

West Hartford News (WestHartfordNews.com)

News

Delamar hotel gets unanimous approval in West Hartford

Thursday, June 12, 2014

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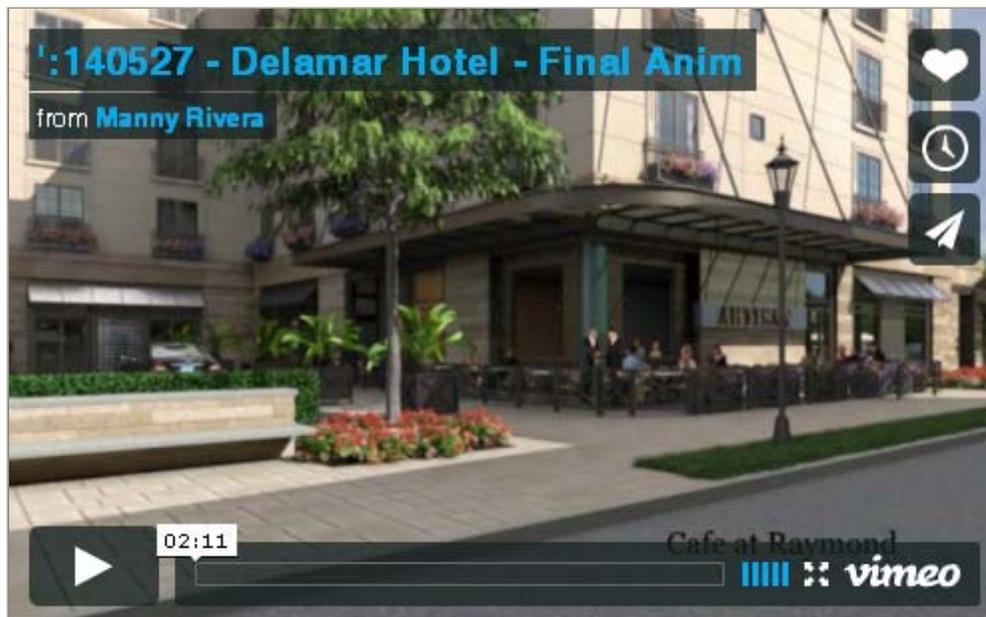
WEST HARTFORD>> The town council on Tuesday unanimously approved plans for construction of the Delamar hotel project, after the planning and zoning commission sent a favorable recommendation to the council.

Groundbreaking on the planned six-story building may begin as early as this fall, with an opening planned sometime in 2016. The project was designed by architect Israel Smith, of Smith Buckley Architects of Burlington, Vt., who was "inspired by old-world buildings in France and Canada, as well as in 19th century New England," he said.

The project is estimated to cost around \$30 million, according to Dan Matos, of the Matos group, a partner of the Greenwich Hospitality Group, forming Delamar West Hartford LLC.

Delamar owns and manages six hotels, including the Delamar Greenwich Harbor, the Delamar Southport in Fairfield and Hotel Zero Degrees in Stamford and Norwalk.

The town planning and zoning commission is scheduled to vote on an outdoor dining permit for the hotel on July 2.



The hotel is expected to generate 120 jobs directly, and many others indirectly as support to vendors that will supply the hotel, according to Greenwich Hospitality Group founder Charles Mallory said.

Delamar has worked closely with town staff and the town's volunteer design review advisory committee to refine the design and plans for the project, which includes a 118,892-square-foot, six-story hotel with a banquet facility, restaurant and retail facilities on street level and outdoor dining. A full service, high end spa, with four treatment studios will be modeled in the success of the Greenwich spa which "is a destination in its own right," Mallory said.

The hotels offer "traditional comfort and luxury, but with a flair and whimsy that people may find unexpected," said Mallory. "We want to be part of pedestrian ebb and flow of Blue Back Square but want it to have its own architectural vocabulary."

The 118,892-square-foot hotel would include a 260-person ballroom that could be divided up, plus a banquet facility, a 90-seat restaurant and bar, a 70-seat outdoor dining area, a 28-seat

Street-front cafe, and an outdoor lawn event space.

Mallory also said the hotel will adhere to the Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design gold standard certification for green building.

Plans include 38 on-site parking spaces, and the group has reached an agreement to share town-owned public lots and garages for the majority of its parking needs, which would include valet parking.

Langan Engineering Senior Principal John Plant, PE, discussed roads and traffic in detail. Saying it was determined "existing roads sufficient for hotel traffic and that parking facilities adequate," Plant added that the hotel staff will work closely with town staff to provide flexibility to adjust to activities and events.

"Customer service is a very high priority for Delamar hotels," said Plant, who outlined plans for "new textured crosswalks" – similar to ones on South Main Street— that will extend the sidewalk on the south side to the trail along Trout Brook Drive. Also planned are extended improvements "down Raymond Road, including fully audible pedestrian signals" already seen in spots around town. The crossing signals will include pedestrian-only phases with a goal of slowing traffic on Raymond Road, with a goal of eventually making Raymond Road less desirable vehicular traffic arriving to Blue Back Square.

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Alair has previously detailed a lease agreement for the project with an initial term of 50 years, with four renewal terms of a decade each. Base rent for the lease is \$150,000 annually, which would increase by 2 percent each year. The tenant would be responsible for all taxes and applicable charges.

The agreement also includes a purchase option for \$3 million, a figure that will increase by 0.17 percent each month throughout the lease.

Smith explained that LEED gold is "something that is very important to us" and is achieved through a point system for building features. A total of 60 points are needed to qualify, currently there are 54 points that are "already agreed" and there are plans to adopt half of 20 that are currently "solid maybes," he said.

The hotel will also feature six suites intended for long term guests, based on a successful long term model in Greenwich.

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