

January 17, 2022

Caroline Skuncik, Executive Director
I-195 Redevelopment District
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utile

RE: Parcel 2 Pre-Selection Design Review Panel Comments

Design Review Panel Contributors:

- Craig Barton, Design Review Panel, University Architect, Professor of Practice in History of Art and Architecture, Brown University
- Emily Vogler, Design Review Panel, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture, Rhode Island School of Design
- Jack Ryan, Design Review Panel, Founding Principal, Jack Ryan Architect, Providence, RI
- Tim Love, Utile, Consultant to the I-195 Redevelopment District
- Zoë Mueller, Utile, Consultant to the I-195 Redevelopment District

Dear Caroline,

Utile and the I-195 Redevelopment District Design Review Panel convened on January 6th of 2022 to review and discuss the architectural drawings and building program information provided by the three development teams that submitted proposals for Parcel 2. The Panel reviewed the revised designs that had been submitted by the three development teams to evaluate macro-level urban design issues for each.

This pre-selection review does not replace the detailed design review process that will be conducted in partnership with the selected developer. The goal of providing design feedback at this stage is to advise the Commission on which development team demonstrates the most potential to produce a thoughtful and context-sensitive design for the site. After a robust discussion, the Design Review Panel unanimously agreed that the Urbanica proposal shows the most design promise. We have provided detailed comments below to inform the Commission's selection of a preferred development team.

Urbanica Comments

Design Features

1. Massing & Material Strategy: The massing and variation in material is engaging and interesting but not busy. The two dominant materials – terracotta and brick – are used to reinforce a few clear and intentional massing moves that help to break down the overall scale of the building.
2. South Main Strategy: All three proposals have a similar approach to South Water Street (a pedestrian plaza leading to gateway to South Main Street), but Urbanica's South Main Street treatment is the strongest and most context-sensitive of the three. The upper stories pull back from the street giving the South Main street edge a more appropriate three-story scale on South Main Street. The choice of a brick façade

material also helps to resonate with the brick facades of many of the existing historic South Main Street buildings.

3. James Street Corner Treatment: The Urbanica proposal handles the James Street corner well by creating a generous plaza area and using a material palette and reduced height that responds more directly to the traditional brick building across the street.
4. Transit Street Easement: The scale of the Transit Street easement feels more generous and welcoming to the public because the thin glass corridor on the third floor makes the opening appear to be three stories tall, rather than two stories tall, like the other proposals. Also, the curvature of the building's ground floor preserves more sightlines to the water.

Public Realm Activation

1. Ground Floor Activation: The retail curves around to activate South Main Street as well as South Water Street. Additionally, by tucking the service and parking access mid-block on Dollar Street, the Urbanica proposal activates the Dollar Street corner of South Main Street with a fitness center rather than a blank wall. Like the two other proposals, the townhouses lining South Main Street help to activate the street.
2. Relationship of Upper Story & Ground Floor Program: Small apartments on the upper floors are likely to drive more consistent use of the ground floor amenities than then proposals with larger units. This should help to make the retail spaces more viable and stable over the long term.

The panel provided the following feedback about the other two projects:

Providence Partnership for Community Reinvestment, LLC (PPCR) & Eden Comments

Design Features

1. Massing & Material Strategy:
 - a. Eden: The material palette reinforces the rhythmic vertical bays, which creates variety but does not help to break down the overall scale of the building. While the Panel thought the revised color palette was better than the original proposal, it does not have a direct relationship to the material of surrounding buildings. The relative even ratios of the two dominant materials and the high contrast between them dilutes rather than reinforces the bigger massing moves like the breezeway connecting the two buildings and the sixth story penthouse setback.
 - b. PPCR: Despite vertical carve-outs and added differentiation of the facade using bays and insets, the massing of the building still reads as a single sweeping move unified by the dominant brick facade, exaggerating the overall scale of the building relative to the more fine-grain historic fabric surrounding the site.
2. South Main Strategy:
 - a. Eden: The townhouses on the northern stretch of South Main Street strive for a context-sensitive scale and material palette, but the two story

townhouses seem out of place, in relationship to the rest of the proposed building and the other buildings on the street. In addition, the decision to locate screened at-grade parking along the southern stretch of the street was not well-received by the Panel.

- b. PPCR: The townhouses on the northern stretch of South Main Street have a context-sensitive scale but their more modern design language, material and color palette does not resonate with the surroundings. The choice to have the southern stretch of the street lined with vehicular access and service uses, partly camouflaged by a mural, is not an ideal condition.

3. James Street Corner Treatment:

- a. Eden: The ground floor resonates well with the surrounding context, but upper story materiality and massing does not respond meaningfully to the context.
- b. PPCR: The plaza, setback of the building from James Street and screen for vehicular access respects the context, but the massing of the upper stories is imposing in relation to the scale of existing historic buildings.

4. Transit Street Easement:

- a. Eden: The narrow plaza space, in contrast to the other proposals, makes the space less welcoming to the public and obscures sightlines to the river. In the revised proposal, the use of lighter colored cladding on the upper story bridge helps to break down the overall scale and increase visual permeability.
- b. PPCR: The relatively narrow threshold into the larger plaza space makes the space less welcoming to the public and obscures sightlines to the river. In addition, the two story clearance of the bridge over the gateway makes the space feel more enclosed and private than the Urbanica proposal.

Public Realm Activation

1. Ground Floor Activation:

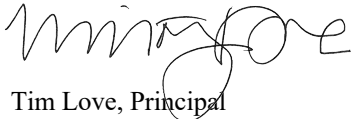
- a. Eden: The ground-floor retail and triangular plaza hold the James Street corner well and the retail along South Water Street has a strong continuous relationship to the public sidewalk.
- b. PPCR: The slight elevation of the South Water Street plaza and pedestrian walkways above the sidewalk elevation, while beneficial for resiliency and curb appeal, may create a perception that these spaces are for building residents more than for the public and may undermine long-term viability of the retail spaces. The design of the ground floor de-prioritizes the South Main Street frontage creating the feeling of being on the back side of the building. The townhouses have the only active entries on South Main Street.

2. Relationship of Upper Story & Ground Floor Program:

- a. Eden: The relatively even mix of studio, one-bedroom, and two-bedroom rental apartments and minimal on-site parking are likely to provide steady support for the ground floor retail.
- b. PPCR: There is a risk that the larger unit sizes (skewing towards two-bedroom with some three-bedrooms) combined with the fact that they are condos with significant on-site parking will undermine the connection with ground floor retail.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like additional information on any of these comments.

Regards,



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