distributed in the meeting package, were reviewed with Corporation Counsel Tom Cassone. She said, “We have agreed to split the security deposit, part amicably, and hope that at some point after the URC pursues zoning approvals for development of the site as part of a comprehensive re-zoning of the downtown, the F.D. Rich Company will then be in a position to rebid.”

Commissioner Nixon made a motion to approve the proposed Settlement Agreement with the URC, the City of Stamford and the F.D. Rich Company and to authorize the Chairman to execute the Agreement and mutual releases. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Robins and carried by unanimous vote.

3. Mill River Corridor

- (a) **Archstone/Re-Use Parcel 21**
- (i) Design Presentation:

Archstone Vice President Daniel Doern said, “What you are going to see today is the culmination of a very fruitful, cooperative process that has been undertaken over the past year or so between Archstone, the URC, Herb Newman’s office, a team of consultants we’ve assembled and many members of the local community.” He opened the presentation with a review of the fundamentals of the project:

- Site Plan – project is located at the corner of Washington Boulevard and West Park Place, directly opposite Columbus Park, with its main entrance on Whittaker Place and a secondary entrance off West Park Place.
- Parking – one below-grade level, with parking in the center of the project and four stories above, with a total of 246 contained parking spaces.
- Ground Level – approximately 5,000 square feet of retail with a plaza on the other side of Columbus Park so Columbus Park and Old Town Hall will have a continuity culminating at the entrance to the Mill River Park. The promenade will have apartments with front porches and there will be a “field house” multi-purpose café and park amenity shop facing the Mill River Park. Possible uses include ice cream in the summer, hot chocolate in the winter, snacks, skates and other equipment rentals, etc.
- Apartments – Four stories of apartments with a courtyard in the center. There will be 195 units, a mix of one and two bedroom apartments, including 18 affordable apartments
- Amenities – Along Washington Boulevard arrayed along the street there will be a library and a state-of-the-art fitness center and spa. This space is also being programmed with street-front, glass enclosed interactive wii playspace, where pedestrians will be able to watch residents play video games.

Mr. Doern said, “What we’ve done is engage the ground level around the entire building. There is no visible parking space. You will either be walking by a shop, by an apartment with a front porch, by our fitness center, our lobby, the library or the café field house. The building engages the City and engages the Park in a sensitive, low-scale way. These are the basic fundamentals of the project. The movie you will see today has been designed to show you the experiential aspects of the building and the massing as a pedestrian.” A brief overview of the presentation follows:

- Main entrance to the five-story, mostly brick building is a double-height pavilion. The smaller scale of the building, according to Mr. Doern, is to intended to make it more pedestrian-friendly and provide a counterpoint to the City’s tallest structure, Trump Parc. Conceptually across the building there are three registers – (i) the base, where at every point there is engagement with the City; (ii) apartments; and, (iii) the top of the building.

Mr. Doern said, “The top of the building is our ‘flourish.’ It’s higher, there is lighting, and what we’ve done around the building is to have extra tall apartments with taller windows and some Juliet balconies.” Architect Herbert Newman added, “Our building is about the pedestrian. It has texture and fine detail and variety on the façade to enhance the experience on the street.”

- The view from standing in Columbus Park emphasizes the building’s corner lit tower with an extra-tall apartment above and a feature that will enable residents to push out the bottom of their oversized windows and turn them into porches. Mr. Newman said, “The porches were incorporated so people could come out and be neighborly.”
- At West Park Place at the entrance to the Park, Archstone has created a “tower lantern.” Mr. Doern said, “This will be a light-weight structure clad in glass or some other translucent materials that will contain a light sculpture. Archstone is planning to hire an artist and work with the artist to program it to announce to the City that this is the entrance to the Park. It will be visible from Old Town Hall and from Washington Boulevard. We imagine that this ‘beacon’ will be programmed to coordinate with activities in Columbus Park and Mill River Park.”
- There are apartments along the ground floor, many of which will have front porches. A light artist will design and program a lit pathway into the Park on West Park Place. Mr. Newman explained, “We are suggesting that this lit pathway penetrate, like footsteps, to mark the path that you will be taking into the Park.” Mr. Doern said, “We’ve landscaped the edge of our building, which comes right out to the street, and put in an overhang so the Park will approach and come up to the building.”

In response to Commissioner Heftman’s question about who would fund the lighting on West Park Place, Mr. Doern responded, “Archstone will build it,” referring to the in-pavement lighting in West Park Place and the paving and lighting of West Park Place. Chairman Osman said, “I want to clarify this further. The lantern is the responsibility of the developer. However, there is another feature here – the art part. We’ve agreed that if this meets the artistic standard approved by the URC’s Percent for Art Committee, we will agree to use the Percent for Art monies for the artistic feature of the lights.” The Percent for Art Advisory Committee will convene after the developer selects an artist. Mr. Doern added that they are planning to turn their secondary entrance (on West Park Place) into a display area for art.

- Showing the site plan, Mr. Doern said, “As the movie takes you around the building, I hope you can see that every side is front. We have been very careful to design every elevation, every façade and every experience at the ground to engage people and make the building connect to the street and the pedestrian.”
- The architects will be working with a palette of two primary brick colors. They will also use a darker and a lighter color brick for accents and inset sections of the building. There will be a variety of brick and exterior facing materials.

Mr. Doern briefly reviewed some of the architectural features; i.e. the overhangs, the lit cornices, awnings over the retail area, the planters and the double-height entrance on the north façade.

Mr. Doern concluded his presentation, noting that Archstone would like to receive approval of its conceptual design at this meeting. Discussion ensued. Commissioner Heftman said, "I would like to see some changes in the north face of the building. I think it needs some more interesting features in it – it's too flat." Mr. Doern responded, "We have directed the architects to start working on that and we are confident that they can add another level of richness." Mr. Newman suggested: (i) that the cornice height in the middle section could be extended; (ii) that the balconies could be pronounced on the two wings that are beside the central section; (iii) that the color of the two recessed sections could be darkened with a much darker brick so that piece would seem like a separate building; and, (iv) that more glass could be introduced into the Archstone entrance. Mr. Newman explained that the goal is to "see this façade not as a single mass but as a series of three or four buildings." Commissioner Heftman asked, "Could you put in more of the garret-type windows you have on the Washington Boulevard side?" The architect and the developer responded that they would explore this idea.

Commissioner Heftman asked for clarification of the approval process. Executive Director Bergstrom responded, "This is an approval of the conceptual design that would be then documented via a Settlement Agreement which will embody all of this series of agreements that we've negotiated and have in it an actual schedule for the rest of the project from next month's meeting until construction starts and is completed during which time the detailed construction drawings would be done and all the remaining permits would be secured. This Settlement Agreement will be recorded on the City's Land Records to ensure that all commitments would be binding on a new purchaser in the event Archstone were to sell the land to another developer." Executive Director Bergstrom continued, "This approval really needs to happen today so we can spend the next month with Archstone crafting that agreement which would then be approved at the next Commission meeting." Attorney Goldberg reminded the Commission that today's approval would be for "conceptual design, not schematics."

Following further discussion, Chairman Osman said, "We have worked, and Archstone has worked, very hard over the last few years with multiple iterations, each one getting better, until the developer has come back with a project that I think is very good. We are hopeful this will end up physically as interesting as we've seen it on the movie and that this will set a standard for Stamford in the future to build something really interesting and of high quality even though it is stick construction." On behalf of the Commission, the Chairman congratulated the developer and the architect for doing something groundbreaking in this environment.

Commissioner Nixon made a motion to approve the conceptual plans as presented on this date, with the intention that between now (October 10th, 2008) and the next regularly scheduled Commission meeting (November 13th, 2008), we will draft an Agreement that

embodies all of the details we've been discussing over the last several months, to be approved by the Commission and recorded on the City of Stamford's Land Records. Commissioner Robins seconded the motion, which was carried by unanimous vote.

The Chairman called for a brief recess at 11:20am. The meeting was resumed at 11:40am.

4. Agency Administration

(a) **Financial Services – Review/Approve Dell'Aera Proposal:**

Attorney Goldberg reported that following the issuance of a Request for Proposals for Financial Services, the Commission and its Budget Committee (Commissioners Mellis & Heftman) entered into discussions with the accountant Michael Dell'Aera who has been doing the Agency's quarterly closings. Mr. Dell'Aera submitted proposals for: (i) accounting services, and (ii) QuickBooks installation & budget integration.

Following discussion and recommendation by Staff and the Budget Committee, Commissioner Heftman moved to authorize the Chairman to execute the two above referenced agreements with Accountant Michael Dell'Aera. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Robins and carried by unanimous vote.

5. Discussion of Proposed Seminar Series

Executive Director Bergstrom briefly discussed plans to work with the City and key stakeholders to define the emerging conditions that will shape Stamford's competitiveness and craft a positioning strategy to exploit the conditions. This would include sponsoring a monthly seminar series with outside speakers on each of the key ideas discussed in his August 2008 position paper entitled *Five Changes Shaping Stamford's Competitiveness* (copy attached as part of these official minutes).

The Executive Director also discussed creating a CEO's for Cities Cluster Group to drive the monthly seminar series, saying that these workshops and seminars would be co-sponsored and funded by a cross sector group of organizations that would include: the URC, the City's Economic Development & Land Use Bureau/Boards, the Stamford Downtown Special Services District, the Stamford Partnership, UConn/Stamford, the Business Council of Fairfield County, the Stamford Chamber of Commerce, RBS, UBS and Stamford Hospital. Executive Director Bergstrom said he would like to launch an event in 2008 to coincide with the Stamford Historical Society "Fifty Years of Development" exhibit currently at the Palace Theater and schedule an additional ten sessions throughout 2009.

6. Adjournment

The next regular Commission meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 13, 2008 at 6:00pm.

There being no further business before the Board, Commissioner Nixon made a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Joel P. Mellis, Secretary/Treasurer

Attachment: Executive Director's Position Paper