



PROVIDENCE PRESERVATION SOCIETY

To: City Plan Commission
From: Providence Preservation Society
Date: July 21, 2020
RE: Case No. 19-076MI-- 976-1000 Westminster

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PPS opposes final plan approval of the application for 946, 964 and 1000 before you today. We were opposed to the preliminary plan approval in December 2019, where we presented a list of concerns about the project. We remain frustrated and disappointed that this application and its sister application (870 Westminster) has been considered piecemeal before the commission and as minor land development rather than holistically as major land development considering that it is part of six contiguous parcels under common ownership.

Our concerns remain waiving of 1st floor active, commercial use on a main street and lack of a comprehensive site and development plan. We do not believe that preliminary plan approval should have been granted for two design waivers (at 946-1000 Westminster) with such little justification or information presented to the CPC by the applicant. We would still like to see market studies to validate the waiver for 1st floor residential space 20 feet from a main street and, now that these eight months have passed, to understand the applicant's plan for 48 market-rate units at this location at the time of great financial uncertainty.

Very rarely does PPS appeal a decision of the CPC, however we found this project so egregious, and the site too historically significant and prominent, that we felt compelled to stand up for the future of the West End neighborhood. We joined the West Broadway Neighborhood Association and neighbors abutting the project site in our appeal. The petition for appeal at the Zoning Board of Review was not successful and that decision is currently being appealed in Providence County Superior Court, as you are aware.

As noted in the minutes from the December 2019 CPC meeting, PPS invited the applicant to meet to discuss the design. PPS did not hear directly from the applicant until we received a veiled email from an unidentified agent of the applicant on July 10 (a Friday afternoon) regarding a community meeting on July 15. We were not able to attend this meeting on such short notice and due to prior public programming. We then received an email invitation on July 16 for a virtual meeting on July 20. Due to time constraints, we were able to share this information internally with our board of trustees and Planning & Architectural Review Committee, as well as with participants in our West

End Gateway Design Competition, which yielded 15 community-sourced creative designs and uses for the site. We did not, as was suggested by the applicant at the July 20 "community meeting," dissuade community participation in this event. We regularly encourage and facilitate community meetings to bring development teams and community members together with the result often being stronger and improved proposals. It is regrettable that this developer did not engage with the community earlier, or particularly prior to preliminary plan review.

We trust that the CPC will not be satisfied that the applicant has met all of the conditions enumerated in December 2019 in their preliminary plan approval.

-With short notice, PPS was invited to two community meetings in July, and was only able to attend the one that took place yesterday. We offered to meet with the applicant at the December 2019; Mr. Bilodeau also recommended that the applicant meet with our Planning & Architectural Review Committee.

-The addition of trees at the parcel boundaries of the surface parking and bifurcation of the surface parking on Lot 185 does not provide reasonable or adequate information on a landscaping or traffic circulation plan for the entire site.

-The applicant has, arguably, "enhanced and further developed" the design of the building entrances with the addition of the double-height glass bay and more designed front door, however no explanation has been provided in addition to the rendering.

We respectfully request that this application be continued and be considered with the application for 870 Westminster and plans for 57 Cranston Street after meaningful input from the community.