



DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION

REPORT: 100 Pearl Street, Hartford, CT 06103

For consideration: January, 20, 2021 (continued from December 16, 2020)

STAFF REPORT

TO: HARTFORD PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Autumn Florek, Senior Planner
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PROJECT: 100 Pearl Street
PARCEL ID: 246-346-034
ENERGOV ID: COMM-2020-0297

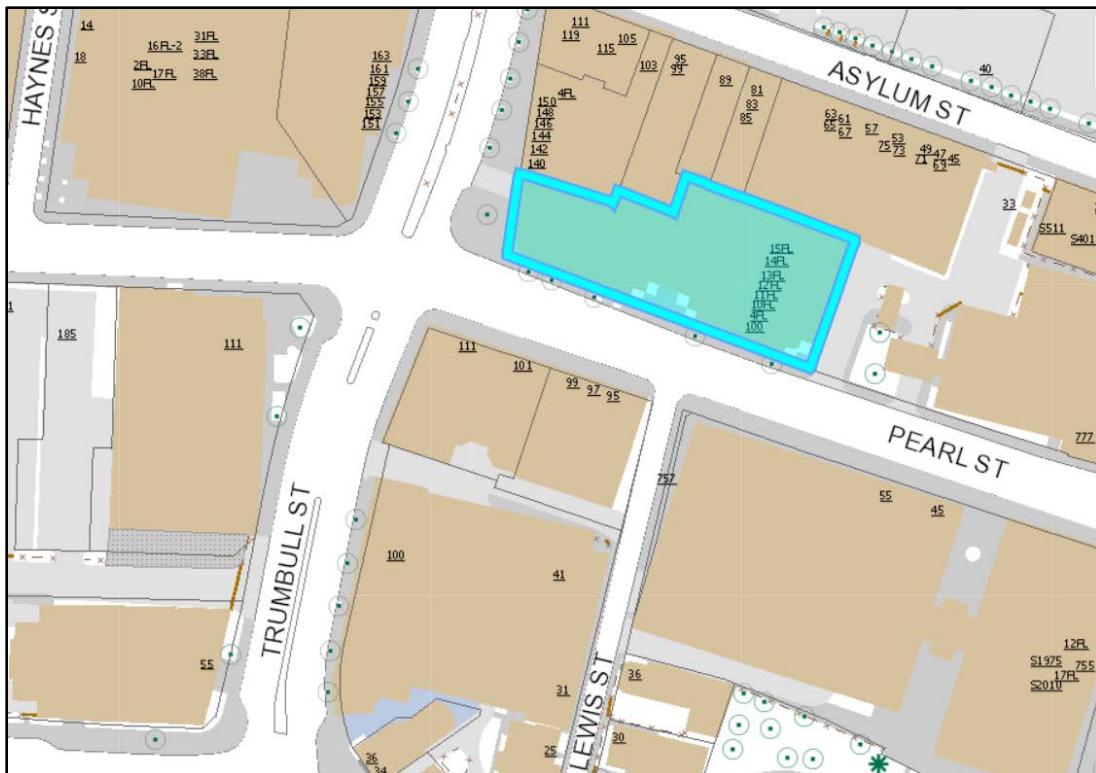
ZONE: DT-3 **HISTORIC DISTRICT:** Asylum Trumbull Pearl State Historic District

TYPE: ARTICLE XII HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
Sec. 28-170 through 28-221

APPLICANT: Hartford Healthcare c/o Matthew Bruton, BL Companies

OWNER: SGS Pearl, LLC

LOCATION MAP



BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The subject site is 100 Pearl Street, part of the Asylum Pearl Trumbull State Historic District. The Commission first heard the application on December 16, 2020. In its December, the Commission raised concerns with regard to several elements of the Applicant's proposal. The Applicant said they were willing to address some of the Commission's concerns, stating that they were prepared to preserve an existing fanlight window and revise the plans so as not to include three bollards along Pearl Street.

The Commission adopted a resolution approving the glass box addition, requesting that the Applicant preserve the fanlight window, and tabling the remainder of the proposal until the next meeting. The Resolution is attached for reference. The Commission said it wished to consider the proposed plans for the plaza as a whole, but placed special emphasis on the following components:

- (1) Potential preservation of the existing 18' clock tower.
- (2) The proposed media tower.
- (3) The proposed sign at the top of the building's west façade.
- (4) The proposed seating areas.

Note: The Commission has previously considered a separate application for seven signs, filed by another applicant (COMM-2020-0271). The Commission approved this proposal on November 18, but the Applicant has revised their proposal for the subject site and will appear later on the agenda for this meeting.

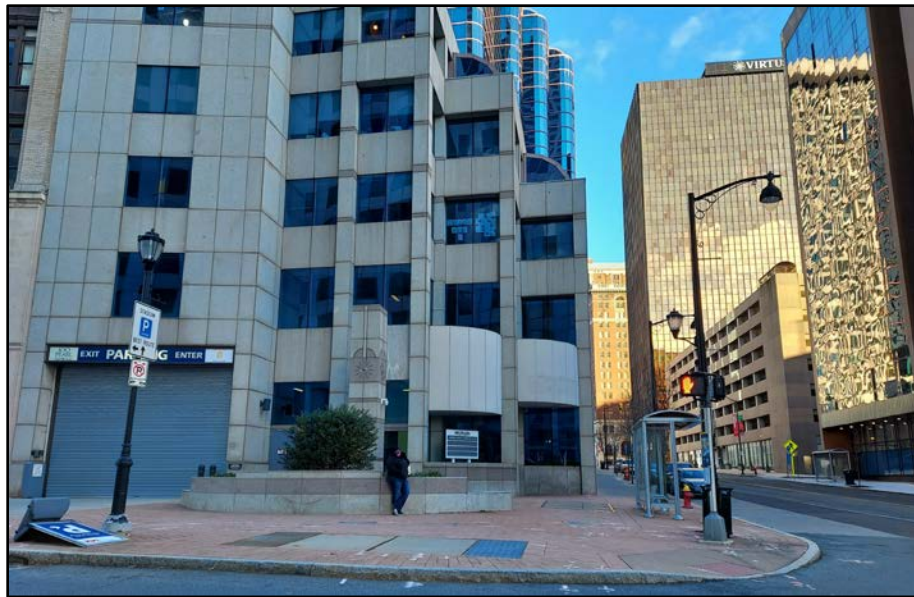


Figure 2: 100 Pearl Street, December 6, 2020

Proposed Project: The Applicant has made the following changes to the proposal:

- (1) Preserved the existing fanlight window.
- (2) Removed the three Pearl Street bollards from the proposed site plan.
- (3) Preserved the clock tower, but proposed its relocation slightly to the north, near the parking garage driveway.

- (4) Shifted the proposed Hartford Healthcare sign on the seventh-floor façade at the top of the building away from the existing fanlight window and adjacent building.
- (5) Added a seating area in the middle of the plaza above the proposed sign embedded in the plaza.
- (6) Reduced the height of the proposed media tower from 17'1" to 14'9". The proposed media tower, base, and pedestal would be 21'6", less than the 24'1" initially proposed.
- (7) Reduced the width of the proposed media tower from 8'9" to 7'6".



Figure 2: 100 Pearl Street, Staff Photo, December 6, 2020



Figure 3: Existing Digital Display at Chase Bank, Staff Photo, January 15, 2021



Figure 4: East Side of Trumbull Street, Staff Photo, January 15, 2021

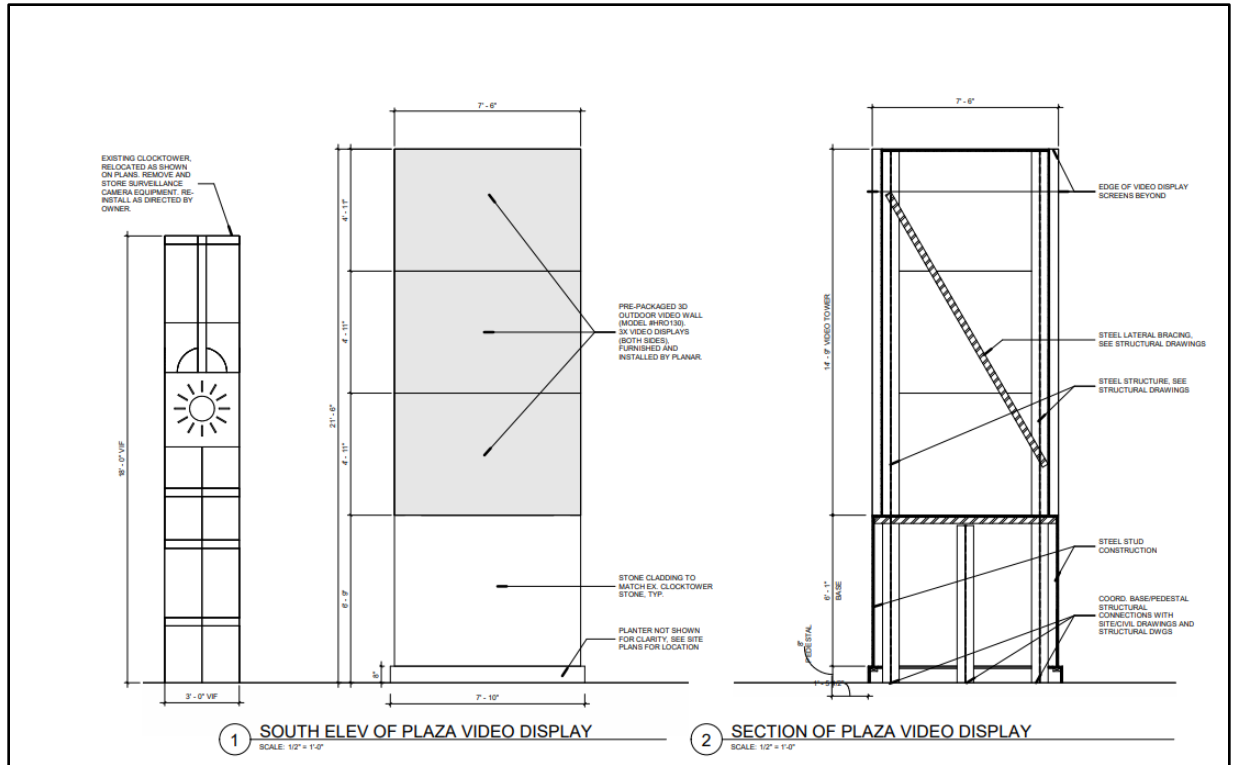


Figure 5: Detail of Proposed Video Display, Revised Plans



Figure 6: Rendering of Proposed Plaza

LEGAL STANDARD

The Commission reviews and acts upon all applications for Document of Suitability. No person or entity may, without first applying and obtaining the approval of the Commission, file an application for a demolition permit, or for a building permit for any protected property as designated in the Historic Preservation Ordinance Sec. 28-219.

STANDARDS SPECIFIC TO THE USE

The commission shall adopt the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* and the City of Hartford's *Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings*.

The following sections of the *Guidelines* are relevant:

- Designing Alterations and Additions, page 27:
 - “Recommended: Alterations and additions which are in character with the style, detail and massing of the existing building.
 - “Acceptable: Alterations and minor additions may reproduce historical style. Larger additions may be contemporary in style and detail, as long as they compatible in materials, massing, and scale to the original.
- Facades, page 37:
 - “Recommended: Any change should be compatible with the original design of the building.”
 - “Recommended: If it becomes necessary to add new elements, or to mix old and new parts, they should harmonize with what already exists.”
- New Construction and Alterations, Downtown, pages 35-37:
 - “New construction in the Downtown Business District should be harmonious with the scale and character of the existing streetscape. Materials should convey a sense of substance and permanence, and the architecture should reinforce the impression of stateliness and dignity appropriate to Hartford's urban center.”
 - “Any change or addition should be compatible with the original design of the building.”
 - “Whenever possible, retain original details and materials. If it becomes necessary to introduce new elements, or to mix old and new parts, they should harmonize with what already exists.”

FINDING OF FACTS

CURRENT USE:	Office	PROPOSED USE:	Office
YEAR BUILT:	1924, 1989	STYLE:	Neoclassical, Contemporary

Particular mention in Historic nomination:

The original nomination also noted the Mechanics Savings Bank, whose façade remains, but has mostly been demolished for the modern structure:

Two historic structures remain at 100 Pearl Street which are particularly mentioned in the nomination to contribute to the state historic district: - 80 Pearl Street, Mechanics Savings Bank, built in 1924, is noted for being one of Hartford's older financial institutions and the work of architects Morris & O'Connor. Architecturally the building is noted for its [sic] granite façade, Greek Doric columns, and other Greek inspired details.



Figure 3: Pearl and Trumbull Streets, February 1986.
Source: Library of Congress, HABS

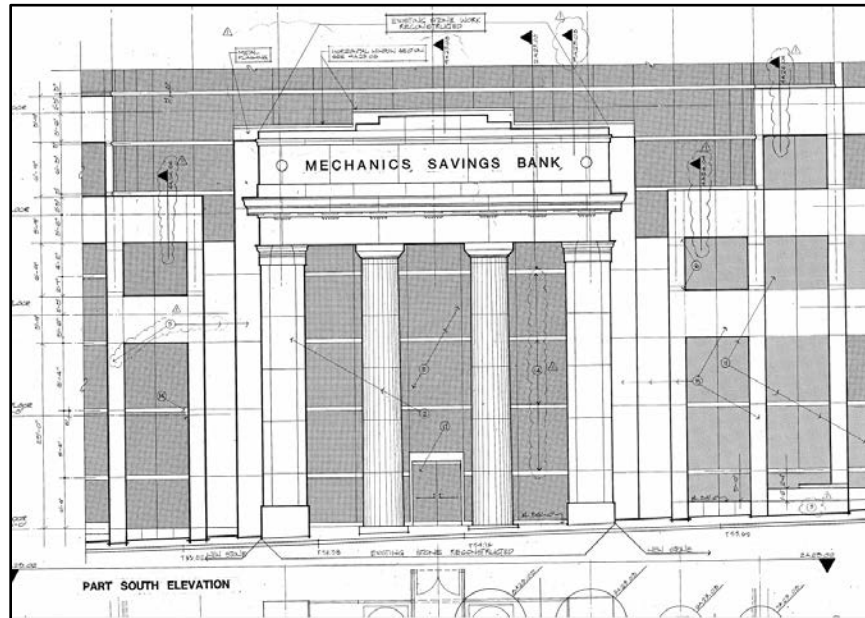
The nomination also mentioned the Corning Building which was demolished in the 1980s:

Corning Building, built in 1934, is noted for its avant-garde [sic] design that is unique in Historic Downtown Hartford. Designed by the Hartford Architect Lester B. Scheide, the building relies “for effect on fine materials, varied planes and sensitive massing rather than on architectural embellishment. In the front elevation a central recessed section of polished black granite is flanked by projecting limestone masses on a black granite base...

The nomination also includes the following information for the adjacent Shoor Brothers Building which may be relevant for this discussion:

Its yellow brick Trumbull Street elevation is an elaborate statement in the Neo-Classical Revival Style, although the street level shop windows have been altered, the central

entrance closed and the second and third floors covered. At the fourth floor the windows under the arches are divided into nine sections and have a peaked cap. At the fifth floor the scheme is the same without the peak and at the sixth floor the arches dictate a 1-over-1 window flanked by single sections. The vertical muntins carry up through the spandrels between floors, giving vertical thrust to the design.



Nearby Conditions: Modern buildings, including several high-rises, occupy the blocks close to the subject site. Nineteenth century structures still remain to the north of the site along Trumbull Street. The historic buildings appear in good condition and both historic and contemporary structures appear well-maintained. The Shoor Brothers Building is adjacent to the subject property. The 1908-09 structure has narrow arched openings near the top of the building that are mirrored in the designed of the 1986 design of the subject structure.

COMMENTS RECEIVED Prior to the December meeting, The Hartford Preservation Alliance submitted a letter opposing the proposed media tower. Mary Falvey also spoke at the December meeting and reiterated those concerns. Staff notified the Department of Public Works about the project. DPW staff said that they would review the proposal as well.

The Applicant has made several revisions to address the concerns raised in December. The Applicant has removed the proposed bollards from the plans. The Applicant has also revised the plans to keep the fanlight window on the Trumbull Street façade. Moreover, they have moved the Hartford Healthcare logo sign (now 9' x 9') to overhang at the southern end of the façade. Given the isolated position, Staff believe that the sign wouldn't detract from the existing fanlight window or the Shoor Brothers Building.

The Applicant has further revised the proposal to preserve the 18' clock. The Applicant proposes to relocate the clock, but only a short distance from its existing location, close to the existing parking garage driveway, approximately 3' from the media tower. The proposed relocation would preserve and keep the clock in the plaza. It is possible that the media tower would detract from the existing clock, but it is worth noting that the clock was erected circa 1987-1989, when the other modern alterations were made to the building. The clock is not a contributing structure, not mentioned in any historic documentation due to its newness, and there is no notation regarding a significant architect or designer. The installation of the media tower and preservation of the clock may physically crowd the public way. This proposal is intentionally designed to enliven and activate the corner. The removal of the clock may allow for modernization of the space while retaining a vertical element on the Trumbull St. façade. The media tower can be designed in such a way that it nods to the clock design or reuses the clock face. Of note however, in conversation with staff, the Applicant also explored the idea of relocating the clock to the Pearl Street frontage.

At its previous meeting, the Commission voiced concerns that the proposed media tower would disrupt the character of the existing streetscape, as articulated by the nomination for the Asylum Trumbull Pearl Historic District. At the time, it was believed the proposed tower would particularly impact the Shoor Brothers Building. The nomination for the Asylum Trumbull Pearl District, however, does not directly mention the Trumbull Street streetscape itself. With regard to the continuous view of the historic facades along the block, staff believe that the corner sidewalk bump out and existing sidewalk direction helps to preserve that vista for pedestrians.

In response to concerns about the media tower, the Applicant has reduced the height and width of the video tower proposed. The proposed placement and number of screens remain as they were in the previous plans. Staff requested a narrative from the applicant describing, among other things, what type of advertising would be displayed on the media tower. The narrative, received 1/5/21, noted that there would be programming for health issues like COVID, vaccines, and mental health. Staff asked the Applicant to elaborate on the programming and how the media tower would benefit the public realm, but had not heard back as of this writing.

With the proposed changes, staff do believe that the proposed tower would have less of an adverse effect on the streetscape than the earlier proposal. The zoning regulations will address concerns with sightlines between pedestrians and traffic entering the parking garage just beyond the tower and clock. Zoning will further address matters of brightness of the media tower face.

The proposed seating area between the planters would obstruct the public right-of-way similar to the bollards removed. There is a lack of clarity as to whether this issue is under the purview of the Historic Commission. The Commission may introduce a recommendation that the seating area be examined more closely during zoning review. Similarly, the Applicant proposed to install a 10' x 10' sign

embedded in the plaza that, while possibly outside the purview of the Historic Commission, should be discussed during zoning review.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of this application.

A draft resolution follows.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Completed and signed application form.
2. Cover letter for revised plans.
3. Set of Revised Plans.
4. Letter from Hartford Preservation Alliance.

REVIEWED,

Aimee Chambers, Director



CITY OF HARTFORD
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION
100 PEARL STREET
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPOSAL

- Whereas,** The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the proposal for the new signage, development of a public courtyard, the removal of existing features, and addition to the existing building façade for the property at 100 Pearl Street; and
- Whereas,** The subject property is located in the Asylum Pearl Trumbull State Historic District; and
- Whereas,** The existing site retains the façade of the 1924 Neoclassical Mechanics Savings Bank; and
- Whereas,** The façade of the 100 Pearl Street Corning Building retains some acknowledgements to its architectural history, like a recessed section of black granite in the front façade and a raised disk with lettering, but has largely been replaced and does not retain its historic character; and
- Whereas,** The Applicant proposes to install new signage that includes a 9' x 9' sign installed in the isolated overhang at the top of the building, two 5'4" x 5'4" signs on the west and south facades, respectively, and a 10' x 10' sign on the pavers of the plaza, and a 14' 9" media tower with six dynamic digital displays mounted on a 6' 1" base; and
- Whereas,** The Applicant proposes to preserve the 18' clock tower erected in 1987 and relocate it a short distance to the north, close to the existing driveway to the parking garage; and
- Whereas,** The proposed signage avoids the remaining façade of the Mechanics Savings Bank; and
- Whereas,** The proposal does not threaten the historic nature of the site and the district as a whole; and
- Whereas,** The Commission previously adopted a Resolution on December 16, 2020, to approve certain elements of the proposal;

Now therefore Be It

- Resolved,** The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission hereby approves the modified plans in addition to the December 16 approval as follows:
1. The 9' x 9' sign shall be installed in the isolated overhang at the top of the building on the west façade
 2. The two 5'4" x 5'4" signs on the west and south facades
 3. The 14' 9" media tower with six dynamic digital displays mounted on a 6' 1" base located per the plans
 4. The 18' clock tower shall be relocated to the north per the plans

Resolved, The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission recommends removal of the proposed seating area between the planters and the install a 10' x 10' sign embedded in the plaza.

Be It Further,

Resolved, This 20th day of January 2021.