

TOWN OF WEST HARTFORD

TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

January 24, 2023, 7 p.m.,

Legislative Chambers

**Re: Application Filed on Behalf of Blue Back
Capital Partners and Charter Realty
Development Corp., Owners and Managing
Partners of Special Development District
#113, Also Known as Blue Back Square.**

A p p e a r a n c e s:

Town Council Members Present:

MAYOR SHARI CANTOR

LEON DAVIDOFF

MARK ZYDANOWICZ

ALBERTO CORTES

DEB POLUN

CAROL BLANKS

BEN WENOGRAD

LIAM SWEENEY

RICK LEDWITH

Town Planner

Corporation Counsel

DALLAS DODGE

NADIA KAHN

Deputy Town Clerk

For CHARTER REALTY CORP.:

JOHN B. IRELAND, M. Arch.

1 **PRESIDENT CANTOR:** Okay. We
2 are now at seven o'clock. We will call the 7
3 p.m. public hearing to order.

4 This is an application filed
5 on behalf of Blueback Partners and Charter
6 Realty Development Corp, owners and managing
7 partners of Special Development District
8 Number 113, also known as Blue Back Square.

9 The application requests an
10 amendment to the existing Special Development
11 District design guidelines to create a new
12 standard for freestanding shade structures.

13 Roll call, Ms. Kahn?

14 **THE CLERK:** Thank you, Madam
15 Mayor. I'll begin the roll call with,
16 Councilor Blanks?

17 **COUNCILOR BLANKS:** Present.

18 **THE CLERK:** Mayor Cantor?

19 **PRESIDENT CANTOR:** Here.

20 **THE CLERK:** Councilor Cortes?

21 **COUNCILOR CORTES:** Here.

22 **THE CLERK:**

23 Councilor Davidoff?

24 **COUNCILOR DAVIDOFF:** Here.

25 **THE CLERK:** Councilor Fay?

1 **PRESIDENT CANTOR:** She's not
2 **present.**

3 **THE CLERK:** Councilor Polun?

4 **COUNCILOR POLUN:** Here.

5 **THE CLERK:** Deputy Mayor
6 **Sweeney?**

7 **COUNCILOR SWEENEY:** Here.

8 **THE CLERK:**

9 **Councilor Wenograd?**

10 **COUNCILOR WENOGRAD:** Here.

11 **THE CLERK:**

12 **And Councilor Zydanowicz?**

13 **COUNCILOR ZYDANOWICZ:** Here.

14 **PRESIDENT CANTOR:** Thank you
15 **very much. We will begin with a presentation**
16 **from Blue Back, and please introduce**
17 **yourself?**

18 **JOHN B. IRELAND:** I will. So
19 **good evening. My name is John Ireland, like**
20 **the country. I'm with Charter Realty, and my**
21 **role is design and construction.**

22 **So we have a brief**
23 **presentation tonight. This is an amendment**
24 **or an addition to the current Special**
25 **Development District 113 to add freestanding**

1 structures, so -- and I appreciate the use of
2 the laptop. I'm glad it's not flickering.

3 So 15 years ago, there were
4 design guidelines set up, and so this is an
5 amendment to that to add these freestanding
6 structures. We are finding that
7 restaurants -- in particular there are three
8 that we're focused on this evening.

9 Rosa Mexicano, which is now
10 open.

11 Bucuria, which is a Spanish
12 tapa restaurant, due to open later this year.
13 We're still pinning down that date. Their
14 construction starts soon.

15 And then the other one I think
16 that you know well is Fleming's. So they,
17 too, have expressed interest in a
18 freestanding shade structure, and we'll talk
19 a little bit more about what that means.

20 So it is similar to the
21 artisan restaurant across the street in the
22 Delamar, and somewhat similar to Whole Foods
23 and their freestanding structure. So again,
24 this is an addition.

25 So the sheet that you have in

1 front of you is -- we filled up the first
2 sheet -- is an additional sheet. And so the
3 idea here is to extend the building out into
4 these shade structures. They would be
5 freestanding. They would be as low as that
6 first design band, or that sign band. They
7 would be entirely on Blue Back Square or
8 inside the property line, and would not
9 project into any of the public ways,
10 sidewalks, streets, et cetera.

11 They would not have a
12 permanent roof. So this is a shade
13 structure. They could have canvas. They
14 could have some lighting. They could have
15 some decorative plants. We have lighting
16 guidelines in place already. So they would
17 need to follow that.

18 They cannot have logos, signs,
19 or any additional graphics. So this really
20 is an extension of the architecture. So up
21 on the screen is, of course, the Artisan
22 Restaurant. It's in the lower right and
23 upper right, and then Whole Foods. Again,
24 two separate SDD districts. And for whatever
25 reason we don't have this. So we're here

1 tonight to seek your approval to add this to
2 our district.

3 We do already have Town
4 Planning and Zoning Council approval. We
5 also have the architectural of the DRAC
6 approval. And then this evening, we just met
7 with the heritage board, and they had no
8 comment. So we presented the same, same
9 presentation.

10 And with that, I will pause,
11 open it up to questions. And?

12 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you,
13 Mr. Ireland.

14 Okay. I'm just going to go to
15 the public comment first. Madam Kahn, have
16 you received any written comments?

17 THE CLERK: We have not.

18 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. No
19 written comments. Are there anybody signed
20 up to speak?

21 No.

22 Is there anybody in the
23 audience that would like to speak to this
24 public hearing?

1 (No response.)

2
3 PRESIDENT CANTOR: No. So we
4 can go to questions from the Council. Are
5 there any questions? Mr. Wenograd?

6 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Thank
7 you, Madam Mayor. Can you hear me?

8 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Yes.

9 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Okay. So
10 just one question. You mentioned the three
11 restaurants, but are we talking about
12 potentially having it for others? Or is this
13 limited to those three?

14 JOHN B. IRELAND: Yes. So
15 when the guideline is -- if the guideline is
16 approved, then it would apply to anybody.

17 They would still have to go
18 through an SDD approval process. So
19 everything through that, the process, as well
20 as get a building permit, so which then also
21 requires town planning, and Town Planning and
22 Zoning sign-off.

23 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: So you're
24 saying that even after, if we approve this,
25 you still would have to go for an SDD?

1 MR. LEDWITH: Yes. So this
2 simply adds this guideline to the
3 freestanding structures, the exterior
4 amenities.

5 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Okay.
6 But it doesn't actually prove
7 any particular --

8 JOHN B. IRELAND: Exactly.
9 Exactly. I mention those -- not to be
10 confusing, but I mention those because there
11 is a request. In fact, some of them have
12 already gotten their drawings ready, and we
13 suspect there may be more.

14 For instance, Cheesecake is
15 right across from Rosa. They may or may not
16 elect to do this.

17 But yes, there's already an
18 interest, and I think -- so tonight is just
19 to approve the guidelines.

20 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Thank
21 you. And that was actually the exact
22 restaurant I was thinking about, was the
23 question of whether if we had it on both
24 sides, does that start -- I can't really
25 picture it, but if Cheesecake had it and Rosa

1 did, does it start becoming sort of a
2 corridor in between as there is now?

3 So just -- I'm not judging
4 that, but if that came forward it would still
5 have to go through DRAC and everyone to
6 decide whether or not that was appropriate to
7 have it on both sides?

8 JOHN B. IRELAND: Right.
9 Right.

10 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Okay.

11 JOHN B. IRELAND: And again,
12 the scale is very, very important. As the
13 guidelines say, it has to be human scaled.

14 In other words, you keep it
15 under that sign band, which is roughly in the
16 15-foot range, plus or minus. So these are
17 not large structures.

18 COUNCILOR WENOGRAD: Thank
19 you. And I should have gone through you,
20 Mayor. I apologize for that.

21 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you.
22 No, that's fine.

23 Mr. Wenograd -- just to follow
24 up on Mr. Wenograd's question, though, that
25 would not come back to the Council, though.

1 Once we approve the guidelines, it then goes
2 through the normal approval process, but not
3 back to us. So just to make that clear.

4 Right? Okay. Thank you.

5 Other questions? Ms. Blanks?

6 COUNCILOR BLANKS: Thank you,
7 Madam Mayor. And so my question is similar
8 to Councilor Wenograd's in terms of the space
9 that you referred to in terms of whether it's
10 the -- what is it? Pergola, or whatever
11 awning opposed to the sidewalk space, and
12 using Rosa Mexicano as well as Cheesecake for
13 an example, because on the sidewalk space it
14 does seem like there's a tight space.

15 So you said the regulatory
16 amount of space is how much? And then what's
17 the amount of space for sidewalk walk space?

18 JOHN B. IRELAND: So I think
19 the best way to answer that is it's, these
20 are not allowed in the public walkway, the
21 public walkway being associated with the
22 street. In that case, Isham or Eye-shum
23 [phonetic]. It's nowhere near that; it's
24 inboard.

25 Between those two structures

1 there, there is a walkway. And I think
2 visually -- I think Cheesecake has taken
3 theirs down, but they have gates or fencing
4 up. So it will remain within the fencing,
5 and then the walkway remains open.

6 So we're sensitive to that,
7 too. In other words, it's not intended to
8 overtake any of the other spaces.

9 So is that --

10 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Thank you.
11 Are there any further questions?

12
13 (No response.)

14
15 PRESIDENT CANTOR: Okay. I
16 would like to read in for the record a letter
17 dated January 6 -- as mentioned -- 2023, from
18 Town Plan and Zoning Commission, recommending
19 approval; a letter dated January 17, 2023
20 from the Design Review Advisory Committee,
21 recommending approval.

22 If there's no further
23 questions or comments?

24
25 (No response.)

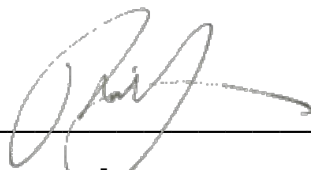
1 **PRESIDENT CANTOR:** The public
2 **hearing is now closed. And we have 20**
3 **minutes until our council meeting. So -- all**
4 **right. Thank you very much.**

5 **JOHN B. IRELAND:** Thank you.

6
7 **(Whereupon, the above**
8 **proceedings were concluded at 7:11 p.m.)**
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CERTIFICATE

I hereby certify that the foregoing 13 pages are a complete and accurate computer-aided transcription of my original verbatim notes taken of the Public Hearing In Re: APPLICATION FILED ON BEHALF OF BLUE BACK CAPITAL PARTNERS AND CHARTER REALTY DEVELOPMENT CORP. OWNERS AND MANAGING PARTNERS OF SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT #113, ALSO KNOWN AS BLUE BACK SQUARE, held before the West Hartford Town Council, at Town Hall, 50 South Main Street, Room 314, West Hartford, Connecticut, on January 24, 2023.



Robert G. Dixon, CVR-M 857

My Commission Expires:

6/30/2025