

ARCHITECTURAL & DESIGN REVIEW COMMITTEE MINUTES

SEPTEMBER 2, 2021 5:45 p.m.

Members present: Charles Regulbuto, Marshal Montana, Sue Larsen, John Scheib??, Dave Goslin??

Staff present: Michele Lipe, Director of Planning

The ADRC Meeting was called to order at 5:45 p.m.

1. **Appl. 21-36P, 25 Talbot Lane Site Plan**- request by UW Vintage Lane II, LLC for site plan approval for a 359,640 sq ft distribution facility on 30.37 acres of property, on property located at 5, 25 Talbot Lane, 475 and 551 Governor's Highway (southerly side of Governor's Highway, easterly side of Talbot Lane), I zone

Ben Wheeler of Design Professionals presented the application. Mr. Wheeler commented that the applicants, Brad Wainman and Bob Urso, were present, in addition to the site's architect, George Fellner from Fellner Architects. Mr. Wainman reviewed the design of the proposed building. Mr. Wainman pointed out the main access would be on Talbot Lane to avoid having excess traffic on Governor's Highway. He commented that the front of the building would face Talbot Lane and there are proposed berms and buffers surrounding all sides of the building, particularly, the abutting neighborhoods. Mr. Wainman added that a majority of the truck parking and loading docks are proposed farther away from residences. Mr. Wainman commented that they have tried to limit the visual impact of the building as much as possible, specifically on the residential side. Mr. Wainman explained they are proposing the use of earth tones for the exterior of the building, which would allow the building to blend in better with the surroundings. Mr. Wainman added that the height of the building would be 40 ft. at its highest point. Additionally, Mr. Wainman commented that they are building an almost identical building in Stratford that would be available for the Commission to view for reference.

Ben Wheeler commented that a berm is planned along Governor's Highway and would have a few openings, one for emergency vehicles and the other to protect endangered plants found on the site. Mr. Wheeler added that the remainder of the berm would be planted with evergreens, deciduous trees and ornamental flowering trees. Mr. Wheeler explained the parking areas would have additional landscaping including more deciduous and ornamental trees. Mr. Wheeler reviewed the landscape plan for the remainder of the site. He commented on the wetland mitigation that is being discussed further with the Inland/Wetland Agency and Conservation Commission. Mr. Wheeler added that the lighting on the site would have shields to help reduce light spill into the surrounding neighborhoods. Committee member Montana questioned if the proposed business would be a 24-hour operation. Mr. Wheeler responded yes, it is a 24-hour business. Mr. Wheeler added that the applicant is proposing the lights be dimmable at a certain hour in the evening, however, the lights would be motion detecting and would have the capability of returning to full power should motion be detected for safety reasons. Montana questioned the thickness of the existing vegetation in the buffer area. Mr. Wheeler commented that this area is well established with some mature trees. Mr. Wheeler added that this area would remain untouched and the proposed berm would start beyond the 50 ft. of this vegetative area.

George Fellner from Fellner Architects reviewed the architectural design of the building and the interior floor plan. Mr. Fellner commented that the two office areas would be located on the southern portion of the site and there would be 27 loading docks on each side of the building. Mr. Fellner commented on the exterior design of the building, the gutters, overhang for entrances, ramps and the exterior color, and material, which would be cool earth tones. Mr. Fellner highlighted the lighting plan which would feature LED, low profile lights and recessed down lights at the entrances. Committee member Montana questioned if there was a prospective view from residential neighborhoods. Mr. Fellner responded that the residences would be unable to see the building as a result of the existing vegetation remaining and the buffer being added. Montana questioned evergreen tree height. Ben Wheeler responded the evergreens on the berm would be approximately 6-8 ft. tall at planting.

Commissioner Montana commented on the parking lot and truck routes within the site. Ben Wheeler explained the need for larger facilities with loading docks on both sides of the building. Committee member Larsen questioned the noise from trucks backing up. Mr. Wheeler commented that the business would need to respect the town noise ordinance. Michele Lipe, Director of Planning commented on the location of the 35 foot light poles, suggesting the applicant not put 35 ft. pole adjacent to Governor's Highway in the area of the residential properties. Ms. Lipe also questioned the appearance of the front of the building. Mr. Fellner responded that he can provide some more detail of the front of the building but wanted to point out that the purpose of the berm and buffer would be to ensure you could not see the building from Governor's Highway.

Brad Wainman explained why there is a large demand for this type of distribution center, change in trucking laws had made truckers log their hours electronically, therefore, truckers legally must get off the road after 10 hours of driving. This change has caused a huge demand for trucking and distribution centers in Connecticut which is the center of many popular trucking routes.

Ben Wheeler commented that the site is in the industrial zone, while Coca-Cola and Home Depot's recently built distribution centers are located in the I-291 Corridor, which has slightly stricter aesthetic requirements. Mr. Wheeler pointed out that there would be no rooftop units on the building. Committee member Montana commented that the building seemed innocuous in comparison to other industrial buildings in the area.

Mr. Wheeler commented that there would be tenant signage at the northwest corner of the building facing Talbot Lane and Governor's Highway. Mr. Wheeler commented that they would prepare renderings for the front elevation of the site and they would further discuss shortening the light poles near the neighborhoods. Montana questioned the hours of operation. Brad Wainman responded that it is tenant driven but the industrial zone allows for 24-hours of operation. Committee member Larsen commented that she was disappointed in the presentation, she did not feel the applicant was prepared with the proper materials. Commissioner Larsen added that the job of the Commission is to assess the exterior and the design of proposed buildings. Brad Wainman commented that they are specific about the coloring of the exterior of the building and they can bring that to another meeting. Michele Lipe suggested the applicant comes back to ADRC with samples of material and detailed views on the building. The applicant agreed to come back to the Commission with further materials and a more detailed elevation of the front of the building

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Caitlin O'Neil