



December 15, 2023

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

**RE: Parcel 2 Final Plan Approval Recommendation**

Design Review Panel Contributors:

- Craig Barton, Design Review Panel
- Emily Vogler, Design Review Panel
- Jack Ryan, Design Review Panel
- Tim Love, Utile
- Kevin Chong, Utile

Dear Caroline,

Utile, the I-195 Redevelopment District's Urban Design and Planning consultant, recommends that the Commission grant Final Plan Approval for the Urbanica proposal for Parcel 2, with the conditions outlined below. The Urbanica team has addressed all the major comments from prior memos and has acknowledged and committed to addressing the remaining design review concerns, which can be resolved before the construction documents are issued and reviewed by the District staff and Utile.

Utile further understands that the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) may have additional comments on the Final Plan submission, and will work with District Staff, Urbanica, and the SHPO as necessary to address those comments. Given the nature of the SHPO's preliminary feedback, these comments should be able to be addressed administratively.

*Summary of the Design Review Process*

Utile and the I-195 Redevelopment District Design Review Panel met on November 27, 2023 to review the Final Plan Application materials provided by Urbanica for their proposed development on Parcel 2. The same group met on May 9, 2023 and again on July 7, 2023 to review the Concept Plan Application materials. The consolidated feedback of the Panel on Phase 2 was provided to the developer as a memo on July 13, 2023.

### *Waivers*

We recommend approving the requested waiver described below, based on satisfactory further development of the site plan design:

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1. Minimum First Story Height (Table 2.3-1) - the requested reduction from the 18' minimum ground floor height required under the original Development Plan to 14' for the south building is generally consistent with revisions adopted under the 2023 Development Plan (which requires a first story height of 15' for non-residential and 12' for residential uses), and is further justified by the need to balance first story height with overall building height given community sensitivity to height at this location.

### *Conditions for Final Plan Approval*

1. Additional refinements to the design of the stepped landscape wall along the the edge of the Water Street sidewalk are required:
  - a. More study is required of the relationship between the stepped wall and the stairs and ramp. As shown in the latest drawings (submitted to the District staff after the Design Review Panel review), both the ramp and stair are framed by a taller wall rather than stepped walls along the rest of the sidewalk. This means that the stair and ramp are not visible to pedestrians walking north or south along the sidewalk on the east side of the Water Street sidewalk until they are immediately in front of them. As a result, the tall planters around the stair and ramp should be peeled back so the access points to the plaza level are more visible from more locations.
  - b. A planting plan is required for the new stepped wall configuration so the overall scale and character of the sidewalk edge can be better understood.
2. The latest drawings from the proponent show a new shop window facing the South Water Street sidewalk in the northernmost retail space. This is a positive change. The Design Review Panels would also like Urbanica to consider additional revisions to this corner to provide a more welcoming pedestrian experience:
  - a. Consider eliminating the adjacent exterior single-run stair that connects the sidewalk level with elevation of the plinth over the subsurface parking (at approximately the elevation of South Main Street).
  - b. Consider transforming the walkway leading from the stair to the plaza into private balconies for the adjacent units.
3. The Design Review Panel is generally receptive to the landscape plan of the plaza/South Main Street level, which includes a walkway bordered by curved

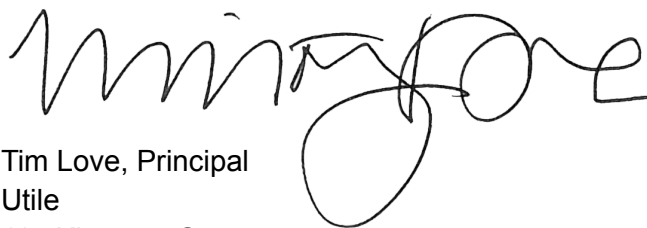
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walls that define mounded areas that provide enough soil depth of small trees. Additional information is required to fully assess the functionality and character of the space:

- a. Provide a drawing which clarifies which of the landscape borders are tall enough to function as seat walls.
  - b. Provide a drawing that more clearly shows the relationship between interior spaces and the location of the mounded areas vs. exterior paving.
  - c. Provide a diagram that demonstrates the amount of solar exposure (across different times of the day and year) of the different landscape areas and the suitability of the plantings for these varied conditions. This is especially important to understand on the south side of the plaza, since those planters won't receive direct sunlight for most of the year.
4. The Design Review Panel supports the change in exterior cladding from terracotta shingles to dimensional brick, but recommends a few additional adjustments to make all of the architectural elements work better together as an ensemble.
- a. While the canopy design at the entrances to the residential units along South Main Street looked appropriate when the elevations were clad with high-textured terracotta, they now look too heavy-handed. The depth of the structural elements should be reduced and the connection details should be more elegant.
  - b. For the same reason, the rhythm and pattern of the vertical battens in the "wood-look" facade panels should be simplified slightly.

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

Regards,



Tim Love, Principal  
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