

October 18, 2022

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

utile

**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 Pennrose 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 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?

*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.

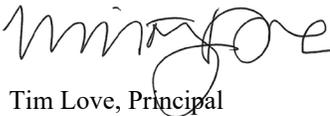
*Building Expression and Facade Design Recommendations*

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.
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  
Utile  
115 Kingston Street  
Boston, MA 02111