

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: WESTVILLE VILLAGE HISTORIC DISTRICT, Authorization for Signs at 3 Locations in the Public Right of Way (Aldermen Lehtonen and Dildine).

REPORT: 1453-12

ADVICE: Approval of scaled-down Sign with Conditions as noted

BACKGROUND

Aldermen Thomas Lehtonen, 27th Ward, and Greg Dildine, 25th Ward, have petitioned their colleagues to authorize placement of three signs at entry points to the Westville Village Historic District. When signs are placed on City land, Board of Aldermen approval is required. According to the submission materials, the Westville Village Renaissance Alliance has secured funding from the State of Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development and the Tremaine Foundation for the manufacture and installation of the signs. The signs are proposed to be installed in the tree belt at Fountain Street and Alden Avenue, at Whalley Avenue and Harrison Street, and at Whalley Avenue and Fitch Street.

Each sign would be two-sided, laser cut steel or aluminum panel mounted on a steel pylon to be anchored to a concrete pad in the tree belt. Overall height above ground level at the top of each sign is proposed to be 16'-9", and the bottom of the sign will be 11'-10" above the ground. The signs themselves are approximately 5'-9" wide by 4'-3" tall. There is a 3' separation between the edge of curb and edge of sign. The signs would have on one side "Entering Westville Village Historic District" and on the opposite side "Leaving Westville Village Historic District". West Rock with profiles of village buildings at its base is depicted at the top of each sign.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The Board of Aldermen controls encroachments on the public right-of-way under the general authority of Section 49 of the City Charter. The Commission advises the Board in considering proposals for appurtenances on City property, and looks at suitability of design, scale, durability of product and its supports, and quality of construction materials, and location in the light of interference with traffic sight lines or potential damage by vehicles.

The Commission believes while the signs appear carefully designed, they are unnecessarily large for the scale of the "village" and for the 25 mph posted speed limit. The pylons appear as large as a light pole or other tall structure. The sign on Whalley Avenue appears to be close to the same height as overhead wires. The Commission recommends scaling the structures down to a size more in keeping with the historic village they are signing. The submission is not clear as to who will maintain the signs. If the Westville Village Renaissance Alliance will maintain them, it should also maintain liability coverage if required by the City's Corporation Counsel. The Commission defers to Corporation Counsel to determine whether a public liability policy would be required for such signs in the tree belt. All locations are in the State right of way and will therefore be subject to CDOT review and requirements. An engineering stamp on a final design as to the structure, wind loads, etc. will be required. The Traffic Department should review the locations and installation details.

ADVICE

The Commission recommends Approval of a sign scaled down to be more in keeping with the historic village with the following Conditions

1. Exact locations of signs and methods for installation shall be subject to review by the Connecticut Department of Transportation.
2. An Engineer's stamp will be required as to the structure, base detail, and wind load.
3. A **current** and continuous public liability certificate of insurance, acceptable to the City's Corporation Counsel, shall be maintained for the signs, if so required by Corp Counsel.
4. The City reserves the right to revoke the privilege for the signs if hazardous to pedestrians or motorists or if not maintained in good repair and clean condition.

ADOPTED: June 15, 2011
Roy Smith, Jr.
Vice Chair

ATTEST:


Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director