

THE CITY OF PROVIDENCE
STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 91

Approved February 21, 1989

WHEREAS, Several parcels of property which are bounded by Smith Street, Francis Street, Brownell Street and Park Street, are located in a sensitive area relative to the Rhode Island State House, and the abutting Smith Hill Neighborhood, and

WHEREAS, These parcels are subject to future development pressures which directly impact the Rhode Island State House and the Smith Hill Neighborhood, and

WHEREAS, Several petitions have been presented to the Zoning Board of Review from people seeking variances, which would allow the construction of oversized buildings which, if approved, would adversely affect the visual and aesthetic quality of this area, and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Director of the Department of Planning and Development is hereby requested to undertake a survey of the parcels referred to with the intent of making long range recommendations to benefit the harmonious and productive development of said area.

IN CITY COUNCIL

FEB 16 1989

READ AND PASSED


PRES.


CLERK



Councilman Oliver



Department of Planning and Development

"Building Pride In Providence".

February 2, 1990

Mrs. Rose M. Mendonca
City Clerk
City Clerk's Office
City Hall
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

RE: Development on Smith Hill

Dear Mrs. Mendonca: *Rose,*

At your request this Department reviewed the development potential for that parcel of land located between I-95 and Francis Street, Smith Street to Brownell Street (see attached). The area from Smith Street to Hayes Street is the only site between the State House and Downtown that is not covered by the Capital Center Guidelines. In addition, the parcel is a conglomeration of zoning categories that makes it subject to a variety of possible uses.

Because of the importance of this area, the study completed by this Department recommends a series of zoning changes. These changes, we feel, would protect the character of the area while allowing flexibility for development.

These changes will go a long way toward insuring that development of the parcel is sensitive to the historic character of the area.

Sincerely yours,

Tom
Thomas V. Moses, Esq.
Director

TVM/bms
TED

SMITH HILL STUDY AREA
ISSUES PAPER

I. Background Information

The Providence City Council passed a resolution requesting that the Department of Planning and Development review existing conditions and recommend future strategies for preserving the character of Smith Hill, between Smith, Francis, Brownell and Park Streets. The Council's concern arises from the development pressure on this site and the variety of proposals that have been submitted that are not sensitive to the State House, Capital Center and the overall development character on Smith Hill.

The Department reviewed the land use of the area, both existing and proposed, building heights, zoning classification, as well as the area's historic character and significance, and the implications of the Capital Center Project on this site. The basic premise established for future development of this parcel is that the development should complement the State House and the Capital Center Development. Based on these development goals, the Department established implementation strategies to regulate development of the study area.

II. Existing Conditions

The study area consists of fifteen (15) individual parcels, totalling more than 85,000 square feet of land. Many of the uses on the lots have changed over the decades, but the current distribution of land use is as follows:

<u>Land Use</u>	<u>No. of Parcels</u>	<u>Land Area</u>
Vacant (underutilized)	5	29,476 sq. ft.
Commercial	1	21,380 sq. ft.
2-family Residential	4	17,547 sq. ft.
3-family Residential	4	16,864 sq. ft.

II. Existing Conditions cont'd

The study area is divided among three zoning districts: R-4, C-1 and C-4. The majority of the area is zoned C-1, Limited Commercial Zone, although the principal land use in the area is residential. The height regulations in the R-4 zones permit a maximum of six stories or 75 feet, while the height regulations in the commercial zone permit only three-story buildings, not to exceed 45 feet. This restriction applies to all uses and development types within the zone, including residential ones.

The specific development pressures in the study area have included proposals for two large scale office buildings, and one 64-unit apartment building. This residential development would more than triple the current density in the study area if approved. Ultimately, these petitions indicate that existing zoning cannot sufficiently address the increasing demand to develop in the area, nor can current zoning adequately protect the historic integrity of the area's residential element.

III. Goals

Smith Hill has experienced extensive redevelopment and new construction throughout the neighborhood. The subject area is no exception. This sites proximity to Capital Center, as well as to the state offices along Smith Street, makes it an attractive location for all types of intense development.

Review of the pressures being placed on the study area, as well as the area's history, leads this Department to offer the following goals.

- A. Preserve the overall development scale of the area, both in terms of renovation and new construction. For example, building height should be limited to an average of three stories in the study area, with buildings located at the corner of Smith and Francis Streets being restricted to two stories, and those near Francis and Brownell Streets limited to four stories. This would preserve and enhance the Capitol's visibility from all points as well as its overall significance within the area.

III. Goals cont'd

- B. Encourage interaction between this area and the surrounding development areas, including Capital Center and Smith Street. Development in the study area should include pedestrian and vehicular access to various key points, particularly the pedestrian walks and recreational areas surrounding the state house.
- C. Preserve the historic character of the study area. All renovations and new construction projects should be appropriate in terms of scale and style to the historic properties and structures within the area. All historic structures should be encouraged to be maintained and saved, rather than demolished.
- D. Encourage consistency within the area in terms of uses and development scale.

IV. Recommendations

Several alternatives exist for achieving the goals for the study area delineated above. This Department offers the following proposals as initial steps in achieving the ultimate goal of development control and consistency within the study area.

- A. Re-zone the entire study area to C-2: General Commercial Zone. This zoning district was established to promote retail services and professional offices near denser residential areas. The C-2 zone does not allow the heavy commercial uses deemed inappropriate by this Department for the study area, and it restricts building heights to three stories, 45 feet. This zoning classification would allow the appropriate scale and type of office and commercial development for an area abutting the state house and state office buildings, and would serve as a good transitional area between an intensive commercial area like Capital Center and the stable residential neighborhoods nearby.

This re-zoning conforms with the proposed land uses for the area, while still permitting the type and scale of development appropriate near Capital Center.

IV. Recommendations cont'd

- B. Encourage the Zoning Board of Review to grant no variances or special exceptions within the study area.
- C. All required parking should be designed for the rear of all properties, with ingress and egress points located along Park Street whenever possible. Preferable, under any structures built.
- D. The existing setbacks should be maintained wherever possible, to provide for pedestrian walkways, landscaping, trees and parallel parking (along Francis Street).

It should be required that all buildings be built at the setback line along Francis, Brownell and Smith Street. By building to the setback line the City will insure that the urban character is maintained adjacent to the State House.

- E. Buildings should be designed to complement the character of the area. Landscaping should be installed, and signs should be limited in size. To achieve this, the Department should have site plan review over any proposals for development of this site.

FILED

FEB 2 4 55 PM '90

DEPT. OF JUSTICE
PROVIDENCE, R.I.