

October 28, 2022

Caroline Skuncik, Executive Director
I-195 Redevelopment District Commission
225 Dyer Street, 4th Floor
Providence, RI 02903

RE: 150 Richmond Street Concept Plan Design Review – Response to Comments

Dear Caroline,

Ancora, GRE and our design partners at HOK and VHB are pleased to provide this memo, and accompanying drawings & graphics, in response to the comments offered by Utile and the Commission's Design Review Panel in their memo dated October 18, 2022, as well as those voiced at our initial hearing on October 19th by Commission Members, the Neighborhood Design Panel Representatives, and the general public. We will respond first to comments in the Utile Memorandum, then to those offered at the hearing, and we close this response with an updated summary of the waivers for which we seek approval, as well as those we have eliminated.

Design Review Panel Comments

Parking and Loading:

We fully grasp the goals inherent in the Development Plan around the District being a pedestrian-focused environment, and the specific parking strategy that is embedded in the availability of the Garrahy Garage on Clifford St. However, a lab-intensive building of this nature does have an inherent need for more loading and service activity than other building types throughout the District. In addition, the public-health nature of the RISHL space comes with specific requirements for ensuring that samples of biological and chemical materials gathered from across the State can be delivered 24/7 to the Lab in a convenient, safe and chain-of-custody-regulated manner. This is the reason that we provide approximately five (5) vehicular parking spaces behind the building. Use of these spaces will be limited to short-term, delivery-oriented activity. All Staff at the RISHL, as well as all employees of other companies, organizations or institutions located in the commercial side of the Building, will use the Garrahy Garage for their routine daily parking needs.

In this context however, there are steps we can take to ameliorate the impact of these requirements. We will work to ensure an integrated design approach that provides only the minimum truck-circulation necessary to maneuver these vehicles up to the loading docks (without resorting to a back-in-from-the-street process). We will also seek to minimize curb-cut dimension through the use of mountable curbs, and by engaging with the City of Providence in discussions about the removal of a limited number of parking spaces on the west side of Clifford St, to better facilitate truck entry and exit from the street into the loading area.

We also recognize that our early conceptual plans do not fully address the Development Plan goals for pedestrian connectivity through this block as a whole, nor for outdoor people-friendly break space. We

are to some extent hampered by the configuration of our parcel and the existence of the small triangular parking parcel that belongs to the adjacent property, and we have opened conversations with the owners of that property to explore whether there might be some way to aggregate the parcels together in a manner that would enable more efficient parking, better pedestrian connectivity to Clifford St, and more space devoted to people. However, we are not yet in a position to offer specific proposals that incorporate that triangular lot. We have, however, identified a strategy from moving our bicycle storage facilities within the building, which will free up more space for people and buffer plantings. We also anticipate using differing sorts of paving materials to highlight zones and pathways where pedestrians are welcome. The Site Plan submitted with this memo incorporates a number of enhancements to our prior proposal; we will keep the Commission apprised of the state of discussions with our neighbors.

Ground Floor and Public Realm:

150 Richmond offers a singularly unique opportunity to bring together different laboratory-focused communities who do not often interrelate – scientists and administrators whose focus rests in commercial product development, those focused on institutional research, and most uniquely, the scientists and lab technicians who are charged with overseeing public health in the State of Rhode Island. The genesis for this rests with the members of Rhode Island leadership community who originally spawned the idea of using the State Lab to help enable the growth of the local bioscience community by serving as an “anchor” for the development of commercial lab space in downtown Providence. From the beginning, our goal has been to build on this idea by creating a singular facility that enables and encourages interaction, and perhaps even collaboration, among the different user groups in the Building. For this reason, we believe our current approach of bringing all building users and visitors into the building through a common lobby and café amenity space, before they split off into their respective work environments, is highly consistent with the overall goals for the Project.

We intend to brand the building with an all-encompassing name – something like the Rhode Island Center for Health Sciences, though that is still just one idea under consideration. Inside the lobby, the RISHL Unit will “own” the wall to the left, with a secured entry point and opportunity for RISHL signage. The commercial/institutional Unit will “own” the wall towards the back, with a concierge desk and appropriate signage. To the right the lobby will dissolve into an active cafe and amenity space that is equally welcoming and available to everyone in the building, plus the general public via an entrance on Elbow Street. Major Building Users – the RISHL Lab and any large commercial tenants – will also be granted the opportunity for additional discrete identity signate outside the building in the vicinity of the entry.

We have revised the ground floor to incorporate indoor bicycle storage, as well as accompanying showers and lockers. The bicycle room would have a dedicated entry off of Elbow Street, and would also be connected to the lobby/café/amenity space. This will activate the majority of the Elbow Street frontage, though there is still a need for some service rooms at the back end, off the loading dock. We support and will encourage the activation of the RISHL’s Richmond Street frontage with attractive, engaging graphics and other materials that seek to put science on display, though the RISHL Team is the ultimate decision maker for how this space is finished and used.

Building Expression and Façade Design:

We appreciate the Design Review Panel’s comments with regard to the changes made to date with regards to façade and building massing. We do intend to continue the process of developing the façade concept, such as with some kind of top-piece or cornice element. However, as we are still in the Schematic Design phase and just receiving back our first round of cost estimates, we’re not yet in a position to make highly specific commitments with regard to the exact materials we’ll be employing. We would ask the Commission to accept and approve what we have shared to date as demonstrating

our intent at a Concept Design stage, subject to adjustments we may make prior to coming back for Final Design Approval. We do, however, take special note of the Panel's commentary – also expressed by some representatives of the Neighborhood Design Panels – that the “rear” façade, and also the mechanical penthouse and screen at the top of the building – need more attention to ensure that the Building is visually interesting and pleasing as viewed from any direction.

Neighborhood Design Review Comments

We appreciate the active participation of the larger design community and neighbors at the Commission hearing and we acknowledge our responsibility to engage with and be responsive to those impacted by this building development. Below you will find comments made during the hearing and our responses, articulating how we attempt to address these comments in the latest design iteration:

Downtown Neighborhood

1. *Add cornice or shadow line* - A shadow line has been added to the façade to cap the main massing of the occupied floor areas in response to both Utile and neighborhood comments. We note that this also in conforms with I-195 requirements.
2. *Add additional building entrances* - The design team has maintained a common entry as stated above under the *Ground Floor and Public Realm* section. Additional entries have been included on Elbow Street for bike storage access and retail that will help to enliven the pedestrian way of Elbow Street. Richmond Street has been enlivened through means of transparency and layering, without additional entries, to maintain a level of security and access control necessary for the program area that occupies this street front.

Fox Point

1. *Bicycle parking inside* – The bike parking has been accommodated within the building, complete with shower facilities.
2. *View of building from Fox Point* – The design team appreciates that this building has a presence on all sides, including visibility across the river from Fox Point. We have included additional detail renderings of the north face and will continue to develop the details and select materials to create visual interest for adjacent and distant neighbors alike.
3. *Likes massing without cornice* – A shadow line has been added in compliance with I-195 standards and is not a true cornice. We think the design strikes an appropriate balance between I-195 requirements and modern expression.
4. *Select better penthouse facade material* – The design team is working on selecting appropriate penthouse enclosure materials, better than “drab, corrugated” metal. As the design develops, we will try to address scale and texture that create some visual interest for those who have the most direct view of the penthouse from adjacent upper floors as well as from longer distances.
5. *Likes the use of different materials* – The team is trying to select contemporary materials that are complimentary to the urban context and, at the same time, to express the volumes of the program spaces. The intent is to continue this line of design development.

Jewelry District

1. *Support in district* – The indication was that the design review by Utile was well done and that the district is in support of this building, with the understanding that the design continues to respond well to the design comments.
2. *Confident modern building* – We believe the building does make a modern statement that is also sensitive to the urban context. The intent is to continue this line of design development.

Historic District

1. *Appreciates terra cotta* – The material choice of terra cotta is contextually sensitive and is intended to carry forward in the project to add texture and scale.
2. *Look forward to next iteration* – We trust that the newest iteration addresses many of the comments that were received and is still to the community's liking.

Other Public Comment

1. *Does not like exterior, terra cotta or color* – We regret that we are unable to please everyone and appreciate that there was a dissenting opinion against the majority of comments received at the meeting. As affirmed above in many other positive and substantial design comments and by our responses, the design team is proceeding with design development in the same line as that originally presented. We believe that the building is responsive to many of the substantial design comments regarding site development and pedestrian character. We also believe the building is modern, materially sensitive and appropriately responsive to the urban context and the majority of community design concerns.

Waiver Modifications and Requests

In summary, of the originally requested twelve (12) waivers, we are currently seeking nine (9) waivers and have advanced the design sufficiently for conditions related to three (3) of the previously requested waivers to be in conformance with waivers no longer required. Following is a refreshed list of requested waivers for consideration by the Commission:

1. *Street Frontage* – Because of the programmatic driver for deliveries and drop-offs from Clifford Street, we request a waiver from compliance with the 80% street frontage requirement.
2. *Massing and Articulation* – We request a waiver from the requirement to have an articulation above the first floor at every 100'. The current design articulation relates the façade recess to the ground floor lobby/amenity location and structural grid, which is dictated by the lab planning module.
3. *Surface Parking* – We are seeking a special exception for surface parking since there is a programmatic requirement for short-term surface parking, for RISHL only; the surface parking provided for dropping-off of biologic, forensic and chemical samples and poses a risk to public safety and security if users are required to park off-site.
5. *Loading (Curb Cut Width)* – We request a waiver to create a larger curb cut width to accommodate trucks turning from and onto the adjacent one-way street with street parking. The design team is pursuing strategies to minimize the curb cuts by eliminating some parking from Clifford Street (requested through city AHJ) and/or by incorporating mountable curbs.
6. *Fenestration* – Due to required support spaces needed at the ground floor, we request a waiver to the requirement for 70% transparency at the ground floor. We can comply with this requirement on Richmond Street but not on Clifford Street.
7. *Building Entry* – We request a waiver for less than the required number of entries along Richmond Street. A common building entry is considered ideal for security, program and design for both the RISHL and commercial tenants. Additionally, the building will be branded on the outside and individual tenants branded internally, with the possibility of more discreet tenant signs outside as well.
8. *Marquee* – We request a waiver for the proposed canopy which we think is most responsive to the unique urban context of street, private street and plaza. Additionally, it provides cover at both the building and retail entries.

9. Louvers – We request a waiver for the louver extents at the penthouse which are largely a function of the mechanical demands of the laboratory building and will be placed appropriately in response to wind/wake studies.
10. Loading Dock – A loading dock is required to serve both RISHL and commercial lab tenants; we request a waiver for an exterior loading dock since it is not feasible to enclose fully at the ground floor. Roll down doors will be closed when the dock is not in use and we are proposing to screen the dock as much as possible from pedestrian view.

Below is a list of previously requested waivers that are now in compliance with the I-195 development requirements:

1. Long Term Bike Parking – Bike storage has been incorporated within the Building in the plan updates, including stacked bike storage that takes advantage of the available interior volume. The upper storage racks are specified to include a spring-loaded mechanical assist for ease of storage. The storage has been co-located with the shower facilities and ease of access to the main lobby.
2. Mechanical Equipment – Will provide screening of all rooftop equipment.
3. Massing and Façade Articulation – The current design update includes a shadow line.

-----END OF MEMORANDUM -----