

TOWN OF WESTPORT ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES MAY 24, 2016

Members Present: Ward French, Chairman; Philip Weiner, Jon Halper, Vesna Herman and David Mann.  
Minutes from the April 14, 2016 meeting were accepted as presented:

1. **1135 Post Road East**, free standing sign

**Appeared:** Tracey Barker, National Sign

Ms Barker described the sign:

- free standing, double sided 32 sq. ft. sign total
- top panel for First County Bank is aluminum
- internal LED lighting
- 1135-1137 street numbers on bottom panel
- 2 additional tenant panels

Ms. Barker said the sign is already up but will be relocated to its permanent position ten feet to the west.

Philip Weiner asked if the sign is within setbacks and was told yes. He asked about the LED lighting. Ms. Barkers said only the individual letters are illuminated. Mr. Weiner asked about the First Beauty Wellness panel. Ms. Barker said she didn't think her company was doing the other 2 panels, but she assumed it would also be internally lit. Mr. Weiner asked if any other signs in the area use this kind of aluminum panel. Ms. Barker said she did not know. Mr. Weiner asked if the edges of the panel are solid. Ms. Barker said yes, only the letters show light.

Jon Halper verified that the board was reviewing only the First County Panel and the overall housing. He said he assumed the other panels would come to the Board at a later date.

There were no more questions. Mr. Weiner said his only concern was the lighting of the overall sign and its possible glare.

Jon Halper said the bank panel was fine.

Vesna her agreed and understood someone would be returning with the other panels. Board members agreed.

**THE FIRST COUNTY BANK SIGN DESIGN IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT SOMEONE WOULD RETURN WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE TWO LOWER PANELS.**

2. **785 Post Road East (ZBA appl. #7488)** new mixed commercial and residential development

**Appeared:** Rick Redness, land use consultant; Lucien Vita and Gary Chase, Architects

Rick Redness said this is another IHZ project, mixed use commercial and residential. Its location is between the Toyota dealership and the car wash. The house between the 2 locations will be removed and replaced with a new commercial building. The residential buildings are at the rear of the property. Mr. Redness described the site as one with a lot of topography. The townhouses will be benched into the hill behind so they will be screened from the neighbors but will be seen from the Post Road. There will be additional planting at the top of the hill to screen the tops of the roofs from the neighbors behind.

Lucien Vita said the project has two components, business and residential. The business consists of office and retail space and there are 3 residential buildings.

**Commercial Building:**

Mr. Vita said it is 2 stories with natural looking materials but is distinctively commercial. It has heavy glazing to provide visual access. The transparent sides are to the south and west but not the east facing facade which abuts the car wash. The second level of detail is the materials and an extension band between the floors which projects to provide shade to the first level and is integrated into the design. The materials are clearly defined in how they relate to the structure:

- the band between the floors is 'transpo', a wood like material but with an impervious surface. Its driftwood color is within the gray palette
- vertical band of corrugated siding in the middle of the west elevation separates the retail from the office space and is a possible place for signage
- the east elevation is standing seam metal that wraps up over a roof on top of clerestory windows above a green deck, the second floor roof. The clerestories will help light the second floor interior.
- Louvered stained wood slats over aluminum windows are toward the rear of the east elevation. The windows help light an interior stairway
- Additional siding is stained vertical wood and cement fiber where windows are set into a wall
- tempered glass railing on second floor deck at rear half of the building

Mr. Vita supplied samples of the building materials.

David Mann asked for a description of the glass railing. Mr. Vita said it is frameless and set into the central band so it has no hardware.

Vesna Herman verified how the commercial building is sited on the property and that the north end is probably for office use. She asked about the balcony. Mr. Vita said the balcony is only on the north end and is provided by the band between the floors. Its 2 foot overhang provides shade below and is calibrated for optimal use. From the street the side and underside of the band are identical. Ms. Herman asked what kind of glazing would be used and if it would be clear. Mr. Vita said it will probably be clear with a film that reduces solar penetration; it won't look tinted but will cut down on the heat. Ms.

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Herman asked how much light the corrugated material would reflect. Mr. Vita said there are different finishes and materials options with different angles available. It will be solid, not a metallic finish. Ms. Herman asked what is being used to frame the glass where it meets the ground as it looks like there are doors on the west and south elevations. Mr. Vita said there is a 6 inch sill, he is trying to keep it as low as possible. Ms. Herman asked what the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor projection is about. Mr. Vita said it is a run of clerestories that bring light to the second floor and there is a door with access to the green roof.

Jon Halper asked about the window system. Gary Chase said it is a Kawneer system with 2 inch mullions. The lower part of the window units could be operable, the rest fixed. Mr. Halper said there is a discrepancy between what we are being shown and the plans we were provided with. Mr. Chase said the plan has advanced.

Mr. Weiner asked for a description of the shape of the corrugated material. Mr. Vita said it is curvy.

Ward French asked where the signage would go. There is no sense of entry and he wondered about the reasoning behind it. Mr. Vita said there are entries on the south, west and north elevations. Mr. Chase said the band is a possible place for signage, which, with the lighting, will help locate the entrances. The corrugated panel could be a shared location for signs.

David Mann asked what the decking material will be. Mr. Vita said it has not been selected yet. Mr. Mann said the design is very nice; plain, simple and well thought out. The signage will be very important. He loved the green roof but had some concerns about the glazing.

Vesna Herman said she liked the building. It has a certain monolithic aspect to it but it is elegant, too; She liked it.

Jon Halper agreed, it is very handsome and well done.

Philip Weiner also agreed that it was well done and a good solution. He wondered about the horizontal band, it's not a tall building and signs on the band might scuttle the design on such an attractive building.

Ward French said the windows are nice and he hopes they won't be substituted with something else. But the building is turning its back on the car wash which is only one story and this is 2½. The southeast corner is very harsh and visible. He liked the rest of the building. Mr. Vita said he was mindful that it was stark but they deliberately included materials to make one side opaque. Mr. French said he understood, but that monolithic wall is next to a single story building. He said the board appears to approve of the building design but hoped the applicants would take the boards' comments into consideration.

Residential Buildings:

Mr. Vita said the residential buildings are set far back on the site, but the details are still important. It is not a large development, two townhouse buildings set into the hillside, a third perpendicular apartment building with a courtyard between.

### Townhouses

- there are 4 townhouses per unit
- the first floor is living space with bedrooms on the second floor
- the first to second floor projects out to provide relief to cars parked in front of the garage
- the design is residential with pitched roofs but has a more modern aesthetic with materials
- standing seam metal roofs on gables and overhangs
- architectural shingle roofs
- large groupings of residential windows allude to the commercial building
- gray horizontal and vertical wood siding reflect the tresca material on the commercial building
- parged stucco siding at garage level
- each has its own entry and ground floor garage

### Apartments

- Single point of entry has an almost storefront look
- 3 first floor one bedroom apartments
- 2 second floor 2 bedroom apartments
- one ground level 1 bedroom apartment on the south elevation where the land drops off
- Horizontal 8 inch ship lap wood siding on the lower level, 4 inch vertical on the top level
- gray architectural asphalt wood roof shingles
- standing seam metal roofs on overhangs
- wood gables with cement fiber around windows

Mr. Vita said it is a white palette, the design and materials are similar to their project on the old Geiger's property.

Philip Weiner said he saw that several variances are required. Rick Redniss said they went to P & Z for the Geigers project and got variances for similar issues. He had tried to get the regulations changed so this project would not require variances, but no luck. He explained all the variances required:

- to build a parking area and do plantings
- they are in a 5 ft setback from the side of the car wash
- for a loading space behind the commercial building
- for grading to stabilize the land behind the townhouses for the neighbors they have to build retaining walls and the fill requires a variance
- they are creating a flat area behind the townhouses for access to the rear and for fire regulations

Philip Weiner asked if it is all market rate housing. Mr. Redniss said 20% is affordable. Mr. Weiner asked what the material is for the garage doors. Mr. Vita said they are a wood composite with no windows. Mr. Weiner said he assumed there are a lot of gutters and leaders required with the roof lines. Mr. Vita described how they work. Mr. Weiner verified that they are using square commercial gutters. Mr. Weiner asked if they need a traffic plan approved by the state. Mr. Redniss said not really. Mr. Weiner said he was concerned with the extra traffic in that busy area. Mr. Redniss said it has not been an issue with the neighbors. This is not a big project. There is an 18 ft driveway and they are not using up all FAR with density. There are no left turns into traffic.

Jon Halper asked if they had looked at other schemes that had less cut and fill; there could be more natural and feasible solutions. Mr. Redniss said it had evolved from the fire department's need for a circular turn-around. Mr. Halper said he assumed there will be a/c condensers and asked if there are any other mechanicals and dumpsters to be aware of. Mr. Redniss said yes, they are accessible to both and screened. Mr. Halper asked if they would return to the ARB with directional signage and was told yes. Mr. Halper asked about lighting on the buildings. Mr. Redniss said they are working on it with the neighbors. He said there are no dormers or skylights in the residences above the second floor, the neighbors above are well set back and any other lighting is 20 feet below their site lines. Mr. Chase said there will be lighting in the soffits at entries. Mr. Halper said they seem to be still working through the application process and asked if they were at the ARB for its final approval of the project. Mr. Redness said yes, that would be helpful. Mr. Halper said the drawings supplied are strong schematics but they don't have a lot of details. Mr. Redniss said they could come back.

Ward French said the Board would prefer to see a complete set of detailed drawings.

Vesna Herman said she had a concern with the density. They are putting 8 units of the same design all together. She asked if the sections shown of the buildings from behind are true to scale. Mr. Vita said yes. Ms. Herman asked the depth of the units and was told 30 feet. Mr. Redniss explained that the siting and grading are way below the density allowed.

David Mann said it is a large mass of townhouse buildings and wondered if they had looked at ways of breaking it up; the 2 buildings are 200 ft long and 40 ft tall. Mr. Chase said fire department requirements drove that. Mr. Vita said the demands of the land dictated the shape. Mr. Mann asked if they had looked at the detailing of the materials and details to break of the visual appearance. Mr. Chase said achieving the residential feeling created more peakiness. Mr. Vita said he didn't want to fool the eye into thinking it was seeing something that it was not; he wanted to stay consistent and use quality details. Ms. Herman said even the best details seen 100 time over are overwhelming.

Philip Weiner said, on the whole, it is an attractive solution. Repeating an attractive form is the architect's decision. The proof is in how good the total composition is. There might have been other ways to explore, but it is a tight site. The design is subtle, there are no chimneys or balconies, it stays true to its simplicity. He thought it was a good project, but was still concerned about possible traffic issues.

Jon Halper said he liked the strategy, very disciplined. It will be good as long as the details and materials are good, age well and are well maintained. He liked that it is uniform. Detailing is becoming a bit of a cliché by a lot of us architects around town. This project is well done.

Vesna Herman said because of the limited site, it is appropriate. She still has an issue with the repetition. A home is an owners individual expression, it is not an office, and this has to accommodate 8 different families. You can differentiate and still use your own style. Meanwhile, there is a sense of simplicity and beauty.

David Mann said he didn't think the design was quite there. He was still concerned about the mass. The flats building is successful with its architectural differentiations. The townhouses are not quite there. You can differentiate and maintain rigor, just break it into a more human scale.

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Mr. Vita said the rendering is presented from the worst possible perspective. David Mann asked what the elevation change is between the Post Road and the residential courtyard. Mr. Redniss said it is 10 ft above and 300 ft back from the Post Road.

Ward French said the board appears split. He said he didn't have enough of a problem with the design to vote against it but agreed the flats building is more successful. David Mann said he agreed it was handled with a refinement of architectural detail and overall the project is successful. The board agreed it was trying to send a positive message.

**THE OVERALL PROJECT IS RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL AS SUBMITTED WITH THE PROVISION THAT THE APPLICANT WILL TAKE THE BOARD'S COMMENTS INTO CONSIDERATION AND RETURN WITH DETAIL CHANGES (Unanimous)**