

# PENROSE

Bricks & Mortar | Heart & Soul

November 4, 2022

I-195 Redevelopment District Commission  
225 Dyer Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Providence, RI 02903

To Whom it May Concern,

Thank you for the opportunity to bring the second phase of development at Parcel 9 – the 61-unit mixed-income East Building – to the November 9<sup>th</sup> meeting for Concept Design Review. We were glad to hear support for the current project design, specifically the emphasis on bike/pedestrian culture and the scale of the buildings proposed. In addition to the memos from the project architect (The Architectural Team) and landscape architect (BETA, Inc.), we wanted to address the points raised during the October 19<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting and subsequent written comments from the Fox Point Neighborhood Association (FPNA) and SHPO.

### *Exterior design, as compared to the approved West Building design*

- We heard from neighborhood representatives that the East Building design should be more similar to the West Building (which has been awarded financing, estimated construction start Spring 2023); this would not make it feel too institutional.
- Upon further review with Utile and the project design team, we elected to keep different exterior finishes in this concept. We believe that similarities between the buildings' scale, massing, and structure create a strong relationship between the two phases.
- Recommendation to avoid too much gray. We have considered some alternate colors at the ground floor, please see TAT's design documents and memo for more detail.

### *Courtyard, as open to the community or more focused on residential use*

- The initial proposal was to include multi-modal traffic in the Parcel 9 courtyard. Now that the courtyard design is car-free and includes a playground for the childcare facility, this is a much more pedestrian-focused space.
- Some community members and Utile suggested creating a courtyard that was more separate from the public way, while others saw it as an important connection to City Walk at the edge of the Fox Point neighborhood.
- Our team created a design that includes a gateway to the courtyard, with landscaping that creates a distinct space, while still providing an entrance to Parcel 9 that is accessible for the broader community and relates to City Walk.

### *Concern about noise attenuation*

- The proximity to 195 is something that the design team is taking into account as we develop our approach to the building envelope, exterior materials, and window design. FPNA recommended specific window types, which we will consider as the design develops.
- The project team is prioritizing livability and sound attenuation. We will engage an acoustical consultant to evaluate the best options for reducing noise for future residents (window types, wall insulation, and green roof proposed).

### *Historic considerations*

- SHPO has requested a plan for vibration monitoring during both phases of Parcel 9 construction, which will be provided. They have also requested an opportunity to review the exterior design as it develops, which our team will share in subsequent project phases.

We deeply appreciate your thoughtful guidance on the Parcel 9 East Building design and are looking forward to next steps.

Rebecca Schofield  
Developer, New England  
Pennrose, LLC





November 4, 2022

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

RE: Parcel 9, Phase 2 Concept Plan Memo Dated October 18, 2022

Dear Caroline,

The Parcel 9 Design Team met with Utile and I-195 on October 25, 2022 to review the Concept Plan Memo dated October 18, 2022. Since that meeting, the Team has been updating the site and building designs to incorporate feedback. This memo highlights architectural items only, BETA will provide a separate memo to address site and landscape items.

Excerpts from the memo:

1. *Residential entryways need refinement and a more nuanced design treatment.*
  - a. *The primary residential lobby entryway should be emphasized more through building massing, facade design, a more exaggerated canopy, and planting and hardscape strategy.*  
**Response: Panels have been added connecting two floors of windows on both sides at the main entry corner to break up the massing of the patterned siding. The asymmetrical canopy at the main entry has been enlarged over the door. Additional articulation will be provided with landscape features, see separate memo provided by BETA.**
  - b. *Ground floor residential entries need more effective spatial buffering between the doorways and public sidewalk to create the feeling of a protected transition from private to public. This can be achieved through planting strategies described in the Phase 1 feedback repeated above, along with use of canopies and, if possible, setting entries back from the primary facade plane.*  
**Response: The material change and canopies at the ground floor unit entries along Bessie Way have been widened to give them more prominence on the street. Additional articulation will be provided with landscape features, see separate memo provided by BETA.**
2. *The use of screening for the garage podium needs refinement.*
  - a. *Use of metal screen for parking area may not be appropriate for Bessie Way frontage. Explore the feasibility of introducing plantings that grow up these screens.*  
**Response: Metal screens have been removed along Bessie Way due to changes in interior program. Added exterior doors surrounded by panels to align with openings above**
  - b. *Wherever a metal screen is used, the rhythm of screens should have a common logic that connects the ground floor with the rhythm of window openings on upper stories. The garage openings do not need to be identical to the windows above, but the solid areas between the garage openings should align with some part of the solid wall sections between windows above. The larger goal is to have the vertical forces of the facade above make their way all the way to the ground.*  
**Response: Metal screen at the garage level, facing the City Walk, have been adjusted to align with series of openings on floors above**
  - c. *Ground floor material composition along City Walk has too many elements. Suggest reducing to brick and screen only, removing the brown colored fiber cement element along the garage level elevation.*

Response: In an effort to be sensitive to cost, the proposed masonry is used as a low wall at the ground for durability and as a backing to the “crashwall” for the garage. Fiber cement panels are used above the masonry to continue the verticals from above. The design team can explore the use of other colors for the panels, if desired.

- d. *The design of the ground floor garage screens needs to be further developed with an intentional strategy that includes framing elements as part of the composition.*

Response: Metal screen panels at the garage level, facing the City Walk, have been adjusted to align with series of openings on floors above

#### *Building Expression and Facade Design Recommendations*

##### *Additional Phase 2 Comments:*

1. *The design review panel needs more clarity on pattern, orientation, scale, texture, and color of all cladding materials to be able to evaluate the overall effect, especially for the penthouse diagonal “scale” pattern cladding and the metal screens used on the ground floor (see comment above). Provide photographs and product information of products selected.*

Response: With long frontage facing Bessie Way, the façade is designed with vertical elements to break up the length of the massing: taller windows, vertical plank siding, and panels added to the windows and doors to enlarge the openings. See attached MAT-1 sheet for primary materials and alternates, along with precedent images of materials being proposed. Materials are currently being evaluated based on price and forecasted lead times; should any materials be cost-prohibitive or unavailable, the design team will contact the Design Review Board to discuss alternates

2. *Continuation of the dominant cornice line across tower elements at the termini of the upper story c-shaped floor plan dilutes the massing logic of these distinctive endcaps.*
  - a. *Currently the fifth-floor enclosed porch facing City Walk appears top heavy with the thick parapet wall/roof over the porch. The belt course/cornice that extends from the main building mass only intensifies this. Suggest converting the fifth-floor enclosed porch to an open terrace while retaining cornice behind it.*

Response: The roof over the fifth-floor deck has been removed and the patterned siding has been continued around. Openings at this top level have been grouped in pairs with panels.

- b. *For the short end where the tower element is facing the highway, suggest eliminating the cornice allowing the tower to extend above it, or eliminating parapet so that the tower element comes down to align with the cornice line.*

Response: The height of the east-facing volume has been reduced so that it is no longer a ‘tower’ element; this felt out of balance once the roof over the deck was removed. The parapet height of the patterned siding (top floor) has been raised to give this more prominence. Panels have been added above the windows to enlarge the appearance of the opening while helping reduce the top-heaviness of the higher parapet.

Should you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact us.

Regards,

The Architectural Team, Inc.

Date: November 4, 2022 Job No.: 7388  
To: Design Review Panel Contributors  
Cc: Rebecca Schofield  
From: Randy Collins  
Subject: Parcel 9, Phase 2 Concept Plan Design Review Panel Comments – Landscape Responses

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## Courtyard Recommendations

### Insufficiently Addressed Phase 1 Comments:

1. Redesign the Courtyard as a community space:
  - a. Provide a better balance of hard surfaces and plantings that acknowledge pedestrian desire lines and view corridors.
  - b. Mount string lights to the two buildings in order to create a virtual ceiling, helping to create a warm and welcoming space in the evening that is conducive to community use.
  - c. Provide a variety of seating options, including some paired with tables, in order to invite use of the space by building residents. Potential furniture combinations include Adirondack chairs, picnic tables, benches, seat walls, etc.

### The Courtyard has been redesigned to provide the following program elements.

- Public access to City Walk from George M. Cohan Boulevard and vice versa
- A play area for the day care that is available to building residents during off hour times
- An attractive transition space between the public sidewalks and the building entrances
- A variety of spaces for small gatherings or one on one interactions

The layout of the rectilinear and curved planting areas combined with the two paving materials encourage movement through the space and help emphasize desire lines. These features also help define the gathering zones and entrances to the plaza.

The two proposed paving material are broom finished concrete and plank style pavers. The broom finished concrete is a continuation of the public realm sidewalk material that encourages the public to move into and through the space. This material also reinforces desire lines. The pavers provide a contrast to the concrete and helps to define the curvilinear nature of the concrete paving.

Other plaza features include catenary lighting over the portion of the plaza between its entrance at George M. Cohan Boulevard and the play area, a variety of seating types (including Adirondack chairs and matching benches and tables and chairs), steel fencing to enclose the play area, and granite planter edging along the rectilinear planting areas.

### Additional Phase 2 Comments:

2. Issues raised about the courtyard design during Phase 1 Final Plan Approval remain unresolved, compromising the overall public realm design impact of both phases of the project. In addition, the current courtyard design is less successful than the version shared at the conclusion of the Phase 1 design review process. We recommend delaying the Concept Design approval of Phase 2

until the Pennrose team is able to present a satisfactory approach and detailed design for the courtyard.

- a. Provide a more detailed plan of the courtyard that shows paving treatments, fencing, planter edges, seating, and planting strategies (included intended plant materials, etc.).
- b. Since the play area enclosure is the dominant visual feature in the courtyard, provide more clarity on the code requirements and design characteristics.
- c. Provide an explanation of the use conditions for the play area - is it exclusively for the day care, or can residents and members of the public make use of it in off hours?

**Most of these comments have been addressed above.**

While the play area is visually dominant when view from above, the intent is to soften its visual impact to user and visitor to the plaza. Plantings are being used to partially hide the play area and not screen it in its entirety. Other site features provide visual interest (e.g., brightly colored site furniture and paving material variation) that distract the eye from the play area.

#### Other Ground Plane and Landscape Design Recommendations

Insufficiently Addressed Phase 1 Comments:

1. Partner with RIDOT to deploy a more intensive foundation planting strategy between City Walk and the blank walls of the East Building.
  - a. Ideally, the foundation plantings should step up in two or three narrow tiers, so they hide most of the wall surface (similar in treatment as the one recommended along the blank garage wall of the West Building)
  - b. This same planting strategy should, if possible, be carried around the far corner of the building and meet the back-of-sidewalk on Bessie Way. Since there is more area between the end wall of the building and the path that connects City Walk with the sidewalk, the tiers of plantings can be expanded in plan to fill in more of the space.
2. Develop a more intentional strategy for the narrow planting area in front of the ground floor residential units in the East Building.
  - a. Raise the planting beds approximately 8-12"
  - b. Enclose them with a 24" metal fence with dominant verticals that create the density and rhythm of a traditional wrought iron fence.
  - c. Plant the planters with medium height perennials such as grasses and herbaceous shrubs.

The planting along City Walk has been revised to include three tiers of planting. This includes narrow upright trees, medium sized evergreen shrubs, low growing evergreens, and perennials. A simplified version of this approach is wrapped around the east of the building. It is simplified due to the amount of underground utilities and the required access into the transformer room. It should be pointed out that RIDOT will not allow any fixed elements within their property. The proposed planting that is shown will be subject to RIDOT's further review of the project.

For the residential units along George M. Cohan Boulevard, we are using a granite edging that has a reveal of 9". These planting areas have been designed to provide a sense of enclosure for each of the entrances. Plantings will be a mix of medium sized broadleaf evergreens, perennials, and space left for the resident to include annuals.

The suggestion of including a 24" metal fence on top of the planter edging has been reviewed. The sidewalk width (from building to face of curb) is 16' 6". The width of the entrance ways and the planters that enclose them is 8' 8". This leaves approximately 8' 10" of sidewalk space. The tree planting cutouts are 3' 9" from the back of curb. This leaves a clear path for the sidewalk at its narrowest point of approximately 3' 6". Our concern with adding the 24" metal fence is that the pinch points will feel even narrower than the 3' 6" space.

Additional Phase 2 Comments:

1. Residential entryways need refinement and a more nuanced design treatment.
  - a. The primary residential lobby entryway should be emphasized more through building massing, facade design, a more exaggerated canopy, and planting and hardscape strategy.
  - b. Ground floor residential entries need more effective spatial buffering between the doorways and public sidewalk to create the feeling of a protected transition from private to public. This can be achieved through planting strategies described in the Phase 1 feedback repeated above, along with use of canopies and, if possible, setting entries back from the primary facade plane.

As identified above, planter areas and the associated plantings have been designed to provide a sense of enclosure to each of the residential units.