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October 20, 2020

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Executive Director
Brent Runyon

Mr. Robert C. Davis, Chairman
I-195 Redevelopment District Commission
Via Email

Dear Bob,

Our Planning & Architectural Review Committee (PAR) had the opportunity to review both proposals for Parcel 9 following the September 23 public presentation at the I-195 District Commission meeting. It is customary for PPS to issue comment letters to the development teams that present to PAR, pointing out strengths and weaknesses of each proposal. For the commission's consideration, we have attached our letters to ONE|Neighborhood Builders and Pennrose, LLC along with the following summary of our findings.

Overall, we are pleased to see the caliber of both development teams interested in this I-195 District parcel. Perhaps more than respondents to other district RFPs, we found that both teams seriously considered the parcel within the context of the historic and post-interstate neighborhood and the housing needs of Providence. Both are to be commended for their commitment to workforce and affordable housing units. We hope that the commission will do all that it can to promote below market-rate housing as parcels within the district are repopulated with residential uses.

We also find it laudable that neither team exhausted the allowable building envelope. We think this move will present a more successful transition from the I-195 overpass to the Fox Point neighborhood.

Pennrose, LLC

With Pennrose, LLC, we found their solution to place two new buildings on the site with a visual and physical link through the site with the courtyard to be successful. We are concerned with all vehicular access within the site funneled through the courtyard and believe it will diminish the positive effect on pedestrians sharing the space. An additional, carefully designed point for vehicular access is recommended at either end of the site. We find that Pennrose's design did a better job of providing and screening the site's interior structured parking.

Pennrose has provided a recipe for promising street-level activity that will be realized as this neighborhood is repopulated-- with the traditional stoop providing a good design touch. The overall design effort, however, is overly cautious. We believe that the design of the new construction can display more 21st century

personality while still being deferential to the church, the maritime history of the site, and the largely-residential nature of Fox Point. And, as with any project, material choice is an important element of the design.

ONE|Neighborhood Builders

We appreciate that a strong local team of developers and architects replied to the Parcel 9 RFP and is interested in this redevelopment opportunity on the East Side. We find their commitment to affordable and workforce housing, aspiration to meet Passive House standards, and community outreach efforts admirable. We are particularly struck by their commitment to anchoring the development with a childcare center from conceptual design. ONE|NB clearly exercised thoughtfulness and sensitivity to their design and understanding of the site's history.

We find the siting of the two buildings and the glass bridges of the upper story connector to be undermined by the lack of visual or physical connectivity at the ground level between buildings. The parking solutions, we feel, should be revisited. We suggest that the first floor structured parking be built in a way that allows for it to be converted into commercial space in the future, and we are concerned about the dependence on off-site spaces that preserves the undesirable condition of surface parking in the vicinity.

We are concerned that in the long-term the street level, as designed, does not promote pedestrian activity. We understand prioritizing childcare facilities over commercial/retail space, but would hope the team could apply creative solutions to bolster future activity as this part of the neighborhood is reactivated. Finally, we raised concern over a "permanent" art installation on the facade. We fully support the inclusion of public art, but suggest that a "canvas" space provided for revolving installations might be a more realistic approach.

After reviewing the proposals of Pennrose, LLC and ONE|Neighborhood Builders, PPS finds both projects to be strong candidates for the development of Parcel 9 in terms of design and team competency. We prefer the application of ONE|Neighborhood Builders for their socially sensitive treatment of the project, sustainability priority, community outreach, and because of their commitment to onsite childcare facilities.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment and for all of the work you do on behalf of the I-195 District. If we can be of further assistance or answer any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Most sincerely,



Brent Runyon
Executive Director