

170 Varick Street  
7th floor  
New York NY 10013  
T 212.675.1870  
F 212.675.1645

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**Memo**

**Date:** August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2023

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**To:** Caroline Skuncik, Executive Director, I-195 Redevelopment District

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**cc:** I-195 Redevelopment District

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**Via:** Email

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www.aro.net

**From:** Kim Yao

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**Re:** Responses to Park Pavilion Concept Design Review Comments

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**Document:** 230804 ARO DRP Concept Memo Response.pdf

Dear Caroline,

Architecture Research Office (ARO) has reviewed the I-195 Redevelopment District's Design Review Panel Concept Design Memo. We appreciate the Panel's thoughtful feedback to our concept design presentation from July 19<sup>th</sup>. The District and ARO solicited additional feedback from the community during an event held in the 195 District Park on July 20<sup>th</sup>. ARO has outlined our next steps and approach to addressing this feedback in the section below. The Panel's "Recommended Conditions for Approval" are included before each response in italics. ARO will work with the I-195 Redevelopment District (the District) to fully address all feedback when we submit for final design approval.

We believe that the pavilion design captured in our concept design presentation carefully addresses past feedback and concerns gathered from Providence community members. ARO and the District felt an overwhelmingly positive response to the project proposal at our recent community outreach event on July 20<sup>th</sup>. ARO discussed the pavilion design with community members and a supplemental survey was provided to collect additional written design feedback. Some highlights:

- *"Having the pavilion will provide an excellent opportunity to gather with the community and enjoy."*
- *"Really beautiful. The shade features are much needed so thank you!"*
- *"It helps support the use of the park as a social destination..."*
- *"Looks very welcoming and open."*
- *"I love how this activates the park and fully claims this as a community space."*

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The public response to the project makes us excited and energized to continue the development of the project. We look forward to our continued collaboration as we work together to realize this pavilion in the 195 District Park.

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### ARO Response to Recommended Conditions for Approval and Feedback from the Community

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*The Design Review Panel recommends that the following issues be addressed during the development of the design and before final design approval:*

1. *There needs to be more clarity about grading around the pavilion and how it is resolved as it interacts with:*
  - a. *Building entrances and is coordinated with finish floor elevations.*
  - b. *Seat walls and other landscape features.*

We share these concerns and developing a grading plan is a priority as we work with our design team partners at Agency and Fuss & O'Neill. A key project goal is to provide a seamless transition from the outdoors to the building interior. Getting the grading strategy right is critical to not only make the user experience feel natural as they walk through the park into the building, but site water management is also a major consideration. We also acknowledge that the surrounding park area around the pavilion has some drainage problems, and we are excited that we can leverage necessary utility work to also address grading problems on the pathways leading to the pavilion. The design team will continue to develop grading in the design development phase of the project to facilitate site drainage and pavilion accessibility. Definition of landscape features including planters, terraces, and site seating will be closely coordinated with drainage and circulation to provide an integrated and accessible visitor experience. These solutions will be clearly articulated in our final design application.

2. *The design team should generate a detailed roof plan and cross-sections that identify all core-and-shell and potential tenant roof top equipment and other vertical penetrations, including plumbing vent pipes. The drawings should also show the location and height of screening solutions.*

Creating a low-profile building that highlights the pavilion's canopy and green roof is a priority of the design team. ARO will be working closely with our design team, including

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Hatfield Group our structural engineer and Collado Engineering our MEP engineer, to closely coordinate the pavilion's structure and building systems to consolidate systems within the pavilion's rooftop mechanical space. We intend to visually conceal building MEP systems from park-goers by surrounding the mechanical space behind a parapet and green roof. We will further study the visual impact of this solution with perspectives, sections, and elevations to determine if a separate "screen" is required. At this time, we feel the visual presence of roof top equipment can be minimized such that a supplemental screen will not be necessary. Avoiding the screen will simplify future maintenance and will also allow the project team to allocate more of the project budget towards the canopy and operable façade which will both have a more direct impact on the public experience.

- 3. Given the visibility of the dining space from the bridge, plaza, and surrounding paths, it needs more architectural definition. The floor and ceiling of the dining area should acknowledge the indoor/outdoor continuity of the space, both because it is wrapped by full-height glass on three sides, but also because two sides of the room can be fully opened. Future drawings should show:*
- a. Floor material/patterns.*
  - b. The ceiling, including sprinklers, lights, etc.*
  - c. The interior elevation of the wall at the back of the space.*

ARO acknowledges that these points are primary areas to resolve in finalizing the visual character of the pavilion. As highlighted in the Design Review Panel's introductory remarks, the main material palette of weathered natural cedar and untreated aluminum work well with the green park landscape setting. The articulation of the pavilion's roof structure and its relationship to the operable storefront system is an area that the design team will pay especially close attention to. The finishes of tenant spaces are to be determined by the tenant and their designers. Material articulation of the interior of the pavilion will be refined during the next design phase and ARO will work closely with the District in providing guidance to their tenant in order to preserve a cohesive visual character for the pavilion. Our design work will provide a tangible design language expressed through the façade, roof, and structure of the building that the tenant's designer can appropriately respond to in completing a complementary interior design.

- 4. Thresholds between back-of-house areas and the dining area need to be better defined and resolved, including the door to the restrooms and the door to the kitchen. Ideally,*

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*doors should not face the dining room, in the same plane as the wall, but instead be located at right angles to the room in recessed vestibules.*

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Circulation between front of house and back of house areas will be refined during design development. The design team will develop a solution to minimize the visual impact of restroom circulation from the dining space. Additionally, the design of the pavilion's vestibule spaces will be further explored during the next design phase. Access to and from the kitchen and the ancillary vendor space will be determined by the building tenant(s) and their design team(s). ARO shares these general concerns, and we will work with the I-195 Redevelopment District in setting fit-out requirements that are sensitive to the public experience.

*5. The change in ground plane materials between the existing park paths and new materials introduced as part of the pavilion project are successful, both in terms of their curvilinear geometry and slight contrasts in color and texture. The change in material helps to distinguish between public seating and restaurant seating in subtle and equitable ways since the pavement change extends under the canopy of the pavilion. In future incarnations of the design, the curved boundary between the stabilized crushed granite and unit pavers under the canopy should include sleeves that can accept poles that support temporary low fences. This boundary will be required if the tenant of the dining space wants to serve alcohol.*

We appreciate this thoughtful feedback and ARO will work with Agency and Fuss & O'Neill to refine the paving design further. Integration of site access control will be a conversation with the District and its tenant(s) as there is more than one way to provide a barrier to define a service zone for alcoholic beverages. We will be exploring both integrated bollards and furnishing strategies to comply with regulations surrounding the service of alcohol. ARO and the District are sensitive to how this is addressed in a manner that maintains the welcoming character of the pavilion.

*6. Future incarnations of the project should include information about lighting sources and evening renderings that show the lighting effects. This is especially important under the canopy.*

ARO is collaborating closely with our lighting designer, Lighting Workshop, to develop a building lighting strategy for the building exterior, including beneath the canopy, and in public park spaces within the pavilion. We look forward to sharing our lighting proposal

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for the pavilion in our design approval presentation. The lighting design will address the illumination of the park immediately around the pavilion and will define the reading of the building at night. The final interior lighting of the food and beverage tenant spaces are the responsibility of the tenant. We will work with the District to provide guidance on how the tenant lighting plan can be designed in a way that is complimentary with the park and pavilion lighting strategy.

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*7. The design team should evaluate if some portion of the canopy can be made non-porous in order to shelter the exterior seating from precipitation.*

ARO and the District have explored options for incorporating sheltered exterior seating areas in our design process to date. We will continue to evaluate this area of the project. However, given the investment made in providing an expansive glazed enclosure for the dining area, and that this glazed area is fully operable, the project provides ample seating that can be open to the outdoors during weather that is conducive to outdoor dining. For this reason, we led with our proposal to treat the canopy as purely a shade structure. The project team will continue to review the question of solar shade versus rain cover as the design of the canopy is finalized. We will speak to this consideration in presenting our final design proposal.

*8. The design team should provide drawings that show how the tenants for both the dining space and pass-through window will add signs, environmental graphics, and color that makes their businesses legible and identify their visual brands. The drawings should include renderings and sign guidelines.*

ARO is in the process of designing signage template that responds to the building design and the planned activation of the park. The final sign graphics and implementation will be completed by the tenant following guidelines established by the District. The design team intends to implement signage such that the building identity is retained across tenancies while allowing tenant branding to be flexibly implemented. We look forward to presenting resolution of the signage in our final design approval submission.

Lastly, we wanted to address feedback received from multiple sources relative to the interpretation of the one interior visualization included in our design presentation. A sample comment on this note is: *"...indoor seating seems dark in the rendering. Can it include skylights..."*

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The interior rendering was included in the presentation to highlight the experience of views out to the park and points in Providence beyond. The interior was intentionally left dark for this reason, but it was additionally de-emphasized as the interior will be fit out by the tenant. ARO appreciates the impression this left and the feedback that generated. We would like to clarify that we will be looking at the pavilion holistically and part of that is making sure that we include thinking about daylight autonomy as part of thinking about the dining area as an indoor-outdoor space. Solving for that may or may not include skylights, but the next iteration of the design will highlight the potential of the pavilion interior and how daylight is experienced both outside of the pavilion under the canopy and within the pavilion interior. As acknowledged in comments that from the outside the pavilion reads like a welcoming space, we want the same reaction from the interior.

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We are already working on resolution of the items above and look forward to presenting the final resolution of the Pavilion later this fall.