

I-195 REDEVELOPMENT DISTRICT

**RESOLUTION REGARDING APPROVAL OF GROUND FLOOR FAÇADE TRANSPARENCY
WAIVER FOR PARCEL 9**

November 9, 2022

WHEREAS: Pursuant to the Rhode Island Special Economic Development District Enabling Act (the “SEDD Act”), the Commission is charged with approving all plans for development within the I-195 Redevelopment District; and

WHEREAS: Pursuant to the SEDD Act, the Commission has adopted a Development Plan applicable to construction within the I-195 Redevelopment District; and

WHEREAS: The Commission has received a design review application from Pennrose, LLC (“Pennrose”), the proposed purchaser of Parcel 9, in which Pennrose requests a waiver from the provisions of *Section 2.5 A. 2. c* of the Development Plan with respect to ground floor façade transparency for a non-residential use (the “Waiver”); and

WHEREAS: Utile, Inc., the District’s design consultant (“Utile”), has determined that the Waiver is appropriate and has recommended that the District grant the Waiver by letter dated November 4, 2022, a copy of which letter is attached hereto as Exhibit A and is incorporated herein by reference (the “Utile Letter”); and

WHEREAS: At a public hearing held this date, the Commission heard a presentation by Utile with respect to the Waiver [*and heard comments from the public*].

NOW, THEREFORE, acting by and through its Commissioners, the District hereby resolves as follows:

RESOLVED: That the District hereby (a) finds that, given the geography of Parcel 9, budgetary constraints imposed by state funding for affordable housing and Rhode Island Housing energy efficiency targets, enforcement of the ground floor façade transparency regulations for a non-residential use contained in the Development Plan would preclude the full enjoyment by the owner of a permitted use and amount to more than a mere inconvenience, (b) adopts the recommendations contained in the Utile Letter with respect to the Waiver and (c) grants the Waiver.

EXHIBIT A

November 4, 2022

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

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RE: Parcel 9, Phase 2 Concept Plan Approval Recommendation

Design Review Panel Contributors:

- Craig Barton, Design Review Panel Member
- Emily Vogler, Design Review Panel Member
- Jack Ryan, Design Review Panel Member
- Tim Love, Utile
- Zoë Mueller, Utile

Dear Caroline,

Utile, the I-195 Redevelopment District's Urban Design and Planning consultant, recommends that the Commission grant Concept Plan Approval and approve the requested waivers (see below) for Phase 2 of the Pennrose proposal for Parcel 9, with the conditions outlined below. The Pennrose team has acknowledged and committed to addressing the remaining design review concerns, which can be resolved during the design process leading to Final Plan Approval.

Summary of the Design Review Process

Utile and the I-195 Redevelopment District Design Review Panel met on September 19, 2022 and again on October 13, 2022 to review the Concept Plan Application materials provided by Pennrose for Phase 2 of their proposed mixed-income housing development on Parcel 9 (referred to as the "East Building" below). The consolidated feedback of the Panel on Phase 2 was provided to the developer as a memo on October 18th of 2022 (attached). Feedback from the panel on early-stage ideas for Phase 2 was also provided as part of the Phase 1 design review process.

Waivers

In recognition of the unique location and configuration of the site, budgetary constraints imposed by state funding, and Rhode Island Housing (RIH) energy efficiency targets, Utile recommends that the requested transparency waiver allowing for a minimum of 30% transparency for residential ground floor uses is granted. Additionally, we understand that the Pennrose team intends to seek an additional transparency waiver to allow for a minimum of 30% transparency for upper story uses. This additional waiver will be considered as part of the Final Plan Approval. Please note that these waivers are in addition to the waiver already granted as part of the Phase 1 design review process, which grants the Phase 2 building a minimum of 40% transparency for non-residential ground floor uses.

Conditions for Concept Plan Approval

1. Courtyard Design:
 - a. The courtyard design was not finalized at the time of Phase 1 Final Plan Approval and additional detail was requested as a condition of that approval.

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- b. Option 1 of the two freehand sketches recently submitted for the courtyard design is headed in the right direction. It includes diverse spaces where residents can gather outside of the play area and the plan geometry better-integrates the play area enclosure within the overall composition. Additionally, one of the seating areas allows parents to keep an eye on their children in the play area.
 - c. Despite positive advances in the design, the proposal requires additional development before the team can advance to construction documents. These refinements need to be demonstrated in a CAD plan and at least one three-dimensional view of the updated courtyard proposal.
 - d. Per one of the conditions of the Phase 1 Final Approval, the development team is still obligated to “provide final design drawings and lighting and plant material specifications of the open space areas, including the landscaped courtyard, landscaped zone between CityWalk and the building, and the second floor amenity deck.”
2. Bessie Way Facade & Residential Entries:
- a. Provide a detailed plan, elevation, and digital perspective view that show the entries and planting buffer along the edge of the ground floor units that face Bessie Way, with the goal to create spatial separation and a threshold between the public sidewalk and unit entries (see 1.c above).
3. CityWalk Facade & Foundation Plantings:
- a. Coordinate the openings in the garage with the windows above so they relate better visually and provide better structural continuity.
 - b. Simplify the number of materials used on the base of the building facing CityWalk.
 - c. Provide a detailed plan, elevation, and digital perspective view that shows the proposed landscape buffer along the edge of the garage in relation to the material treatment of the first floor of the building (see 1.c above).

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like additional information.

Regards,

Tim Love, Principal
Utile
115 Kingston Street
Boston, MA 02111

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October 18, 2022

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

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RE: Parcel 9, Phase 2 Concept Plan Design Review Panel Comments

Design Review Panel Contributors:

- Craig Barton, Design Review Panel Member
- Emily Vogler, Design Review Panel Member
- Jack Ryan, Design Review Panel Member
- Tim Love, Utile
- Zoë Mueller, Utile

Dear Caroline,

Utile and the I-195 Redevelopment District Design Review Panel met on September 19, 2022, and again on October 13, 2022, to review the revised architectural drawings, renderings, and building program information provided by Penrose for Phase 2 of their proposed mixed-income housing development on Parcel 9 (referred to as the “East Building” below). Many of the comments restate comments provided during the Phase 1 design review process because they remain unaddressed in the most recent package. The comments below are meant to inform potential revisions to the design prior to Concept Plan Approval of Phase 2.

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.

Additional Phase 2 Comments:

1. 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 Penrose 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.).

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- 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?

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.

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.
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.
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.

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Building Expression and Façade 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.
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.
 - 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.

Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions or would like additional information.

Regards,



Tim Love, Principal
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