

RUTLAND REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
CITY OF RUTLAND
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Architectural Review Meeting /July 31, 2018
Minutes

Attendance: Dave Cooper, Brennan Duffy, Alvin Figiel, Ed Clark, Stephanie Romeo and Dave Coppock.

Also Attending: Tara Kelly, Planning and Zoning Administrator, Alderman William Notte, Nicole Kesselring, Dawn Hance, Jake Sherman and Gordon Dritschilo from the Rutland Herald.

- I. Dave Cooper called the meeting to order 12:16 pm.
- II. There were no additions/deletions to the agenda.
- III. No one from the public commented on items not on the agenda.
- IV. 5 North Main Street – Proposed Five Guys.

Dave Cooper said that the ARC needs better standards and guidelines to better clarify its role and it is expected that the proposed Zoning Bylaws rewrite will provide those. Until then, he asked Tara to discuss the process of the ARC as it stands at this time.

Tara discussed 24 VSA Chapter 117 regarding design review districts and the fact the ARC was included in the 2004 Zoning Bylaws. Following State Statute, the ARC has an advisory role to the Development Review Board (DRB). The ARC provides either written or verbal comments at a DRB hearing regarding projects in the design control districts. The Zoning Bylaws provide the criteria for each district to be reviewed and the most relevant criteria for the ARC to comment on is criteria #1. Tara distributed copies of the district criteria for 5 North Main St.

Nicole Kesselring spoke on behalf of the applicant Hyde Park Ventures who propose to construct a Five Guys at the corner of Routes 4/7 where there is an existing Mobil Station. She shared copies of the site plan and provided an overview of the project. There will be a small addition to the front of the building for more space and the northern side for equipment. The sidewalk will be reconfigured to wrap around and there will be 40 parking places. The pumps, tanks and canopy will be removed for an open parking lot. The curb cuts will remain with the north as primary, south reduced in width for exit only and access on West Street for two-way traffic. Dave Coppock asked about the size of the curb cuts and Ms. Kesselring said 40 ft and 34 ft. Tara added that the DPW is reviewing the site plan for circulation.

Ms. Kesselring distributed copies of the architectural plans and photo likeness to show the proposed finishes of the building.

Ed Clark said the project looks the same as any other generic cookie cutter approach and not like a building in Vermont.

Dave Coppock agreed with Ed adding that a McDonald's in Stowe was required to have a steep pitched roof with dormers and an arch element as seen in houses around Rutland. He believes it is inexpensive to add these architectural elements.

Alvin Figiel said that in response to Criteria #1, the proposed building does fit in with the surrounding buildings according to the design criteria. However, the Gateways for tourists and visitors to Rutland should not look like Anywhere, USA. He said it is a bad strategy to forget about the Gateways. He asked if all the parking spaces were necessary and if a green area could be added and trees. Ms. Kesselring said the developer is insisting on 40 spaces.

She added that the property is still owned by MT Associates who are concerned about how the site will function after the 5 Guys and whether it could be returned to a convenience store and gas station. She said there is a plan for a row of planters to hold small evergreen shrubs and a flowering plant.

Ed discussed the depth of the parking spaces and width of the drive aisle. He suggested it is possible to add greenery.

Brennan Duffy said the design is intentionally similar to those across the country for marketing and recognition. He has no issue with the design.

Dave Cooper said the revised Zoning Bylaws do not exist and therefore the proposed building is better than what currently exists. He has no objection to the proposed building but agrees that it would be better if the design was more of the Vermont vernacular.

Dave Coppock said if not now, when? There is an opportunity to make Rutland look like a New England town and asking developers to design something else may entice other businesses to relocate, not just a chain. He also asked about the proposed signage.

Ed echoed Dave Cooper's comment about the Vermont vernacular. In context to the landscaping plan, Alvin asked if removing one parking space was a deal breaker. There was discussion of reducing the 34ft drive aisle to 24 ft.

Ms. Kesselring said she would provide feedback and share the comments of the ARC with the applicant.

Alderman Notte said he would caution the Committee not to encourage applicants to follow the proposed sign ordinance as it has not yet been reviewed or adopted.

Jake Sherman asked about alternative designs to adapt to places that don't want a cookie-cutter look.

Dawn Hance discussed the history of the site and what was there. She said the Main Street Park is nearby as well as some historic architecture.

Dave Cooper said he understood the consensus to be that the project as proposed conforms to the design guidelines for the Gateway Business 4/7 and meets Criteria #1 in the City's current Zoning Bylaws.

Alvin asked to encourage the DRB to request the addition of green areas, reduce parking on sideline and encourage narrowing of the traffic aisle to add vegetation. Ed added that the applicant be encouraged to not reduce the amount of green space that currently exists on site.

Discussion continued with regard to reducing the traffic aisle, adding green space and creating a structure with vernacular architecture of Vermont.

Brennan moved to recommend to the DRB that the project as proposed conforms to the design guidelines for the Gateway Business 4/7 as it relates to Criteria #1 and the ARC encourages the applicant to increase the greenspace on the southeast edge between the sidewalk and the parking lot. It was seconded. Stephanie Romeo recused herself from the vote. Motion was approved.

V. 37 North Main Street - Starbucks.

Dave Cooper recused himself from the discussion. Brennan took over as Chair. Tara distributed copies of the design standards and criteria for the Gateway Business II district. Nicole Kesselring shared copies of the site plan.

Ms. Kesselring spoke on behalf of the applicant and gave an overview of the proposed project. The proposal for the Royal's Hearthside and adjacent vacant lot is to raze the existing house and construct a 6,000 sq. ft. building that will house a Starbucks, restaurant and retail business. Access for a drive-thru will be on the north side and run parallel with Route 7. Forty-three (43) parking spaces are proposed. The lot has an elevation 1-2 ft. lower than Route 7 which should minimize headlight issues. There is a robust landscaping plan as well. Ms. Kesselring presented the proposed architectural plan to show the façade materials, color and textures and the three tenant spaces.

Alvin asked about the two doors across from the drive-thru lane. Ms. Kesselring said those are emergency egress doors and may be changed by the tenant and they have not been finalized in terms of location.

Ed said it is a great project but there are issues in terms of design. The project is not in conformance with Criteria #1 for the district.

Alvin said the design does not fit into the Gateway Business II District and is in violation of the Design Criteria #1. The ARC should provide guidance and ask the architect to be more creative. He also talked about retrofitting the existing historic building.

Brennan said he has had many conversations with the applicant who feels that reuse of the existing building is impossible.

Ed added that the proposed building design does not fit when looking at the context of the neighborhood to the north and the applicant should create something that looks compatible and provide an option that would resemble the surrounding buildings.

Tara asked what that means exactly. She suggested it would help to offer the applicant more clarity as to the elements the ARC would like to see incorporated. Alvin suggested the following: pitched roof, gables, building height and width, windows taller than wider, exterior of clapboard, shingles or brick.

Alvin said the rear of the building faces North Main Street and the parking is in the front of the building. This is not in conformance with criteria #2 in the district.

Discussion followed regarding earlier iterations of the site plan showing the building at the rear of the lot with the parking lot in front. The applicant was told they should have the parking to the rear or side, in keeping with #2.

Dave Coppock discussed pedestrian access to the site and how it competes with promoting the human element. He suggested the project needs pedestrian access from the existing sidewalks. Ms. Kesselring responded that there is a 4% slope to the property that needed to be taken into account and a pedestrian connection is provided in another area. She added that the drive-thru meets the zoning regulations.

Stephanie is in favor of development of the site, which has been vacant for 5 years. She suggested the architectural design could be reworked in order to make it more compatible with historic architecture.

Brennan suggested the ARC supports the idea of Starbucks and retail but as submitted a project that does not comply with Criteria #1 and encourages the applicant to come back with a revision.

Dawn Hance discussed issues with traffic backing up on North Main Street from the proposed drive-thru. Ms. Kesselring said a traffic study was underway and should be completed for the DRB meeting.

Jake Sherman said the project does not fit in with the North Main Street of old Rutland.

Alderman Notte discussed the importance of growing the grand list for the survival of Rutland's future. He said the net positive effect and mini urban experience of the proposed development outweighs the vacant building. He added that other locations have been explored and if this site becomes too onerous, the project may happen outside the City.

Alvin pitched the idea of turning the proposed building 90 degrees with the main parking on one side and the drive-thru in the rear of the building.

Alvin and Ed support the project but want the applicant to design a creative variation that complies with Criteria #1 without replicating the buildings on North Main Street.

Following additional discussion regarding the proposed layout of the building and pedestrian access, a consensus was reached. The ARC agrees the proposed project does not comply with Criteria #1 and therefore, the architecture of the new building should be compatible with the structure to be removed and the remaining structures to the north. It does not need to replicate historic buildings, but rather present a design with roof shapes, fenestration and exterior materials that fit within the context of the rest of the district. In addition, with regard to criteria #2, it was suggested the building might be reoriented in some fashion to provide pedestrian access from the existing sidewalk to the building, if feasible from an engineering perspective.

Brennan asked Tara to prepare a written response from the ARC for the DRB.

Dave Cooper resumed as Chair.

- VI. New Business – None.
- VII. Old Business – None.
- VIII. Adjourn.

Ed moved to adjourn. Brennan seconded. The meeting ended at 2:04 pm.

For the Architectural Review Committee
Barbara Spaulding