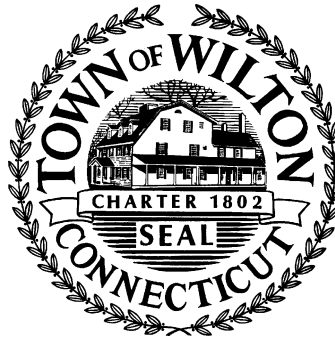


VILLAGE DISTRICT
DESIGN ADVISORY
COMMITTEE/
ARCHITECTURAL
REVIEW BOARD

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TOWN HALL ANNEX
238 Danbury Road
Wilton, Connecticut
06897

Robert Sanders, AIA, Chairman
Samuel Gardner, AIA, Vice-Chairman
John Doyle, AIA
Kevin Quinlan, AIA
Kathleen Poirier,
AIA

**ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD/ VILLAGE
DISTRICT DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR (ELECTRONIC) MEETING MINUTES
Thursday, November 9, 2023
5:00 PM**

REVISED: DECEMBER 20, 2023

PRESENT: Rob Sanders, AIA, Chairman, Sam Gardner, AIA, Vice-Chairman,
Kathleen Poirier, AIA, and John Doyle, AIA – Kevin Quinlan was a
Notified Intended Absence

ALSO PRESENT: Michael Wrinn, Town Planner

I. ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD

- A. Call to Order** – at approximately 5:02 PM
- B. Roll Call**
- C. Work Session**

1. AMS Acquisitions, 131 Danbury Road – Application review for 208-unit
multi-family development

Mr. Wrinn explained that this would be a review of AMS's application. The ARB had previously reviewed their pre-application on September 2nd. Craig Flaherty, of Redniss & Mead, introduced the presentation team and Seelan Pather, of Beinfield Architecture, who went through the presentation. He stated how the amenity building would provide identity to the development and control the visual feel of the entire development. He also said that the front façade material

would give an appearance of wood for a simple expression which would modulate the façade, and this same material would be used for the sides of the amenity building to tie the architecture together. The amenity building needed to be raised ~2ft because the flood elevation created challenges in the rear. He stated that the presence of the meadow in the front would mitigate the feeling that it is higher than the street. He said the site would have 208-units, 10,000 SF of enclosed amenities, and 18,000 SF of internal courtyard area, and a parking ratio of ~1.5. He said that the processional aspect of the design gives a dramatic affect and that they reduced the size and number of the lofts. There would be a common roof deck on the northwestern area of about 3,100 SF.

Jason Williams, landscape architect, then detailed the landscape plan. He started by describing the small muse area of the entry area which would be flush (no curbs), comprised of pavers, and the driving lane would be delineated by light bollards and planters. Driving on the north side of the building there would be ninety-degree parking spaces and landscaped islands. On the west side there would be ninety-degree parking, permeable pavers, and on the south side there would be two-way access and ninety-degree parking, and access to Danbury Road. There would be a meadow area facing Danbury Road, and a five-foot, concrete sidewalk along the frontage of the site. Birch trees would anchor the amenity building on both sides. On the north and south sides there would be rows of evergreen trees. The back of the property would have a signed emergency access drive, three gathering spaces for tenants along the Norwalk River, and a permeable trail that would link them. In the rear, both north and south corners, there would be rain gardens/large infiltration areas. He then detailed the plantings on the four sides of the site, proposed signage, and site lighting.

Mr. Sanders liked the façade detail based on the projection of the window frame in front of the surface which would create shadow definition on the façades. He questioned the privacy of the ground level, corner unit which would be visible to cars entering the site. He also expressed concern about the short life of birch trees versus other longer lasting species. He then commented on the use of vertical siding and how it stops at the top. And regarding west façade he expressed that he thought that the western facade was harsh, based on textures of materials and colors. He suggested introducing more natural materials to soften the appearance.

Mr. Gardner expressed his concern for both this site and the site at 141 Danbury Road, pointing out that the buildings are large and create too much density. He stated that while he liked the architecture of the amenity building, it masked the building behind it, and found that the experience of the building to be like a hotel. He expressed concerns regarding: no sidewalks along the north or south sides of the building for pedestrian traffic; the contrast of the severity of the building to the softness of the materials; the lack of pedestrian environments; that landscaping is predominantly in the front and back, and that it felt like it was a controlled environment.

Ms. Poirier agreed that it created a hotel-like appearance. She also asked about the development of the courtyard area. She also expressed concern about access to the building as a guest. Mr. Pather explained that the visitor spaces would be toward the front of the building giving access to the front entrance. Mr. Doyle commented on the intensity and congestion on Danbury Road, based on the 141 Danbury Road development to the north, and the potential future development further north. He liked the amenity building and how it would keep the scale down. He stated that he thought one less floor could take the edge off. Connectivity was discussed; the lack of sidewalks, and that the trail along the river could provide greater connectivity to the north and south. Mr. Sanders expressed the importance that the front sidewalk be shifted away from Danbury Road for safety purposes. An overall theme was that the development should be modified to be more pedestrian and family friendly.

2. Toll Brothers, Inc., 15 Old Danbury Road – Pre-application review for 207-unit multi-family development

Seelan Prather began the presentation providing details of the architecture. He said that with a large development, their goal was to create a sense of place and community, and that they were challenged to determine a design that could achieve that. He said they determined that they should create architecture that enhanced connectivity, and created units that would have direct entry, to create a more residential entry into the building. He said how the view from Old Danbury Road provides a dramatic view into the courtyard amenity. He then said that the site is difficult as 1) there is no backside to it, and that all four façades are prominent so they must all be treated like a front facing façade, and 2) elevation changes. He noted that there would be a sidewalk around the entire circumference of the building for permeability and connectivity, and that the townhouse approach could address the grading issue, and that proposed stoops would allow the grade change to be addressed. He detailed that 207-units are currently planned, spread over five floors, partial grade parking level, 40% 1-bedroom units, 60% 2 and 3-bedroom units, 314 parking spaces, with 63 in the basement and 251 on the surface, and approximately 20,000 SF of courtyard space. Mr. Pather then discussed the proposed exterior materials, including brick siding that would be used to create a townhouse expression.

Eric Rains then discussed the proposed landscape architecture. He started by saying that they would work with the perimeter of the site and utilize the edges to introduce elements such as canopy trees and light fixtures and a sidewalk that would wrap around the perimeter adjacent to Station Road. This would introduce visitors to an element that would be seen as a tree-lined street of residential living. Trees with a larger canopies would be used to bring the scale down closer to the building. He detailed the amenity on the northwest corner as having a lawn with a pathway running through it to give a parklike feel. Vegetation in the internal amenity courtyard

would be on the perimeter of the space and provide a buffer between the residents inside of their units and the residents using the amenity.

Mr. Sanders commented that he was concerned that the site was primarily parking and building, with an insufficient amount of green space. He expressed his frustration that Wilton zoning regulations has produced this outcome, and that the building looks too urban. He did not think that the look of this building should be the gateway to Wilton. He said there should be greater use of the grade changes and that there could be more underground parking. Mr. Gardner agreed with Mr. Sanders' comments, and added that there were so many opportunities missed in the plan, including the use of towers and other higher elements to take advantage of the low elevation which could create a signature entry into Wilton. He also stated that two buildings versus one could be useful. The conversation then focused on the need for this site to be a signature property welcoming visitors to the town. Ms. Poirier mentioned how the view of the current building from Danbury Road is lifeless and dominated by the roof, and this design would be the same. Mr. Sanders noted that Wilton needs a better solution than what this plan presented.

3. Chipotle Mexican Grill, 14 Danbury Road – Renovations for new restaurant

Chris Lasky, from Lingle Design, presented for the applicant. He explained that the footprint is going to be left as is, including circulation and parking; traffic signage and pavement markings will be updated; and that the pick-up window will have no drive-thru menu board, orders will be placed online or via phone. The interior would be completely gutted, and updated with a conventional Chipotle design. He commented that the roof units would project up ~2 feet, but would not incorporate screening and he requested comment from the Board. Mr. Doyle stated that he would like to see a plan incorporating screening. Mr. Sanders pointed out the importance of the appearance of the north side of the building where there is a dumpster, as it is one of the primary entryways into the shopping center.

4. Sound Federal Credit Union, 3 Danbury Road – Modification of ATM/ITM computer window location and side door replacement

Tabled.

5. Guidepost Montessori, 221 Danbury Road – Proposed signage

Tabled.

6. Bouton Funeral Service, 31 West Church Street – Wheelchair accessible ramp

Robert Keleman represented the applicant. He stated that the plan he presented to the Historic District & Historic Property Commission (HDPC) needed one change (different screening material), which he incorporated into this plan. The Board then gave their approval, and the next step will be for Mr. Keleman to present this version of the plan the HDPC.

The ARB portion of the meeting adjourned at 7:46 pm.

II. VILLAGE DISTRICT DESIGN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

A. Call to Order - 7:47 PM

B. Roll Call Rob Sanders, AIA, Chairman, John Doyle, AIA, Sam Gardner, AIA, and Kathleen Poirier, AIA. Kevin Quinlan was a Notified Intended Absence.

C. Work Session

1. The Vital Stretch/Kimco, 5 River Road – Proposed signage

There was no one present to represent the applicant. The Committee then reviewed the details of the application and voted to approve the application.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mr. Sanders wanted revisions to the minutes from the October 5, 2023 meeting relating to Cactus Rose and Fuller Development. He will forward the requested changes to Mr. Wrinn to create a revised version of the minutes.

IV COMMUNICATIONS

Next meeting: December 13, 2023

V. ADJOURNMENT – 8:02 PM

Respectfully submitted by Rich Callahan – Recording Secretary

*MINUTES HAVE NOT BEEN REVIEWED BY THIS BOARD/COMMITTEE AND
MAY BE SUBJECT TO REVISION IN FUTURE MINUTES. FULL AUDIO
RECORDING OF MEETING IS AVAILABLE AT: Minutes, Agendas & Videos/Audios |
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