



November 6, 2024

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

RE: Parcel 2 - Waiver for Minimum First Story Height (Building A - North Building)

Dear Caroline,

Utile, the I-195 Redevelopment District's Urban Design and Planning consultant, recommends that the Commission grant a waiver to the Minimum First Story Height for Building A (the north building) of Urbanica's proposal for Parcel 2 for the reasons described below.

The Commission previously granted a waiver to the Minimum First Story Height from 18' to 14' for the south building. The waiver currently requested relates to the former live-work units in the north building.

Recommendation to Grant New Waiver

Urbanica's proposal previously included live-work units in the north building consisting of a commercial ground floor and residential mezzanine set back from the exterior wall totalling 18' in height. Urbanica is now proposing to modify the plan for these units to have fully separate floors - a commercial ground floor with a height of 9' and a residential second floor with a height of 8' (totaling 18', inclusive of a 1' allowance for floor thickness).

Utile recommends that the Commission grant a new waiver allowing the Minimum First Story Height (Table 2.3-1) for the former live-work units in the north building to be reduced from the 18' minimum first story height required under the original Development Plan to 9' for the following three reasons:

1. Balancing First Story Height with Overall Building Height - Given community sensitivity to height at this location, there is a need to balance first story height with overall building height. The proposed solution results in no change to the overall building height and no change to the combined height of the first and second "mezzanine" floors of the live-work units.
2. Minimal Impact on Exterior Elevation - Since the ground floor live-work units were originally conceptualized with "mezzanine" floors that were visually signaled by exterior window mullions and projecting canopies with continuous floor to ceiling windows, the subdivision of these units into two fully separate

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floors has no impact on the exterior perception. The proposed design change still gives the illusion of an 18' first story height.

3. Consistency with Updated Development Plan - Due to the significant grade change and multiple buildings, the application of Minimum First Story Height requirements as defined in the 2020 Development Plan is unclear and overly complex. However, Urbanica's development proposal is generally consistent with the 2023 Development Plan governing future development in the District, which clarified the application of Minimum First Story Height.

As the design progresses in resolution, Utile recommends that the Urbanica team develop and share with the District a proactive approach to address two new design questions raised by this change:

1. How does the design address privacy and the exterior look of the second floor residential units that now include floor-to-ceiling windows lining occupiable interior residential space?
2. How does the design incorporate signage for the ground floor commercial of the live/work units without negatively impacting the design and experience of the second floor residential units?

This should be addressed in advance of the issuing of construction documents.

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

Regards,



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