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## RE: Parcel 8/8A Pre-Selection Design Review Panel Comments

Design Review Panel Contributors:

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

Dear Caroline,

Utile and the I-195 Redevelopment District Design Review Panel convened on June 27th of 2022 to review and discuss the architectural drawings and building program information provided by the two development teams that submitted proposals for Parcels 8 & 8A. The Panel reviewed the designs that had been submitted by the two development teams to evaluate macro-level urban design issues for each.

This pre-selection review does not replace the detailed design review process that will be conducted in partnership with the selected developer. The goal of providing design feedback at this stage is to inform the Commission's selection of a preferred development team.

In general, the Design Review Panel felt that the Churchill & Banks proposal represented the most thoughtful and promising conceptual design for the site. We have provided detailed comments below.

### Churchill & Banks Comments

#### *Design Features*

1. Massing & Facade Strategy: The Churchill & Banks (C&B) proposal is distinguished by a sculptural massing that steps from Pike Street up to Tockwotton Street and the highway. This approach not only gives the building profile a unique form, it is also appropriate given the very different edges of the project. The shorter north end of the site at Pike Street is directly across from the one story retail building on Parcel 6 while the taller southern end of the building addresses the scale of the highway and views of the river beyond. Importantly, the variegated massing of the building also expresses the program mix. The tall block facing the highway is the residential component, the multi-tiered shorter section addressing the scale of Pike Street is the commercial office component, and the intermediate step between the two contains a restaurant facing a rooftop deck.
2. Material Strategy: The massing approach described above is reinforced by the palette of materials proposed for the exterior cladding. The brick of the tall residential block and the gray panels of the commercial office component

(metal and/or fiber cement panels) are separated by a glassy vertical section that expresses the connection from the street-level lobby to the restaurant. In addition to highlighting the rich mix of uses in the building, the diversity of materials help break down the scale of the building so it dovetails into the existing context.

### *Public Realm Activation and Parking*

1. **Ground Floor Activation:** Unlike the D+P Proposal (see below), the C&B design proposes active uses along the entire South Main Street facade from Pike Street to Tockwotton Street. An “anchor store” of a little more than 3,000 SF is proposed at the corner of S. Main and Pike Street. Smaller shops of 2,500 and 1,500 SF are located next, moving south along South Main. The building lobby and a residential “multi-function space” occupies the middle section of the frontage and smaller “office/retail” flex spaces occupy the rest of the frontage south to Tockwotton Street. These spaces are likely to be professional office spaces, since retail is less viable further away from Pike Street. Considered together, the continuity of activating uses between Pike Street and Tockwotton Street will help tie the southern end of the district with India Street, south of the I-195 overpass.
2. **Parking Strategy:** The C&B proposal, unlike the scheme submitted by D+P, is able to propose activating uses along S. Main Street because their plan slides the parking west onto the abutting parcel (580 S. Water Street). This is possible because C&B owns 580 S. Water Street. The incorporation of both lots to solve the parking for both projects also means that three parking levels can be accommodated on the District parcels, including a basement, Tockwotton Street-accessed level, and Pike Street-accessed level. Despite this arrangement, the parking is fully screened from S. Main Street and is only visible midblock from approximately 60% of the Tockwotton Street frontage and 40% of the Pike Street frontage.

### **D+P & Truth Box Comments**

#### *Design Features*

1. **Massing & Facade Strategy:** The D+P proposal has been designed to look like two buildings, roughly equal size, that abut along a shared zero lot line “party wall” located roughly midway along the S. Main Street frontage. As a result, neither building mass is dominant, although the design vocabulary of the two buildings is very different. The commercial office building that abuts Pike Street has a more traditional expression, modeled after pre-War commercial buildings that you can find in Downtown Providence and other New England cities. The residential building that fronts Tockwotton and South Main Street is more contemporary in style. The facade is a tartan plaid of verticals and horizontals and it has gently folding inflections in plan. The facades of the residential and commercial building are so different, they look like they were designed by two different architects, not necessarily a bad thing, given the two functions and the scale of the rest of the buildings on the block. But despite this intention, the South Main Street elevation is monotonous since the two facades have an overly similar height, width, and scale of facade pattern.
2. **Material Strategy:** While the materials proposed for the facades are only implied and not made explicit, it appears that the commercial office building is clad with two colors of brick while the residential building is a combination of metal panel and fiber cement. The use of these different material palettes reinforces the two-building reading.

*Public Realm Activation*

1. Ground Floor Activation: Unlike the C&B proposal (see above), the D+P team did not have the benefit of being able to encroach on the neighboring parcel. The consequence is that structured parking and utility functions abut the S. Main Street sidewalk for approximately 50% of the frontage, including the end of the block where S. Main meets Tockwotton Street. In addition, 100% of the Tockwotton frontage is occupied by parking. While the pedestrian activation of this section of S. Main Street is less important than the District's parcels to the north, given its location near the highway, potential changes to the exit ramp configuration currently being studied by the District and City would make this stretch of South Main Street more pedestrian-friendly and make activating ground floor uses more viable.
2. Parking Strategy: In addition to forcing the parking to the building edges, the site constraints also mean that the D+P proposal only has two parking levels, versus three levels. The lower level is accessed from Tockwotton Street and the upper level is accessed by Pike Street and they do not connect internally. To compensate for the lack of space for parking, the plans include both two-car deep and three-car deep tandem spaces for all but a few of the spaces on the lower parking level and approximately 60% of the parking spaces on the upper level. This is likely to cause management and operational issues, especially for the spaces used by the office tenant. As a result, the parking approach, as proposed, is not ideal from an urban design or operational perspective.

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