



Town of Hamden

Planning and Zoning Department

To: Hamden Planning and Zoning Commission

From: Matthew Davis, Assistant Town Planner

Re: Special Permit/Site Plan #21-1339
Retail/Drive Thru (Starbucks Relocation)
Hamden Plaza, Dixwell Avenue

Date: May 10, 2021

Overview

Proposal is to create a new freestanding retail (Starbucks) with an accessory drive thru. The project also includes a small exterior patio area and a large "rain garden." The design raises some issues worthy of discussion in terms of the 2019 POCD recommendations, specifically as to the Transect Zone locations and design standards.

Department Reviews

Town Engineer

As of the date of this memorandum, staff had not received review comments from the Town Engineer. The design requires a number of changes to existing utility and storm water systems, thus the Town Engineer's review is essential to moving the project forward.

Traffic

The applicant's traffic study was provided to the town traffic agent. Following review the agent had no comment on the proposal. Planning staff has provided some review comments below.

Other Line Agencies (i.e. QVHD, GNWPCA, etc.)

Line agencies had no comments on the proposed design, with the exception of the GNWPCA in terms of their standard design and process requirements. It is anticipated that development would proceed subject to standard post approval permitting.

Planning Department Comments

General

The proposal is both consistent with and contradictory to, design principles codified in the T-5 zone regulations. The location of the building is more or less similar in typology to a 'liner' building, and as such, it helps to screen the large parking field. However the orientation of the structure is not parallel, but perpendicular to the front property line and in addition, the building footprint is in part subgrade, effectively eliminating any ability to accomplish the objective of enhancing connections between the public and private areas, either functionally or aesthetically. Glazing percentages are met, but the elevations are in part, obscured from the street. As a practical matter, Dixwell in this location is a five lane arterial, with no median and carrying 22,000 ADT. Clearly not a pedestrian friendly environment. The project location is also more or less at one of the main access drives. This provides maximum exposure for the tenant, but does very little to move the center in the direction envisioned by the T zone regulations.

The project therefore provides an opportunity of sorts to begin a conversation regarding the 2019 POCD's recommendations with respect to modifying and refining the applicability and scope of the T zones and associated design standards. In the present case, one wonders how or if, of if so, how long it would take to evolve this corridor and its "streetscape" into the type of pedestrian friendly, scaled, mixed use "activated" human space that is the bedrock of successful form based new urbanism. The project illustrates the difficulty principals face in trying to retrofit existing physical spaces which are subject to various financial, title, legal, market and other "realities."

In addition to this "policy oriented" point, the project seems to raise at least two other more technical concerns.

The first is the post development traffic circulation and potential for conflicts that would be internal to the center itself and the second is the proximity of the construction and use to the main access and the adjacent "Tesla" charging stations. As a purely technical matter, based on staff's review, the design appears to comply with the objective standards of the applicable regulations, and it should be noted that retail at this small size is permitted as of right in the T-5, while the drive through is the special permit component. It is staff's understanding that the desire for the drive thru is the motivation behind the initiative.

It would also seem beneficial, if the center is moving towards a concept which would include additional "out lot" development, to consider how such development might best occur in light of existing access points, traffic movements onto and within the site, the interactions (or possible opportunities for same) between new uses, and other design/operational matters. Presumably, Starbucks will be entering a multi-year lease and commitment, thus the PZC can assume that what is approved, will likely be in place for perhaps many years. This project may set the stage for what is or is not possible along this frontage for some time to come.

Technical Review

Traffic and Related Issues

As the traffic report documents, the peak hour LOS at both main access drives to Dixwell is either E or F and this project, based on their analysis, will result in no changes to those peak hour LOS levels. This of course relates to the operations of the traffic controls (lights) and not to any "internal" operations within the center itself. Also, re-tenanting of the former Starbucks space may require a modification to the

center's traffic certificate, therefore this approval can only address the scope of this current application. No loading or delivery location has been identified on the plan, and per the T zone regulations, this cannot be located in the "first layer."

Construction Phase

While not insurmountable, the construction phase of the project presents some challenges due to the proximity of the work to both the Tesla charging stations and to one of the two main access drives. In fact, it appears as though one of the entrances will be completely closed for a period during construction. If so, it is not clear what operational impacts this might create, especially during peak periods (day/week and/or seasonal). Associated with this is the need for a laydown area sufficient to accommodate the construction materials and equipment, assumed office trailer, etc. Although a minor matter, the fencing shown on the demo sheet should be designed to better demarcate and control traffic and parking at the interface between the "secured" project area and the active parking field/drives patrons will continue to use.

In addition, the management of stormwater during construction will be complicated for a period of time due to the need to remove/relocate piping systems and other stormwater system features.

Recommendation

If the PZC is inclined towards approval, staff would suggest at least the following conditions to render the application in compliance with the applicable standards of the regulations.

The application, with the conditions contained herein, is consistent with the Site Plan

1. Prior to the issuance of a zoning permit, the applicant shall:
 - A. Submit revised plans containing:
 - i. All Conditions of Approval.
 - B. Revise architectural plans if applicable to show any roof top units and screening of same.
 - C. No occupancy of the vacated current Starbucks space shall be approved by the Zoning Official until a written confirmation from the STC has been secured that no related changes to the center's existing operational certificate are required to allow such occupancy.
 - D. Eliminate the "potential patio extension area."
 - E. The applicant's contractor shall provide a specific construction sequence and related plan at the required preconstruction meetings.
 - F. Interior landscaping shall not impeded interior sight lines.
 - G. Revise the dumpster location (shift west) to comply with the T zone standards.
 - H. Indicate how compost containers are to be secured.
 - I. Provide a detail of the proposed streetscreen wall.
 - J. Revise proposed work area security fencing to better align with the adjacent parking and access drives to remain in use by patrons during construction.
 - K. Address all comments of the Town Engineer's review memo.
 - L. Loading/delivery and refuse removal hours and operations shall be designed to minimize conflicts with on site and abutting residential uses.
 - M. Business signage shall be excluded from this approval and approval of same shall require a separate subsequent zoning permit application.
 - N. Building mounted or any other lighting details not shown shall be indicated on revised plans.

- O. Demo debris shall be removed on a daily basis and the site shall be secured at all times during demolition and construction, to prohibit unauthorized access.
- P. No changes shall be made to the approved design without the express prior approval of the Hamden Town Planner.
- Q. Prior to the issuance of a Zoning Permit, the general contractor, owner and project engineer shall attend a preconstruction meeting with Hamden staff to review the approved plans, applicable permit and inspection procedures, contacts and other related information.
- R. No certificate of occupancy shall be issued until either a temporary conditional or final certificate of zoning compliance has been issued by the Hamden Zoning Official.

MJD



Town of Hamden

Planning and Zoning Department

To: Hamden Planning and Zoning Commission

From: Matthew Davis, Assistant Town Planner

Re: Major Amendment to Special Permit #00-903
QU Temporary Lab Classrooms

Date: May 10, 2021

Overview

QU wishes to construct and occupy a 6,400 modular building for lab classrooms. The application Statement of Use provides the general overview of the project scope.

Department Reviews

Inland Wetlands

A di minimis approval was issued by the Wetland Agent on 5/7/21 (copy attached)

Fire Marshal

The Fire Marshal had no comments.

Town Engineer

The Town Engineer's comments have been addressed.

GNWPCA

The GNWPCA submitted standard technical comments on 5/3/21. A reference to these will be included in the recommended approval conditions.

Planning Department Comments

Planning staff has no issue with the proposal as it is temporary, however we suggest a shorter duration for the permit of two years. In light of the new strategic plan, it is reasonable to assume that QU will have some idea of a permanent location for this use by the end of that two years. If necessary, a brief extension can be requested and approved at that time.

Recommendations

Staff recommends approval subject to the following conditions:

Conditions of Approval:

1. Prior to the issuance of a zoning permit, the applicant shall modify the final plans as follows:
 - a. Incorporate all conditions of approval
 - b. Include the conditions of the di minimis inland approval of 5/7/21
 - c. Attend a preconstruction meeting with Planning Department staff to review permit requirements, inspection procedures, protocols for field modifications, project close out requirements and other relevant matters.
2. The duration of the permit shall be for a maximum of two years from the date of the issuance of a certificate of occupancy.
3. The use of the structure shall be limited as approved herein.
4. Development shall comply with the comments of the GNWPCA staff dated 5/3/21.
5. In the event the temporary permit expires and is not extended, the structure shall be removed within 90 calendar days of the expiration and the site returned to its prior approved condition.
6. No field modifications shall be made without the prior review and approval of the Town Planner.
7. No certificate of occupancy shall be issued until a certificate of zoning compliance is approved.
8. No certificate of zoning compliance shall be issued without a post construction as built, certified by a CT licensed LS, being reviewed and approved by the Hamden Zoning Official.


MJD



Town of Hamden

Planning and Zoning Department

To: Hamden Planning and Zoning Commission

From: Matthew Davis, Assistant Town Planner 

Re: Special Permit/Site Plan Application #16-1238 (2330 Whitney Avenue Rear)
Request for Extension to Complete Site Improvements

Date: May 7, 2021

Attached is Mr. Pullano's request for a five year extension of the time available to complete the improvements for the above project. The Inland Wetland Commission approved a five year extension of their permit for this project at their 5/5/21 meeting (i.e. to 4/6/26).

The original approval was granted by the PZC on 6/28/16.

Much of the project is substantially completed and accordingly, it would seem that two years (or less) would be sufficient to complete the project. If the PZC grants five additional years, the project could possibly take up to a total of ten years to complete. Given the project's central location, its relevance to other proximal properties and uses, its visibility, the current movement back to more normal economic circumstances, the need to expand and diversify the tax base in a timely manner, the data and circumstances upon which the project application was based (traffic counts, etc.), collateral State permits for the project, etc., it is in the community's interest to have the project completed and occupied as soon as feasible.

In addition, as staff noted recently with regard to a different extension request, "open projects" must be monitored and managed by staff in terms of various issues (complaints about the property condition, noise, traffic, the need for periodic site inspections for compliance, etc.). To the extent we can move projects along expeditiously towards conclusion we can reduce burdens on department staff with regard to this particular part of the work program. Doing so frees up limited staff resources to accommodate other clients asking for action on their files/matters.

Finally, if five years is granted, there is no control available to the Town to expedite project completion and in fact, no work could proceed if the owner's preferred to market and transfer the property in an undeveloped (but fully permitted) state.

If, after two years, additional time is necessary, the owner can obviously request up to an additional three years.

Staff recommends the PZC approve a two year extension of the date to complete all improvements for special permit/site plan #16-1278, to 6/28/23.

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April 13, 2021

Town of Hamden
Planning & Zoning Commission
Memorial Town Hall
2372 Whitney Ave.
Hamden, CT 06518

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Reference:

Bond Certificate #106676615


Spec. Permit Application #16-1278

Zoning Permit #16-5383

To the Planning & Zoning Commission;

Please grant a five (5) year extension to the existing Special Permit #_16-1278 and Zoning Permit #16-5383. The current permit expires this June and this extension is requested to allow the Project Owner, Hamden Hospitality, LLC, time to complete its hotel project and the associated work on the project site.

Thank you,


Frank Pullano

