

**MINUTES
DESIGN ADVISORY BOARD
TOLLAND, CONNECTICUT**

February 17, 2011

Members Present: Sudhakar Nagardeolekar, Chair; Vikas Nagardeolekar, Vice Chair; Kimberly Rogers, Bill Byers, Cheryl Nicholas, and Jim Gorman.

Others Present: Linda Farmer, Director of Planning & Community Development

CALL TO ORDER: Sudhakar Nagardeolekar called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the 2nd Level, Conference Room B at Hicks Memorial Municipal Center.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Discussion concerning the Tolland Village Area (TVA) Design Guidelines. Linda Farmer provided an overview of the Tolland Village Area, explaining that the Planning & Zoning Commission and town staff have been working with Planimetrics. She said there were about 70 residents who attended the workshop for the Visual Preference Survey and the Design Guidelines are being informed by that. The next step in the process is that they must amend the Plan of Conservation and Development, and the language for that proposed change is in the handout she gave them called "Create a Town Center." This has been sent to the Town Council and they have 65 days to review and comment on it. If it goes forward from the Town Council, the proposed changes will then be subject to a Public Hearing on May 23, 2011.

Ms. Farmer said that presently they are working on Zoning Regulations for the TVA and the Design Guidelines (of which the first Draft was included in DAB members' packets) will be included in those regulations. She explained that developers would be expected to come before the PZC with an Area Development Plan to show how their project is a piece of the whole and to show connectivity. This would be followed by a Site Plan.

She asked for Board members' comments or suggestions on the Draft Design Guidelines, adding that she would like to see more graphics such as a road cross section and a pedestrian-scale walkway showing size relationships to streetlights and other features.

Sudha Nagardeolekar said one of his concerns with developers is that they will need to keep in mind that one building's rear yard will be another's front yard, so they will want to see plans that show all around character to the buildings. Ms. Farmer noted that Heidi Samokar of Planimetrics does address this issue in the draft TVA zoning text.

Kimberly Rogers said the TVA calls to mind the Olde Mystic Village development with smaller scale buildings that are designed well all around. Bill Byers said it will be important to integrate back street parking with front street service. Jim Gorman said another good example is the village in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in the heart of Dutch country. He said they

made a great effort with landscaping and gardens in the backs of buildings. He said Chatham, Cape Cod is another good example. Bill Byers added as examples Stonington, Maine on the wharf and Salem, Massachusetts.

Ms. Farmer said in the proposed TVA plan there is some space between buildings, which drop down a story, so they would be looking for ideas for outdoor seating, stairs, and attractive fencing. Mr. Byers added that they need to make it apparent to developers that these kinds of treatments are necessary.

Ms. Farmer noted that State Rep. Bryan Hurlburt and Senator Tony Guglielmo are trying to get the town owned Open Space property in the TVA reclassified for economic development. She said the Town is also working with Steve O'Neill of VHB to evaluate the proposed connector road in the TVA and to show how the area can be improved for intensity of use. Ms. Rogers said they will need to make sure the residential connector road does not become a fast cut-through. Ms. Farmer said they would plan to design it with traffic calming features.

The Board discussed the difficulties with getting a good, upscale restaurant to locate in town and their hope that the TVA will foster this type of interest. Ms. Farmer said the developer Mike Taylor is enthusiastic and ready to move with residential development. She added that there is also some interest in bringing a pharmacy into the area and they would want to look at how a drive-thru might be incorporated into it without creating any off-site negative impacts to walkability.

In reviewing the landscaping section of the Design Guidelines, Jim Gorman suggested that on Page 13, there be language that calls for considering the mature size of trees when selecting them for planting. Also, he said 75 percent of all plants should be native and there should be a 50/50 distribution between deciduous and evergreen shrubs. He said there should be a minimum 6' planting area between the walkway and parking. Ms. Farmer said the planting area needs to also accommodate Low Impact Development storm water treatment.

Bill Byers said it would be nice to see walkways and streetscapes that incorporate native stone and native stone as design features in buildings. He said that it would be good to see deciduous, conifer, and pin oaks so they get a mix of color and hardiness, adding that it will be important that watering of plants is maintained for the first year. Mr. Gorman said this would be the responsibility of the landscaper.

Mr. Gorman said it would also be attractive to add natural fieldstone walls and benches, and stone pillars with address markers. Mr. Byers said on Page 3 that it would be good to include language that calls for protecting natural features that inform the building design. Ms. Farmer noted that a reality is that there will be a lot of grading and blasting that will be necessary.

Mr. Gorman suggested that the backside of the Open Space should be planted with an evergreen buffer. He said this will be very important to the neighbors. Ms. Farmer added that the neighbors have been notified of the upcoming March 7 workshop.

From a layout standpoint in the Design Guidelines, Ms. Rogers said they should encourage using a lot of graphics and enlarging photos, adding pictures of stone walls, wrought iron fences, and gates. Mr. Gorman said he would be willing to do some quick graphics for residential and commercial development. Mr. Byers said he could do some photos. They

asked how much time they might have. Ms. Farmer said the regulations would need to go to CRCOG and they would have to have them for 30 days. She said the PZC will be approving and sending the proposed regulations on to CRCOG on April 25, so she suggested they have any graphics and pictures completed by April 1.

Ms. Rogers said Freeport, Maine is a good example where there are sloping side streets. She said it works well because the larger stores locate up on the main street and the retail spaces on these side streets are smaller with smaller square footage, which is appealing to small Mom & Pop stores.

Referring to Page 10, Ms. Farmer said the Canton, Mass., guidelines provided some good examples of screening that they may want to look at. Regarding building sizes, Mr. Gorman said the 2-1/2 story height rather than 3-story seems the better fit.

Both Ms. Rogers and Mr. Byers brought up the issue of planning for heavy snow. The gardening spaces are where the snow will have to be piled, and there was some concern that low shrubs might get destroyed.

There was some discussion that the landscaping that is approved for a development does not always come to fruition in the final product. Mr. Byers said that when the town takes a bond on these developments, they have the clout to insist developers follow the approved design. Ms. Farmer suggested they add language that says “substitution of landscaping requires approval.” She said she will check to see if this is already in the landscaping regulations.

Mr. Gorman said they should also make sure that fieldstone used in accents is real and not fabricated. This opened up a discussion about the use of faux alternative materials, how they look up close and how well they stand up to the elements. Ms. Rogers noted that with the relationship of buildings to walkways, shoppers will be more intimate with the materials. Sudha Nagardeolekar said they want to avoid having buildings with one material on the front of the building and some less attractive, cheaper materials on the sides and back. Ms. Rogers said there are too many examples of bad vinyl-siding jobs, but there are also many ways to dress up vinyl to make it look attractive.

There was additional talk about how wood cedar siding can look nice in the beginning but five years later, the elements can take their toll. Cheryl Nicholas said it would be difficult to enforce maintenance so that is a real concern. Mr. Gorman suggested requiring certain grades of materials, including catalogs or specifications. Mr. Byers said they could also include useful data such as noting that for 15 percent more in price, the developer could provide 40-year warranty shingles instead of 20-year shingles. He said they could also recommend specific manufacturers and where developers could find the products.

Ms. Farmer said the specifications will be important because they want developers to have good expectations of what they need to provide before they come to the Town.

Sudhakar Nagardeolekar said one concern is that he would not want developers to feel they are tying their hands too much. Mr. Gorman said, however, that the Canton, Mass., guidelines are very specific and stringent.

Mr. Gorman also said he felt if they want a good end product, they should require certified landscape designers or architects for the landscape design. Ms. Farmer said that is included in the regulations now.

Mr. Byers said it is important when developers bring forward commercial and residential designs that they don't feel they have to replicate Tolland Green, but rather use elements of the Green mixed into contemporary designs. Ms. Nicholas noted that the Coventry or Canton guidelines make a similar suggestion, encouraging developers to "use architectural cues."

Mr. Gorman said an Appendix of materials would be useful. Vikas Nagardeolekar said the Appendix could then also be updated as needed. Ms. Farmer agreed saying this would be where they could make qualitative statements about materials. She said developers understand that time is money and so they want to know going in that they have it right the first time. Mr. Gorman added that this will help to avoid conflicts, although Ms. Rogers said they need to be mindful that it is inevitable that some developers will push the envelope to see what the Town might allow. Ms. Nicholas added that from a developer's standpoint, the faster they can get through the approval process, the faster they can get on with the business of making money.

Ms. Farmer said she has copies of the Canton, Mass., Coventry, Conn., and Coventry Village Design Guidelines that she emailed links to. She said each of them have some very good examples that might be incorporated into the TVA Guidelines. She said it would be helpful for her if they could email her with any comments or suggestions and then they could talk again at their March 3, 2011 meeting. Ms. Farmer asked that they also look at the hotel guidelines in their packets. She said right now there is a huge demand for a hotel in the area, adding that the new Economic Development Chair George Mantak is working on getting an extension of bus service to UConn out to Tolland as well as the Hartford bus service out to Exit 68.

Ms. Farmer showed the Board a potential phasing plan with a sequence of how things might build out. The hotel might initially be able to be accessed via the commuter lot.

Ms. Rogers asked if there might be any way to leave up some mature trees during the development. She said she would hate to have to start from new as it takes so long for new trees to mature. Mr. Gorman said there does appear to be a lot of cut and fill that would be required to develop the TVA. Ms. Farmer said they would certainly leave a buffer area to the homes on Woodfields. Mr. Byers said in some places mature trees might be saved, and if so, they might have to determine the radius around the trees where bulldozers would not be allowed to dig.

2. Discussion concerning Design Guidelines for Signs. Ms. Farmer suggested Board members look in the Coventry guidelines as well, as there are a lot of "do's" and "don'ts" outlined. She said their guidelines offer plenty of visuals. Mr. Gorman suggested it might be good to specify allowable materials for signs, but with a note that substitutions might be allowed if the town was in agreement.

BUSINESS MEETING

1. **Approval of Minutes** – Approve minutes of December 3, 2009 Regular Meeting. There was some uncertainty if the December, 2009 date was accurate, and it was agreed to hold off voting until the March meeting when the date is clarified.

GENERAL BUSINESS

- March 7, 2011 – Tolland Village Area – Public Workshop, 7:30pm, Crandall Lodge

ADJOURNMENT: Jim Gorman/Bill Byers motion to adjourn the meeting and pay the clerk at 9:15pm. Motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Gentile
Clerk