



Town of Ashland

MASSACHUSETTS

Design Review Committee Meeting Minutes

Zoom Video Conference

Town Hall, 101 Main Street, Ashland Massachusetts 01721

May 6, 2021 – Approved at June 3, 2021 meeting

1 ***Call to Order***

2 Bill Savage, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03PM. Aaron Ladd, member, Bill
3 Novakowski, member, Ujwala Pawnarkar, member and Cathy Rooney, member were present.
4 Emma Snellings, Assistant Town Planner, recorded the meeting.

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6 **0 Memorial Comprehensive Permit Review**

7 Bill Savage, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:03PM. Aaron Ladd, member, Bill
8 Novakowski, member, Ujwala Pawnarkar, member and Cathy Rooney, member were present.
9 Emma Snellings, Assistant Town Planner, recorded the meeting. Ms. Snellings explained that the
10 ZBA is the permitting board for this project, and the Board has requested comments on the
11 architecture of the project from the Design Review Committee.

12
13 Anthony De Felice, Cube3 Architects, provided an overview of the project. Mr. De Felice
14 reviewed the architecture of Buildings 1 and 2, which are transitional designs that have
15 traditional forms and materials used in a modern way. The buildings have a clean line, minimal
16 look that take advantage of the tones and textures. The flat roof and darker top floor help visually
17 minimize the height. Mr. De Felice presented a palette of materials, which includes lap siding
18 and fiber board cement. The clubhouse has large openings to connect with the outdoor feel, and
19 the architecture is carried from other buildings with dark trim and windows and simplistic forms.
20 The materials include a dark shingle roof and horizontal fiber cement lap siding. The townhouse
21 buildings are two stories, with dedicated entries and covered parking. The buildings have simple
22 lap siding and white board and batten siding. The look of the buildings echo the other buildings,
23 with a light and dark monolithic look. Materials will include horizontal siding in white and
24 darker tones, asphalt shingle roofs, and vinyl board and batten siding, with standing seam metal
25 for the canopy roofs.

26
27 Mr. Savage shared that he had initial concerns about the view from Route 135, but now thinks
28 only the tops of the buildings will be visible from that angle. Mr. Savage noted that fiber board is
29 used throughout Ashland, and he likes how the scale of the buildings is differentiated with a
30 band at the first level and a change in materials on fourth level. Mr. Savage noted that the lack of
31 trim has a very contemporary feel, which is new to Ashland, but he is not highly concerned
32 because the development is not on a major thoroughfare. Mr. Savage asked if the colors are
33 representative, because the townhouse looks black which is a little unusual. Mr. De Felice noted
34 that it is a deep gray, not a true black, and is in keeping with the transitional design and using
35 dark and light tones. Mr. Savage noted that the Committee usually views material samples. Mr.
36 Savage asked about a landscape buffer for first floor windows, and Mr. De Felice replied that the
37 sidewalks are as far from the windows as possible, and they intend to have more landscaping

38 around the patios to provide a buffer. Mr. De Felice noted that the vents are designed to blend
39 into the siding. Mr. Savage asked whether the roof parapet hides the mechanical structures on the
40 roof. Mr. De Felice confirmed that the parapet is a height that will block any views of the
41 mechanicals from the ground. Mr. Savage asked if the applicant is considering any sustainable
42 approaches such as solar or permeable pavement. Mr. De Felice replied that those approaches are
43 being considered, the site will have electric car charging and the roofs are solar ready. Mr. De
44 Felice noted that the design of the buildings is a newer style, and that Cube3 designed the Cirrus
45 development and wanted to make sure they did not replicate the same style.

46

47 Mr. Novakowski asked if there will be architectural shingles on the roofs, and Mr. De Felice
48 confirmed that the sloped roofs will be shingled, while the flat roofs will have a flat roofing
49 material. Mr. Novakowski asked, and Mr. De Felice confirmed that the vertical siding is barn
50 board style. Mr. Novakowski asked why some siding is vinyl and some is fiber cement board.
51 Mr. De Felice replied that it is a different way to use materials, and is in keeping with the
52 architectural design. Mr. Novakowski noted that he has concerns about vinyl siding due to
53 appearance and durability. Mr. Novakowski asked about the trees on the renderings, and Mr. De
54 Felice stated that the trees on the renderings were not representative of the landscaping plan. Mr.
55 Savage noted that he shares Mr. Novakowski's concerns about vinyl siding.

56

57 Mr. Ladd stated that some units should be able to see the Boston skyline. Mr. Ladd asked about
58 the size of the townhouse door overhangs, and Mr. De Felice replied that the canopies were
59 added to give a porch feel, and will be about 5 or 6 feet deep. Mr. De Felice stated that the
60 townhouses will have mail and package delivery directly to the units, while the apartments will
61 have mailboxes and a package system in each building. Mr. Ladd asked whether the canopies
62 over the outer unit townhouse entries are flat, and Mr. De Felice stated that the canopies are flat,
63 and the design intention was to have a simplistic form over the door, in a different way from the
64 neighboring unit, and it is a form in the New England vernacular used in a different way. Mr.
65 Ladd requested good buffering for the retention basin. Jeff Smetana, United Group, noted that
66 the dark look of the building is bolder, with references to New England architecture. Mr.
67 Smetana stated that using vinyl siding is a cost effective quality product, and that landscaping is
68 a priority.

69

70 Ms. Rooney shared concerns that the look of the buildings is stark and monolithic, which could
71 be softened with plantings but there is no detailed landscaping plan yet. Ms. Rooney noted that in
72 the winter, there will not be much to break up the white, gray and black of the buildings. Ms.
73 Rooney stated that she also supports sustainable approaches, and that the landscaping plan
74 should have density and variation, with robust ground cover to minimize lawn areas. Mr. De
75 Felice replied that the roofs are solar ready, and the applicant team is still considering other
76 sustainable approaches. Ms. Rooney asked why the buildings will be solar ready but not have
77 solar installed, to which Mr. De Felice replied that the installation is up to the development team.
78 Ms. Rooney noted that the darker color buildings will be harder to cool down in hot summers,
79 and trees could help with this issue.

80

81 Ms. Pawnarkar agreed with other Committee member concerns, including about the dark colors,
82 and that the landscaping is necessary to create harmony between the building types because of
83 the change in eye level between buildings. Mr. Smetana noted that the applicant will explore
84 installing solar when the electrical contractor is hired.

85
86 Ms. Snellings reviewed the comments from the Committee that will be sent to the ZBA. Mr.
87 Savage stated that he does not want the review to appear overly negative. Ms. Rooney shared
88 that she appreciates the site layout and buffer, and is concerned about not seeing the full
89 landscape plan. Ms. Snellings encouraged the Committee members to attend the ZBA meetings.
90 Michael Uccellini, United Group, affirmed that the landscaping is a very important aspect of the
91 project, and they plan to have color and interest throughout the year, as it is an important feature
92 for residents to develop a sense of place. Mr. Savage motioned, and Ms. Rooney seconded, that
93 the review has been completed which passed with a vote of 3-0-1.

94
95 **Discussion of possible changes to the Design Review Bylaw and Design Review Guidelines,**
96 **including recommended planting list and Design Review triggers**

97
98 Ms. Snellings stated that a draft of the sustainability additions for parking guidelines will be
99 shared at next meeting. Ms. Snellings shared that the next concurrent meeting with the Planning
100 Board will be in July, and that forming the working group to assess the parking bylaw is still in
101 progress.

102
103 **Review and Approval of Minutes**
104 The Committee reviewed and approved the minutes from April 15, 2021 with a vote of 4-0-0.

105
106 **Staff Updates and Administrative Matters**
107 Ms. Snellings shared that the Downtown zoning amendment public hearing will be next
108 Thursday, and she will distribute the amendment language. The next meeting of the Committee
109 will be June 3.

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111 The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

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