November 13, 2026

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

utile
Architecture
& Planning

RE: Parcels 8 & 8A Concept Plan Approval Recommendation

Design Review Panel Contributors:

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

Dear Caroline,

Utile, the I-195 Redevelopment District's (195 District's) Urban Design and Planning consultant, recommends that the Commission grant Concept Plan Approval for the Churchill & Banks proposal for Parcels 8 & 8A, with the conditions outlined below. The Churchill & Banks team has been responsive to feedback provided at the proposal stage and has demonstrated a willingness to be collaborative in shaping the evolution of the development concept.

Summary of the Design Review Process
Utile and the 195 District Design Review Panel convened on November 5, 2026 to review the latest architectural drawings, renderings and building program information submitted by Churchill & Banks for their proposed mixed-use development on Parcels 8 & 8A. The Panel previously convened on May 13, 2026 to review RFP responses and documented feedback in a memo that was posted publicly on May 27, 2026. The resolution designating the Churchill & Banks as the preferred developer stipulated that the developer "shall strive to differentiate the Parcels 8/8A building from the adjacent 580 South Water Street building rather than match it."

General Comments

- Building Massing & Materiality: The revised architectural expression and materiality is generally responsive to proposal-stage feedback that the prior design resulted in a more suburban campus enclave feel rather than a new contribution to an established urban block with diverse building styles.
    - The current strategy leverages a variety of vertical breaks to mitigate the otherwise unbroken, uniform horizontal volume along South Main Street. This has been used effectively to reinforce programmatic or massing moves that differentiate frontages and volumes within the building to create more of a "head and tail" expression.

  - The commercial storefront window expression could be improved by introducing a higher water table aligned to the sill of the windows and carried across the length of the building. This could be marked by a change in material or brick color.
  - The building would more effectively address Pike Street, screen parking, and hold the corner if the facade was brought into alignment with the diagonal Pike Street property line rather than remaining at a right angle and leaving a problematic triangular landscape area between the building and Pike Street.
  - While the general material palette works well, explore a brick color that further differentiates itself from the neighboring 580 Water Street project, with the goal of creating a cohesive urban block rather than a project that looks too much like a single residential enclave.

- Public Realm Activation: Due to the elevation change of the site along South Main Street from the high point at the corner of Pike Street to the low point at the corner of Tockwotton Street, as well as the relationship to the I-195 highway, the Pike Street corner and landscape strategy must each play an important role in shaping the public experience of the project.
  - The middle of the block remains dominated by a field of surface parking without any landscape screening or ground level outdoor amenity space.
  - The addition of a residential amenity space along South Main Street closer to Tockwotton Street improves activation along that frontage.
  - Add an appropriately-scaled entrance and canopy to the commercial use at the Pike Street corner, in order to maximize the potential for future tenants that can help activate the abutting sidewalk in the long term.
  - The landscape strips between the sidewalk and building appear insufficient to support foundation plantings.

- Parking Design: The project includes two parking areas: a below grade parking level beneath the building with 40 spaces accessed off Tockwotton Street, and a 45-space surface parking lot behind the building, accessed off of Pike Street. The use of the entirety of the interior block for parking between 580 South Water Street and this development creates the impression of an inward-facing apartment complex rather than a building that engages productively with the public realm.
  - The proposed parking ratio of 0.85 on-site spaces/dwelling unit is slightly higher than the ratio seen in comparable District developments. If the available off-site shared parking at 580 South Water Street (76 spaces) was used for the residents of this building, it would result in a parking ratio of 1.61 spaces per unit. The developer also controls an off-site parking lot underneath I-195 which is available for additional parking.
  - The current design does not leave any space for landscape buffers similar to those included in the 580 Water Street design and does not offer realistic paths for safe pedestrian circulation and loading within the surface parking lot or for safe access to the covered bike parking provided in the lower level garage.

- Vulnerability to Value Engineering: Complex facade designs and the three dimensional relief of those designs often get value engineered back to a more simple design with minimal or no relief. It is therefore best to proactively simplify the facade design to ensure that the few, critical moves can remain intact through the value engineering process.

Waivers

No waivers were requested and properly noticed as part of the Concept Plan Application, but based on the calculation of fenestration transparency percentage provided, the team may need to pursue a waiver at the Final Plan approval stage.

Conditions for Concept Plan Approval

1. Parking & Loading Design Refinements: Provide a detailed circulation diagram for both the ground level and lower level garage demonstrating a safe and well-coordinated strategy for parking and loading functions. This must be accompanied by two supporting documents:
    a. Dimensioned drawings with appropriate vehicle turning radii that call out intended entries, circulation paths, and pavement markings for private vehicles, pick-up/drop-off, deliveries, waste management, move-in loading, cyclists, and pedestrians.
    b. Provide a proposed improvement to the design of the long-term covered bicycle parking room that complies with the Development Plan dimensional standards as specified in Section 2.4(D)(2)(b)(iii) and 2.4(D)(2)(c).
    c. Prepare a surface parking design that meets the Parking and Loading design standards as specified in Development Plan Section 2.4(B)(6).

2. DFE-2 Compliance Strategy: Provide an updated strategy and request a waiver if needed to achieve compliance with DFE-2 through an alternative strategy if it is not possible to locate the transformer and main electrical and utility rooms as well as the fire service and domestic water service rooms above DFE-2.

3. Study Landscape Buffers: Demonstrate an improved strategy for landscape treatment, visual screening, and public experience of the inactive frontages along Pike Street, Tockwotton Street and the southern stretch of South Main Street. In support of this, study the potential to align the Pike Street facade to the diagonal property line in lieu of the current right angle and resulting problematic planting triangle.

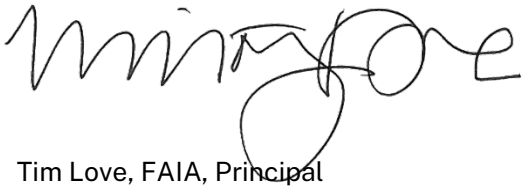
4. Proactively Study Facade Simplification: To guard against likely value engineering, study thin brick being applied across the horizontal South Main Street facade more uniformly without metal breaks, or having the metal panel facade come down to ground floor only at the entry, including a potential tie into the canopy design.
    a. Consider reducing the brick upper stories on the rear facade closest to the highway by 2 bays of windows to reinforce a reading of the Pike

Street side of the building as the more dominant end and this as the subordinate of the two.

5. Clarify Proposed Detailing of Thin Brick and Metal Panel System: The success of the proposed facade design relies on a cost-effective and handsome detailing of the joints between the thin brick and metal panel facade cladding systems.
    a. Study alternatives to cap the end of thin brick, including the potential for the metal panel system to create a cap with a blade edge.
    b. Study potential to see metal panels behind openings and french balconies to reinforce this feature.

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

Regards,



Tim Love, FAIA, Principal
Utile

utile
Architecture & Planning

115 Kingston St.
Boston, MA 02111

110 Union St.
Providence, RI 02903

47 Maple St.
Burlington, VT 05401

(617) 423-7200
utiledesign.com