

STAMFORD PLANNING BOARD
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES #3573
TUESDAY, JANUARY 26, 2010
7TH FLOOR CONFERENCE AREA
888 WASHINGTON BLVD., STAMFORD, CT

Stamford Planning Board Members present were: Duane Hill, Theresa Dell, Claire Fishman, Rose Marie Grosso and Jay Tepper. Present for staff were Robin Stein and Todd Dumais.

Regular Meeting

The chairman, Mr. Duane Hill, called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

Stillwater Ave. Corridor Study: Implementation Strategy

Robin Stein introduced the study and explained that another way to look at neighborhoods such as this is by looking at them as corridors.

Vincent J. Tufo, Executive Director, Charter Oak Communities (C.O.C.), explained that C.O.C. helped to kick-off the study but they were not the primary driver of the study. Mr. Tufo stated that it was the West Side Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. He commented that the purpose of the study was to get in advance of the development going on in the West Side and that it is an Implementation Study not a Master Plan. Mr. Tufo stressed that this study took a whole series of previously compiled studies and pulled them together as a compilation plan.

Ken Buckland, Principal, Cecil Group, Inc. stated this is an exciting location because of the players involved and that the compilation report was important. He explained that the study was a community based process which involved; the West Side NRZ as a center point for coordination; the Hospital and seeks to leverage private market forces and infrastructure for neighborhood-scale development.

Mr. Buckland utilized a PowerPoint presentation and stressed the following components of the study:

- Hospital as key player – attracting hospital related uses to the edge of their property to stimulate neighborhood interactions;
- Number of different studies of what can happen throughout corridor;
- Key connections and block by block transitions;
- Prototype developments on each block and how they could work;
- Implementation strategies: Zoning – draft new zoning regulations, similar to the Glenbrook & Springdale Village Commercial District; revise Master Plan Map and Zoning Map.
- Discussed special architectural design criteria and incentives for non-conforming commercial uses to transfer out of neighborhoods.

Mrs. Dell asked for an example of nonconforming commercial uses? Mr. Buckland answered the contractor storage yard on Liberty Street.

Mr. Buckland stated that one key to a successful neighborhood was reconfiguring the open space and creating new public open space at Finney Lane.

Mr. Stein asked if there are examples of public/private partnerships for parking. Mr. Buckland said yes, TIF laws and various developer agreements.

Mrs. Dell asked the interaction between the Hospital and Stillwater Avenue would occur. Mr. Buckland stated that they have to create a new identity of not looking at the hospital as if closed off from but linked to the neighborhood.

Mrs. Dell asked if this would cause problems for the Hospital internal parking? Mr. Buckland explained that in the Hospitals master plan they are talking about providing a significant amount of parking.

Mr. Stein asked Mr. Buckland to talk about the housing aspects of the study? Mr. Buckland said they've looked at market information on housing and it provided several different types of opportunities from mid-rise and townhouse styles. He added that part of the recommendation is to have a real code enforcement program.

Mr. Stein asked if new public infrastructure would incent new development? Mr. Buckland responded that improved transit, streetscape improvements and any visible improvements provide incentives for property improvements.

Mr. Hill said he was pleased to see an implementation matrix and notion of stewardship in the study. He asked to what extent did they get input from the marketplace that would attract development from the private sector? Mr. Buckland said the idea of incentives requires a particular investor. Infrastructure costs need shared opportunities and that they had specific market information input.

Mr. Hill said it needs to be done in context of the marketplace.

Mr. Buckland said the Planning Board is an important player though its advancement of capital program and land use regulations along with education of property owners.

Mr. Hill asked who monitors this process? Mr. Buckland said the Westside Neighborhood Revitalization Zone because they have the most to gain for what happens in this neighborhood.

Mr. Tepper said this seems more comprehensive and aggressive than other Village Districts?

Father Richard Fuetie, President, WNRZ said we need to actively engage residents and his group has been working with the Cecil Group. They have not seen great resistance to the plan and area residents appear to be open and hopeful of the changes.

Pam Kaprowski, from Stamford Health Systems stated that the Hospital has been involved throughout meetings and thinks that it would be wonderful if employees/visitors could walk to a new neighborhood center.

Father Fuetie said that three main parties are in sync with each other.

Mr. Hill said the Board applauds and encourages the collaboration and that this type of study could represent a real model for future planning

Mr. Hill called a five minute recess.

Stamford Museum & Nature Center Master Plan

Mr. Stein introduced the Plan by stating that the Planning Board has been part of the process for the Museum and Nature Center through funding through the Capital Budget.

Melissa Mulrooney, Executive Director Stamford Museum and Nature Center described the process and how the City has funded the Master Plan. A letter from Artie Sulkowitz was read into the record. She explained that the Museum and Center has been working on the process for about a year and a half. Ty Su Kim partners had great sensitivity to their interests for the Museum and Center and that the a major board retreat was held with their team. In addition, City officials and constituents were consulted and a major online survey about the site/center was conducted. Mrs. Mulrooney stated that the feedback was not about making the site bigger but better. She then outlined major institutional goals.

Whit Egleheart, partner with Ty Su Kim, discussed layout of the site, circulation issues/problems; signage/early findings; utility infrastructure issues; the recommendation to bring in City water; upgrading the electrical service and bringing a connection to City sewers. He explained the new master plan highlighting the new circulation plan for the site, especially the new “catchy” entrance area directly off High Ridge Road, while also explaining the need to enhance and expand farm area which is the main draw to the site.

Board asked questions about other entrance areas and parking. Mr. Egleheart discussed the new state of art museum center and discussed new idea of carriage path/trail north through the site to connect up to the Bartlett Arboretum.

Juanita T. James, President of the Board of Directors for the SM&NC said the board came together to approve this master plan by starting a capital campaign to complete the project. They want to continue partnering with the City which is an important partner with their short term capital projects.

Mr. Tepper asked if they were projecting to raise \$30 million privately. Mrs. James replied yes.

Mrs. Mulrooney said the idea of scaling the project and phasing it is critical to its success. They would love to know the City will support some component of this.

Mr. Hill said the Board applauds the work they’ve done in creating a master plan. He asked to what extent do you think about extending public transportation to the site? This would enhance your fund raising prospects. It should be made clear that it is a city and regional resource.

Mr. Tepper said he thinks it’s a terrific job and wished them good luck.

Mrs. Dell said they should be very aggressive on their infrastructure needs.

Mr. Tepper asked if the entrance off High Ridge Road would really work?

Mrs. Mulrooney said they are very sensitive towards not overgrowing the site.

Planning Board Meeting Minutes for Approval:

August 25, 2009 Mr. Tepper moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mrs. Fishman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the eligible members present voting, 4-0. (Hill, Grosso, Tepper, and Fishman with Dell not eligible)

September 3, 2009 Mrs. Fishman moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mrs. Dell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the eligible members present voting, 4-0. (Hill, Dell, Tepper and Fishman with Grosso not eligible)

November 2, 2009 Mr. Tepper moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mrs. Fishman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the eligible members present voting, 3-0. (Hill, Tepper, and Fishman with Dell and Grosso not eligible)

December 22, 2009 Mr. Tepper moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mrs. Dell seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the eligible members present voting, 4-0. (Hill, Dell, Tepper and Grosso with Fishman not eligible)

January 5, 2010 Mrs. Dell moved approval of the meeting minutes. Mrs. Fishman seconded the motion and it passed unanimously with the eligible members present voting, 4-0. (Hill, Dell, Tepper, and Fishman with Grosso not eligible)

Old Business:

Mr. Stein said they have the Capital Budget books and reminded the Board that the Public Hearing is scheduled for next Thursday, February 4th at 7:30 PM in the Cafeteria.

New Business:

There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Hill adjourned the meeting at 9:19 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,
Duane Hill, Chairman

Note: These proceedings were recorded on tape and are available for review in the Land Use Bureau located on the 7th floor of Government Center, 888 Washington Boulevard, during regular business hours.