

# City of Woonsocket, RI

## Design Review Commission Meeting Minutes

Date/Time: Tuesday February 1, 2022 | 6PM

Location: Teleconference Via Zoom, Meeting ID: 893 2999 4171

I. Call to Order

Chairman Finlay called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

II. Attendance Review

Members in Attendance:

1. Ken Finlay, Chairman
2. Wendall Gardner, Vice-Chairman
3. Jon Pratt

Members Absent:

1. Roji Eappen

Staff in Attendance:

1. Kevin Proft, City Planner/Administrative Officer
2. Genesis Johnson, Recording Secretary

III. **Remote Meeting Announcement:** The Chair reviewed the Remote Meeting Announcement:

**General Proceedings**

- A. Each agenda item will be read in-full to ensure it is clear what matter is before the board.
- B. Members should request permission to speak from the Chair prior to speaking. The Chair should recognize the Member by name.
- C. Members will identify themselves each time before they speak.
- D. All votes should be conducted by roll call.

**Public Comment**

1. The public will be muted by the meeting administrator until the Chair opens the floor to public comment, at which point all members of the public will be unmuted.
2. Members of the public wishing to comment should use the "raise hand" tool on their zoom screen so they may be called on by the chair to speak. If this method proves to be too challenging, the meeting administrator will mute all members of the public and then unmute each member of the public one-by-one and ask if they have a comment.
3. Members of the public wishing to comment should state their first/last name and address

for the record, then state their comment.

#### **Documentation**

1. Documents associated with the items being discussed at the meeting are available to the public on the Planning Board's webpage on the Woonsocket website.

<https://www.woonsocketri.org/planningboard/pages/meeting-files>

#### **Technical Difficulties**

1. If remote access is interrupted for all participants and cannot be restored within 10 minutes, the remainder of the meeting items will be continued to the following meeting. a. The board will preemptively vote to continue items not addressed due to potential technical difficulties to the next meeting to avoid the need to re-advertise said items. The date of said meeting must be included in the motion to continue.

- IV. **Vote on Motion to Continue Advertised Agenda Items to the regularly scheduled Planning Board meeting on March 1, 2022 in the case of technical difficulties with the remote meeting.**  
Motion to CONTINUE ADVERTISED AGENDA ITEMS TO THE MARCH 1, 2022 MEETING in the case of technical difficulties: Vice-Chairman Gardner  
Second: Member Pratt  
Discussion: None.  
Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Gardner	Yes
Member Eappen	Absent
Member Pratt	Yes

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Passed</b>	<b>3-0-0</b>
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- V. Correction/Approval of Minutes

No minutes to approve.

- VI. **Design Review** | Applicant: Brisa Development LLC | Owner: Brisa Bernon Mills, LP | Project Location: 0, 115 & 119 Front Street (Lots 15-221, 16, & 61) | Project Description: The applicant proposes to adjust the lot lines between three existing parcels at 0, 115 & 119 Front Street. The project will redevelop the existing stone mill buildings as 60 residential units, the existing two-story brick building as commercial space, and the existing building fronting Court Street as commercial space. This item was continued from the Special Design Review Commission Meeting on January 25, 2022.

Andrew Teitz, attorney for the applicant, and Victoria Howland of Pare Corporation represented the applicant. Mr. Teitz told the Commission that his clients had met with Mr. Proft to go over

the outstanding comments on their plans and discuss changes recommended by the Planning Board at the January 25<sup>th</sup> meeting, where this item was tabled. The applicant met with the City's utility department heads, at the request of the Board, on January 31<sup>st</sup> to address their concerns in a manner acceptable to both the City and Applicant.

Mr. Proft concurred that the applicant had addressed all outstanding concerns.

Chairman Finlay read the Design Review Commission's Findings of Fact & Decision into the record, including the following conditions of approval:

1. Exterior construction shall be limited to 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Monday-Friday and 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Saturday, with no construction taking place on Sunday.
2. Dust shall be controlled during all stages of development per section 9.0 of the City subdivision regulations.
3. Erosion shall be managed during and after construction and stormwater from new impervious surface resulting from development shall be managed after construction per section 8.7 of the City's subdivision regulations and Chapters 7.5 and 7.75 of the City's Code of Ordinances.
4. Signage shall be reviewed administratively under a separate design review application prior to sign-related building permits being issued.
5. Brightly colored bollards shall not be used, unless required by the associated utility company.
6. The area where "Showy Wildflower Seed Mix" will be planted shall be better defined on the landscape plan prior to Final Plan approval from the Planning Board.
7. A note specifying the planting treatment of the steep slopes to the east of Mill 2 and to the east of the access ramp to the lower parking area shall be added to the plan prior to Final Plan approval from the Planning Board.
8. A note stating that the generator shall be installed in a sound attenuated weather-proof enclosure shall be added to the plan prior to the Final Plan approval from the Planning Board.
9. The following notes shall be added to the lighting plan prior to final plan approval:
  - a. Downward facing, wall-mounted fixtures will be mounted at doors without canopies at Mill 2 and Mill 1 & 4.
  - b. All exterior canopies will have recessed lighting fixtures.
  - c. The existing accent lighting at Mill 2 will be updated.
  - d. All lighting will be downward facing, LED, and timed to shut off or dim during low-traffic times.

**Motion to APPROVE the Design Review Application with Conditions of Approval: Vice-Chairman Gardner**

**Second: Member Pratt**

**Discussion: None.**

**Vote:**

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Gardner	Yes
Member Eappen	Absent
Member Pratt	Yes

**Motion Passed 3-0-0**

VII. Administrative Officer's Report

No report presented at this meeting.

VIII. Next Meeting Date  
TBD

IX. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 PM: Vice-Chairman Gardner

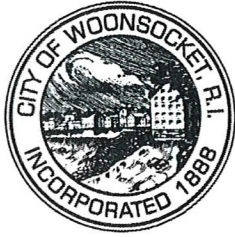
Second: Chairman Finlay

Discussion: None.

Vote:

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice-Chairman Gardner	Yes
Member Eappen	Absent
Member Pratt	Yes

**Motion Passed 3-0-0**



# City of Woonsocket, RI

## Design Review & River Corridor Review Commissions

To: Brisa Development, LLC (Applicant)  
2009 Flatbush Ave  
Brooklyn, NY 11234

Brisa Bernon Mills, LP (Owner)  
119 Front Street, #401  
Woonsocket, RI 02895

Date: February 1, 2022

Re: Project: Bernon Mills Redevelopment | Applicant: Brisa Development, LLC. | Owner: Brisa Bernon Mills, LP. | Design Review Approval & River Corridor Review Approval

The Design & River Corridor Review Commissions **approved – with conditions** – Brisa Development's application for Design & River Corridor Review at their February 1, 2022 meetings. The application was continued to February 1 from the special Design & River Corridor Review Commission meetings held on January 25, 2022. The applicant proposes to redevelop the existing stone mill buildings as 60 residential units, the existing two-story brick building as commercial space, and the existing small building fronting Court Street as commercial space. The applicant has secured Master & Preliminary Plan approval from the Planning Board and has secured the required relief from the Zoning Board. Design Review Commission approval is required per section 12.1-1 of the Zoning Ordinance because the project proposes substantial renovations to commercial buildings in an M-1 zone. River Corridor Review Commission approval is required per section 12.3 of the Zoning Ordinance because the project falls within the River Corridor Overlay District.

The following exhibits were used to inform the decisions of the Design & River Corridor Review Commissions: Subdivision Application (signed December 23, 2021), applicant's narrative (December 22, 2021), locus map (November 2021), plan set (revised: January 25, 2021), soil erosion & sediment control plan (December 2021), stormwater report (December 2021), stormwater operations and maintenance plan (December 2021), traffic impact analysis (November 2021), RIDEM Request for a Preliminary Determination (December 2021), Planning Division comments for Preliminary Plan review with Zoning, Police, and Fire comments addended (January 13, 2022), Planning Division comments for Design Review (January 14, 2022), Engineering Division comments (January 13, 2022), Applicant's Response to Comments including "relocatable easement" deed and fire truck turning radius diagram (January 2022 – received January 21, 2022), remaining outstanding Preliminary Plan review comments (January 25, 2022), remaining outstanding Design Review comments (January 25, 2022), Zoning Board approval (Bk 2631 Pg 171), Draft Design & River Corridor Review Approval Letter (February 1, 2022).

The Design Review Commission evaluates projects based on the following evaluation criteria: (1) architectural design (2) landscape design, (3) impacts on available utilities, (4) traffic impacts, (5) on-site traffic circulation, (6) overall visual quality, (7) relationship to surrounding building sites, (8) sign design and placement, and (9) site layout. The Design Review Commission made the following findings:



- (1) The architectural design of the project is acceptable. The project includes the renovation of existing historic structures. Due to the use of Historic Tax Credits to finance the project, the structures are being restored per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. No substantial modifications or additions to the exteriors of the buildings are proposed, except that the cobbler building, fronting Court Street, will be reclad with wood siding and storefront paneling – a major improvement over the building's existing false stone façade.
- (2) The landscape design of the project is acceptable. The applicant contracted Diane Soule of Diane C. Soule & Associates ASLA to develop the landscape plan for the project. Ms. Soule has approximately 35 years of experience as a Landscape Architect. Per the Woonsocket Main Street Design Guidelines, the landscape plan uses non-invasive species that thrive naturally without irrigation. At least seven existing, mature trees are maintained throughout the site, including three street trees within the front yard setback along Front Street. Thirteen additional deciduous trees, including dogwoods, maples, and oaks will be planted as part of the project, including an additional two street trees along Front Street. The plan includes appropriate buffer vegetation, including American Holly and American Arborvitae, between the project site and abutters at the northeast of the property. The plan includes appropriate buffer vegetation, including rhododendrons and mountain laurels, between the project site and the north property line of lot 15-216. The project also adequately screens major mechanical equipment such as transformers and generators with shrubs of an appropriate height. Special interest landscaping such as inkberry, hydrangeas, evergreen groundcovers, and red sprite winterberry are spread strategically throughout the site. Invasive plants will be removed from the existing vegetated area at the northwest corner of the site. Dumpster areas, while highly visible, are screened by an attractive enclosure fence. Where fencing is proposed, an ornamental steel fence is proposed. Where guardrails are proposed, they are attractive timber guardrails. Where retaining walls are proposed, they are an attractive block wall designed to mimic stone. The applicant has paid close attention to detail, using riverstone in areas designated as gravel beds and planting hardy grasses in stormwater bioretention basins to improve their visual quality. A Showy Wildflower Seed Mix will be used in areas where a manicured lawn aesthetic is not desired.
- (3) The impacts on available utilities are manageable. The Engineering Division provided the applicant with confirmation that the proposed project's demands on water and sewer utilities is acceptable given existing infrastructure capacity. The applicant and City utility divisions are working to resolve City concerns over how the site will be serviced as part of the Planning Board's Major Land Development process.

The applicant will prevent erosion and manage all new stormwater on-site per State and local requirements including section 8.7 of the City's Subdivision Regulations and Chapters 7.5 and 7.75 of the City's Code of Ordinances. Impervious surface on site would be reduced compared to existing conditions. The proposed drainage plan for the site is designed to treat 145% of the required treatment area per RIDEM standards. Stormwater management conditions will be improved by the project compared to existing conditions.

- (4) Traffic Impacts resulting from the new development will be acceptable. The applicant conducted a traffic study for the project, which was reviewed by the City's Engineering Division and Police

Department. The study concludes that, "Overall, the proposed Bernon Mills reconstruction is not expected to have any significant impacts on the safety or operations of the roadway network surrounding the site, and no mitigation is proposed."

- (5) On-site traffic circulation is acceptable. The applicant has eliminated a redundant curb cut and driveway at the development's entrance. Passenger vehicle circulation is logical and appropriate given the proposed uses of the property. According to the applicant's design software, site circulation is designed to allow the City's largest fire trucks adequate circulation on-site, including to the lower parking lot. The Fire Marshal's Office intends to confirm this at the Building Permit stage of the project. An adequate snow storage plan is included on the site plan, though minor conflicts between landscape areas and snow storage areas should be addressed. The project complies with the Zoning Ordinance's parking requirements. ADA access and Pedestrian circulation is acceptable due to a network of ADA parking spaces, sidewalks and curb ramps, and cross walks.
- (6) The overall visual quality of the site is acceptable. The historic architectural character of the site is maintained and, in the case of the cobbler building, significantly improved (see (1) above). The landscape plan is acceptable (see (2) above). Additionally, the applicant is working with the electric utility company to remove the utility poles from the site and bury utility wires. While this is the applicant's intent, there is no guarantee that the poles and wires will be buried. The applicant has proposed a reduction in paved area and an increase in landscaped area. Site lighting will be adequate to allow safe vehicular and pedestrian circulation, will be limited to 16 feet, and will use ornamental fixtures. The applicant has agreed to consider potential means of reducing the visual impact of the striped asphalt area in the lower parking area.
- (7) The relationship of the proposed development to surrounding buildings is appropriate. The proposed development includes only existing historic buildings. That said, the proposed uses will be beneficial to the neighborhood by increasing density and creating quality commercial space in the downtown area.
- (8) Signage will be reviewed under a separate Design Review application.
- (9) The site layout is appropriate given the type of project proposed. Circulation is adequate (see (5) above), the landscape plan is acceptable (see (2) above), and the proposed structures are existing. The applicant has agreed to consider ways to better activate the riverfront area to the west of the lower lot.

The River Corridor Review Commission evaluates projects based on the following evaluation criteria: (1) availability of public access to river, (2) impacts on available utilities, (3) off-site traffic impacts, (4) on-site traffic circulation, (5) on and off-site environmental impacts, (6) overall visual quality, (7) site layout. The River Corridor Review Commission made the following findings:

- (1) Availability of public access to the river was determined to be impractical given existing on-site conditions and the project goals of the developer. The riverfront is at the extreme west of the site, while access to the property is at the far east of the site. The uses proposed within the mills on the west side of the site are residential, making public access in the same area undesirable to



the developer. There is no obvious opportunity to extend access to the north or south of the site to create a larger public access area along the river due to existing lot configurations and steep slope of the riverbank.

- (2) Impacts on availability utilities: see item 3 under Design Review.
- (3) Off-site traffic impacts: see item 4 under Design Review.
- (4) On-site circulation: see item 5 under Design Review.
- (5) On- and off-site environmental impacts will be negligible. The applicant will prevent erosion and manage all new stormwater on-site per State and local requirements including section 8.7 of the City's Subdivision Regulations and Chapters 7.5 and 7.75 of the City's Code of Ordinances. Impervious surface on site would be reduced compared to existing conditions. The proposed drainage plan for the site is designed to treat 145% of the required treatment area per RIDEM standards. Stormwater management conditions will be improved by the project compared to existing conditions. New landscaping, including thirteen new deciduous trees and a variety of evergreen trees, shrubs, and grasses will be incorporated into the site design, increasing tree canopy on the site.
- (6) Overall Visual Quality: see item 6 under Design Review.
- (7) Site Layout: see item 7 under Design Review.

Conditions of Approval:

- 1. Exterior construction shall be limited to 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. on Monday-Friday and 7 a.m. – 5 p.m. on Saturday, with no construction taking place on Sunday.
- 2. Dust shall be controlled during all stages of development per section 9.0 of the City subdivision regulations.
- 3. Erosion shall be managed during and after construction and stormwater from new impervious surface resulting from development shall be managed after construction per section 8.7 of the City's subdivision regulations and Chapters 7.5 and 7.75 of the City's Code of Ordinances.
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- c. The existing accent lighting at Mill 2 will be updated.
- d. All lighting will be downward facing, LED, and timed to shut off or dim during low-traffic times.

The Design Review Commission voted on the following motion during its February 1, 2022 meeting:

Motion by Member Gardner and seconded by Member Pratt that the petition for Design Review proposed by Brisa Development, LLC. (applicant), 2009 Flatbush Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11234 on behalf of Brisa Bernon Mills, LP. (owner) 119 Front Street, #401, Woonsocket, RI 02895 for property located at 0, 115 & 119 Front Street in Woonsocket be approved with conditions.

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice Chair Gardner	Yes
Member Eappen	Absent
Member Pratt	Yes

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Passes</b>	<b>3 - 0 - 0</b>
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The River Corridor Review Commission voted on the following motion during its February 1, 2022 meeting:

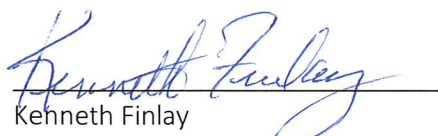
Motion by Member Gardner and seconded by Member Pratt that the petition for River Corridor Review proposed by Brisa Development, LLC. (applicant), 2009 Flatbush Ave, Brooklyn, NY 11234 on behalf of Brisa Bernon Mills, LP. (owner) 119 Front Street, #401, Woonsocket, RI 02895 for property located at 0, 115 & 119 Front Street in Woonsocket be approved with conditions.

Chairman Finlay	Yes
Vice Chair Gardner	Yes
Member Eappen	Absent
Member Pratt	Yes

<b>Motion</b>	<b>Passes</b>	<b>3 - 0 - 0</b>
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As stated in § 12.1-7 and § 12.3-6 of the Zoning Ordinance, all plans and designs approved by the Design and River Corridor Review Commissions shall be executed as such. Failure to comply with approved plans shall be deemed a violation of this ordinance and of the building permit issued for such development, and shall cause the building official to issue a stop-work order until such time that the violation has been satisfactorily remedied.

Sincerely,

  
Kenneth Finlay  
DRC and RCRC Chairman

  
Kevin Proft  
Design and River Corridor Review Officer

RECEIVED IN WOONSOCKET R.I.  
DATE Feb. 03, 2022 TIME 09:07:13A  
Christina Harmon, CITY CLERK

