



Issued January 23, 2026

**DESIGN REVIEW ADVISORY COMMITTEE
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY, JANUARY 15, 2026
ROOM 400, TOWN HALL, WEST HARTFORD, CT**

Call to Order/Roll Call: 4:30 P.M.

DRAC ATTENDANCE: Chair: Ray Giolitto; Committee Members; Angela Cahill, Rick Conary, Brian Flemming, Jenna McClure & Liz Pang. Alternate: Jim Lawler

ABSENT: David Hines

Staff: Brian Pudlik, Senior Planner and Robert Gosselin, Associate Planner

REFERRAL FROM THE TOWN PLANNER:

1. **455 South Main Street:** Study session preparatory to the submission of Special Development District Amendment for a new entry addition, new façade and new signage along with associated site improvements to the existing building at 445 South Main Street.

B. Pudlik – Senior Planner – Introduced the item and noted that this proposed project is substantially scaled back from the prior proposed renovation and addition to the Hartford Health Care (HHC) building. Regarding the proposed sign for 433 South Main, Mr. Pudlik also stated that the proposed sign is refined from the version originally reviewed by the DRAC and is responsive to some of their comments.

B. Scalise – Project Architect – Briefly discussed the monument sign for 433 South Main and noted that the existing HHC sign immediately south of the property entrance is proposed to be removed. Regarding the existing HHC building, stated that updates are required because the building is in disrepair. Mr. Scalise stated that the updates to the building and site include the following:

- *Interior layout changes to accommodate the needs of HHC.*
- *Stone proposed around the building entry, around the building base and the parapet wall*
- *The building entry will be reconfigured to accommodate a new glass structure and new canopy*
- *Around the rear of the building, the existing brick will be painted grey. In other areas, where the brick is in poor condition, it will be replaced by a metal rainscreen panel.*
- *New signage is proposed around the building and at the corner of New Britain Ave and South Main Street with a proposed monument sign made up of a curved stone base with lit channel letters mounted above the wall*
- *To accommodate the placement of the new sign, the pedestrian walkway into the site will be relocated to the west of the sign*

In reviewing the design philosophy for the exterior treatment of the HHC building, Mr. Scalise noted the disparate architectural character of the properties at each of the adjacent corners and that HHC

was trying to bring their own identity, while at the same time not completely departing from some of the neighboring design elements.

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Made the following range of comments on the proposed project:

- The buildings on adjacent properties have an eclectic mix of architectural styles and as a result, trying to draw from that is challenging.*
- As proposed, the building has too many design elements and material types.*
- The stone, particularly around the parapet is too heavy and unnecessary given it does not relate to any structural elements below it. The stone parapet, particularly in combination with the stone around the entry, gives the building a “castle” aesthetic, which is undesirable.*
- The metal panel material and glass entry appear out of place and should be reconsidered.*
- Overall, the project needs a different approach that calls upon some of the existing design elements, such as the natural brick.*
- Regarding the monument sign, it appears too larger for its location.*

M. Carafino – Project Architect – In response to Mr. Giolitto, stated that much of the design language was pulled from other HHC buildings that HHC corporate. Regarding the parapet, they considered a simple metal panel parapet wall as an option.

Mr. Giolitto suggested the simple metal parapet would be a better option and asked whether the exterior brick could be saved. Mr. Carafino stated that in many areas, the brick is falling off the building and is not safe to remain in place.

B. Scalise – Project Architect – Showed two design alternatives; one with a simple metal panel parapet and stone entry and one with all metal panel and no stone.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Asked whether the team considered eliminating the mansard roof entirely so that the walls extend directly into the parapet? Mr. Carafino stated that they did consider that option, but did not elect to pursue it.

J. McClure – DRAC member – In response to the alternate design options presented, stated that either of those are preferred to the currently proposed design, but noted that the stone around the base of the building is OK. Regarding the mansard roof, stated that it is not very successful. Overall, Ms. McClure stated that fewer material types will allow the team to make a statement with the building entry. She did question whether it needed to be at a 45-degree angle. Mr. Carafino stated that that orientation allowed them to create a more formal drop-off area without making any dramatic changes to the parking area.

Next, Ms. McClure asked whether any plantings were proposed as part of this project. Mr. Scalise stated that plantings likely would be part of the project, but those details had not been fleshed out by the client at this time.

Regarding the freestanding sign, Ms. McClure stated it was much too large at this location.

Lastly, Ms. McClure requested that for any future presentations, the team needs to verify that the colors proposed are accurately represented in the renderings; that appeared not to be the case here.

A. Cahill – DRAC member – Asked how the metal panels will be attached to the building. Mr. Scalise stated that there is CMU wall behind the brick and metal panels would be attached to that substrate. She then asked how the roof is being handled. Mr. Scalise stated that due to concerns with the existing conditions, the entire roof is being removed and rebuilt. Ms. Cahill then made the following comments on the project:

- The design language for this building should not match neighboring commercial properties, but rather a business park-like aesthetic.*
- She requested that the team have more comprehensive site work/landscaping plans prepared for the next DRAC presentation.*
- For the areas of the building where the existing brick is being kept, consider a stone wash over exterior paint, which should improve durability.*
- She has no objection to the use of stone around the base of the building.*
- She would like to see an all rain-screen option for the building, rather than a mix of materials.*
- She stated that the team should look for opportunities to enhance the amount of natural light that gets into the building.*
- Regarding the proposed monument sign, she reiterated comments from the other Committee members that it is too big and creates a distraction on that corner. She also questioned whether or not the sign is actually necessary given the relatively large building mounted sign proposed at the entrance facing the same direction.*

R. Conary – DRAC member – Also questioned whether the freestanding sign is necessary with the proximity of the sign on the building. He further noted that the team should choose one or the other and that both are not necessary. Mr. Conary also asked that plantings be considered as part of the next submission. Regarding the use of stone on the building, he noted that as proposed there is too much, particularly at the parapet. Regarding wayfinding, Mr. Conary raised a concern that if the existing monument sign close to the property entrance is being removed, how will customers know to pull into the parking lot for 433 South Main to access this building. Mr. Carafino stated that they would discuss the issue with the property owner.

L. Pang – DRAC member – Stated that the corner freestanding sign is not necessary. Regarding building façade treatment, she noted that less stone is preferred to the current approach. Regarding the walkway from the public sidewalk, she asked whether it could be better aligned with the building entry. In response, Mr. Carafino stated they would review options to do that.

J. Lawler – DRAC member – Stated that the overall design for the building is unsettling and does not match any other HHC building. He went on to say that the building needs to be drastically simplified.

B. Flemming – DRAC member – Reiterated the comment that the freestanding sign is not necessary and is too large as proposed. Regarding the treatment of the roof, stated that if the whole roof is being removed and rebuilt from scratch, the team should not bring back the mansard-style roofline and should explore other options.

R. Giolitto – DRAC Chair – Regarding the 433 South Main Street monument sign, noted that the proposed sign is improved from the prior version, but further noted that the DRAC suggested the team review signage that was more interior to the site to direct people.

Generally, the DRAC expressed concern that patrons of HHC would not be able to find the building without any sign presence at the entrance to 433 South Main, which is the only way into the property. They suggested the application work with the owner to find solutions to that problem, whether by including HHC on the proposed monument sign, or through other means. The Committee also strongly suggested additional wayfinding signage be proposed within the parking lot.

APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:

2. Minutes of the December 18, 2025 Special Meeting – **No action taken by the DRAC**

COMMUNICATION

3. None

ADJOURNMENT: 5:30 PM – Motion: Cahill; Second: McClure, Vote: 6-0

Cc: Rick Ledwith, Town Manager
Dallas Dodge, Corporation Counsel

Duane Martin, Community Development Director
Leon Davidoff, Town Clerk