

August 7, 2024

Providence Historic District Commission
25 Dorrance Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Members and Staff of the Providence HDC,

It is my understanding that on Monday, July 22, 2024 the Providence HDC heard the first information presented related to the proposed subdivision and development of the parcels of land referred to as 118-126 Benevolent Street. I was out of the state on that day and only received notification via mail the day of the meeting—it was waiting for me upon my return to the office. Therefore, I was not able to provide this information before the first meeting. I am happy for the opportunity to do so now.

As the Commission may know, the Rhode Island Historical Society was given this property by the Aldrich family in 1974 and sold it a decade later. However, the property came to the RIHS with restrictions and those carried forward to the subsequent owners. We added more restrictions, as well as clarifying language, in the deeds to subsequent owners. As such, for decades, the RIHS was part of conversations related to the land’s potential subdivision, sale, and development.

As of 2023 we understand that the restrictions that required both our written consent for subdivision and our right of first refusal have expired (these were among those added to the deeds by the RIHS). However, this does not mean that we are uninterested in the development of this land. In fact, we have invested considerable time, thought, and energy into this property, and those around it, for decades. Also, just for your information, the other restrictions carried over to each landowner still remain:

- Parcels 3, 4, 5, 6 (which includes the land in question) may be sold or leased subject to restrictions to insure compatibility with the structure located on Parcel 1 (Aldrich House) and conformation to present neighborhood uses, including but without limiting the generality of the foregoing, restrictions as to building dimensions, location of any structure on such parcel or parcels, architectural design, landscaping, contemplated use and the like....
- The restrictive covenants contained herein shall attach to and run with the land, and shall be binding upon The Society, its successors and assigns.
- No waiver of failure to enforce any of the restrictive covenants herein shall be construed to be a waiver of any breach of the same or other restrictive covenant.

Our thinking and guidance to owners has been consistent over the years and I believe it might be helpful to share that information with the Commission to help the group in making its determinations.

In the summer of 2013, we engaged in extensive conversation with former owner Herbert Sackett when he sought to subdivide the vacant land that then stretched from Benevolent to George Street. At the time it

Remember Interpret Honor Share

consisted of two inconsistently shaped lots (one small square and one larger L-shaped lot). He wished to change the lot lines and make four equal-sized lots, after having first proposed three lots.

The RIHS did not approve the subdivision of Lots 269 and 168 into four (4) equal lots. After consultation with both the head of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission and the Providence Revolving Fund, as well as neighborhood residents, it was clear that the creation of four lots was considered inappropriate and untenable. However, we agreed that the original proposal of the creation of three (3) lots, two of equal size facing Benevolent Street and a third, larger lot (on which a now-demolished garage sat) facing George Street, was acceptable because of the character of the houses immediately adjacent and across from said lots.

Sackett sought an administrative subdivision, which did not require any notification of neighbors, and the city granted it. He created two, large lots, one facing Benevolent Street and the other facing George. Ultimately, Sackett sold the lot facing George Street to the Ragona family, who subsequently built a single-family home on the lot and engaged in conversation with the RIHS throughout the process. The other large parcel was sold to a private entity as a single property.

In the summer of 2023 the owner of the vacant lot, Whisper Investments, LLC, was looking to sell the property and had buyers who wanted to subdivide it into two parcels to build two single family homes for two family residences, one for themselves and another for their parents. This was in keeping with the sentiments we shared with Sackett in 2013 and we sought legal advice to understand the current state of the restrictions and what our authority was. As mentioned before, this legal opinion stated that our consent to subdivision was no longer needed. However, with full credit to the seller, they wished to engage the RIHS and support the historical character of the neighborhood and recognized that the other restrictions regarding conforming to the neighborhood were still in place.

Looking back, again, to our 2013 conversations with Sackett, we were asked to define how we, acting with the original land donor's intent at the fore, understood the words in the restrictions. We submitted the following:

In terms of clearer language related to “compatibility” and “conformation,” we suggest using a combination of language found in the NPS’s *Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, *Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts* (a publication of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia), and Oregon City’s *Design Guidelines for New Construction in Historic Districts*:

- a. *Style Compatibility*: New Construction shall compliment one of the existing historic styles to support the historic context and be compatible with adjacent properties, the block and the neighborhood.
- b. *Citing*: Residential buildings are to be set back from the lot lines and spaced from one another similar to the immediate neighborhood (within one block).
- c. *Building Form*: The building form needs to relate to the buildings in the immediate neighborhood and to take into account both similarities and changes on the block. The new building form shall reference the principles, proportions and scale of an historically appropriate style, while not creating a false sense of historic development.
- d. *Design Composition*: Design composition principles relate to the detailed design of the exterior, and include historically appropriate materials, finishes, and unobtrusive integration of new technology.

e. *Impact*: New construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

We also shared the type of questions we would be asking when we reviewed a project and we suggested the buyer/architect to consider these when designing new structures:

- a. *History*: Does the proposed design appropriately incorporate or respond to any historical assets or would it destroy or compromise such assets?
- b. *Continuity*: Would the proposed development maintain or strengthen the existing street edge or would it create an interruption to urban continuity?
- c. *Building Character*:
 - *Height*: Would the height and form of the building have a positive relationship with the street and surrounding buildings as viewed from both near and far?
 - *Massing*: Would the massing of the building be an appropriate response to the context?
 - *Architectural vocabulary*: Does the architectural vocabulary relate to the existing context or create a meaningful juxtaposition?
- d. *Composition*: Would the building materials be attractive and appropriate to the surroundings?

When the Aldriches donated this land to the Rhode Island Historical Society, the neighborhood did not have the protection of being in a historic district. With the expansion of the College Hill Historic District, we hoped that any change to our oversight role would be taken up by the Commission, thus keeping the character of the district at the forefront of the conversation. We contend, as we have in the past, that the development of two lots would be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood, but that the current proposal of three is out of character and scale. We hope that the HDC shares this view.

My hope is that this letter gives some context to our thinking in the past and present about new construction in the area.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



C. Morgan Grefe, Ph.D.
Executive Director

John Goncalves
Senior Deputy Majority Leader
Councilman - Ward 1

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25 DORRANCE STREET, ROOM 310
PROVIDENCE, RI 02903
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WARD1@PROVIDENCERI.GOV



COMMITTEES

State Legislative Affairs- Chairman
City Property- Chairman
Claims & Pending Suits- Chairman
Urban Redevelopment Renewal & Planning

Providence Historic District Commission
Joseph A. Doorley, Jr. Municipal Building
Department of Planning & Development
444 Westminster Street, Suite 3A
Providence, RI 02903-3215

Cooke Twenty-Five Realty LLC
450 Veterans Memorial Parkway, Suite 7A
East Providence, RI 02914

Albert Garcia, AIA and Christine West, AIA
Kite Architects
One Central Street
Providence, RI 02907

Dear Members of the Providence Historic District Commission, Cooke Twenty-Five Realty LLC, and Kite Architects,

I am writing to formally request that both the Providence Historic District Commission and Cooke Twenty-Five Realty LLC agree to a continuance of the review process for the proposed development project at 118-126 Benevolent Street. This request is made to allow additional time for in-depth discussions with neighborhood residents, who have expressed several significant concerns regarding the current development plans.

We understand that the seller of the vacant lot was represented by Kira Greene of Compass Providence, and the buyer was represented by Jim DeRentis of Residential Properties Ltd. According to the quitclaim deed, a public record of the sale, the 16,427-square-foot lot was sold in June by Craig Stewart and Jessica Stewart with the clear intention of building on it. We acknowledge that this development is a significant investment for the buyers, and we understand their intention to develop the property.

However, the proposal to construct three single-family residences, each with a detached garage, on subdivided lots has raised substantial issues within the community and neighborhood abutters with greater legal standing. These concerns include:

- 1. Mass and Scale:** The proposed construction of three houses, each 40 feet high with 20-foot high garages, is viewed by many neighbors as excessive for the neighborhood. The mass, scale and density are viewed as not consistent with the historic character of the Power-Cooke Historic District, a historic district expansion that I was the

lead sponsor on expanding in 2021. By subdividing the lots into three parcels, the development maximizes built space with minimum street frontage, minimum square footage, and maximum height, which neighbors see as out of alignment with the neighborhood's scale and fabric. We would like to work out solutions to this issue.

2. Impact on Trees and Green Space: The development threatens the loss of mature trees and green space, which are critical to the historic district's aesthetic and environmental quality. Residents are particularly concerned about the potential damage to trees on the lot as well as at the lot line on neighboring properties. This loss would detract from the high canopy that is a valued feature of the neighborhood.

3. Architectural Incompatibility: The design of the proposed houses, with their uniformity and proximity, appears more akin to a suburban subdivision than the existing historic homes that better define the neighborhood. The project, as currently proposed, does not seemingly incorporate to the fullest extent the architectural diversity, design and historic significance of the surrounding area.

4. Potential for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): The plan includes detached 2-story garages that may potentially be used as ADUs under pending city regulations. This could lead to up to six residences on the lot, further exacerbating existing parking issues on Benevolent Street due to the need for three curb cuts. We would like to seek more clarity on this issue and transparency and ideally come to an agreement on planned uses.

Given these substantial concerns, the neighborhood residents and I believe that a continuance is necessary to allow for a collaborative review of the plans. By engaging in further discussions, we can explore potential modifications that would better align with the historic and architectural character of the district while also addressing environmental and aesthetic issues.

I am confident that through this process, we can develop a solution that respects the community's values and maintains the integrity of the Power-Cooke Historic District. **Our hope is that you grant this continuance and we look forward to working together toward a mutually agreeable outcome.** I would be happy to schedule an in-person meeting at City Hall in the coming weeks to convene all parties and facilitate further discussion.

Thank you for your attention and consideration.

Sincerely,



Senior Deputy Majority Leader
Providence City Council, Councilman – Ward 1
Chairman, Committee on State Legislative Affairs

Chairman, Committee on Claims and Pending Suits
Chairman, Committee on Public Property

CC:

James J. Beliveau
Jeffrey A. St. Sauveur
Christopher J. Montalbano

Jason Martin, Preservation Planner
Ryan Haggerty, Chair
Edward Sanderson, Vice-Chair
Catherine Lund
Rachael Dotson
Glen Fontecchio
Neal Kaplan
Tina Regan
James Verity
Victoria Wilson-Barnes
Pabel Fernandez, Auxiliary
T. Eric Galloway
Albert Garcia, AIA
Christine West, AIA



Samuel Daganhardt
City Forester

BRETT P. SMILEY
Mayor

Cynthia Ragona
253 George Street
Providence RI 02906

RE: Significant Tree Protection

To whom it may concern,

A site visit was conducted at 253 George St, Providence RI 02906 to evaluate a 32" DBH Sycamore maple tree, located in the southwest corner of the property. This property abuts the proposed development of 118-126 Benevolent St. This Sycamore maple is considered a significant tree per ordinance and is evaluated to be in good condition.

Significant trees are vital to the City; they not only reduce the heat index for residents but they also improve biodiversity and quality of life, absorb storm water runoff, improve air quality, and prevent erosion.

This significant Sycamore maple will require rigid adherence to tree protection zones and critical root zones. These areas extend onto the property of 118-126 Benevolent St and will impact the ability to develop certain structures.

The tree protection zone (TPZ), where there is to be no stockpiling of construction material, no machinery parking and minimal grade changes would consist of a radius of 32' from the trunk of the tree. The critical root zone (CRZ) is considered to be 16' in radius from the trunk of the tree. This is an area where there should be no excavation or machinery operation in any form.

There are currently structures being proposed to be built within the TPZ and CRZ. Further, the amount of canopy coverage that is going to be lost through this development will be a detriment to the ecology and environmental health of the neighborhood.

PROVIDENCE PARKS DEPARTMENT
1000 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02905
Phone: 401-680-7270



Samuel Daganhardt
City Forester

BRETT P. SMILEY
Mayor

As the city forester of Providence, RI, I am concerned that the developments on this lot will cause severe stress and health decline of the Sycamore maple tree, if these protection measures are not followed.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Samuel Daganhardt". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Sam Daganhardt
Providence City Forester
ISA #NE-7590A
ISA TRAQ

PROVIDENCE PARKS DEPARTMENT
1000 Elmwood Avenue, Providence, RI 02905
Phone: 401-680-7270

From: [Gregor Mittersinker](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Request for Continuation of Review Process for Development at 118-126 Benevolent Street
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 4:30:46 PM

Dear Mr Martin!

I am writing to express my concerns and request a continuance of the review process for the proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent Street. As a resident of 109 Benevolent Street, I believe it is crucial to provide additional time for the community to review and discuss the plans thoroughly.

We are very concerned about the potential changes this development could bring to the character of our street. The proposed large structure on a relatively small plot could significantly alter the historic and aesthetic value of our neighborhood. Our community values its green spaces and tree-lined streets, not the prospect of skyscrapers.

It is vital for the development to align with the unique character of our historic district. I urge further discussion and engagement with the neighborhood to ensure that the development reflects the collective interests and preserves the integrity of our area.

Please let us know how we can ensure that the concerns and needs of the neighbors are considered in this process.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Gregor Mittersinker

<https://calendly.com/mittersinker>

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GREGOR MITTERSINKER
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CONFIDENTIALITY NOTICE: The content of this email message and any attachments are intended solely for the addressee(s) and may contain confidential and/or privileged information and may be legally protected from disclosure.

From: [Felix Leitner](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Property Development
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 4:06:19 PM

Dear Members of the Providence Historic District Commission,

I am a resident of 109 Benevolent Street and am writing to request a continuance of the review process for the proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent Street. This will allow more time for the community and neighborhood to review and discuss the plans.

As a neighbor, I am concerned about the scale of the proposed properties proportional to the plot as well as compatibility with the nearby architecture. I believe that further discussion with the neighborhood is necessary to ensure that the development aligns with the character of our historic district.

Thank you,
Felix Leitner-Mittersinker

From: [Birgit Leitner](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed Property Development on Benevolent Street
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 4:06:28 PM

Dear Members of the Providence Historic District Commission,

I am a resident of 109 Benevolent Street and am writing to request a continuance of the review process for the proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent Street. This will allow more time for the community and neighborhood to review and discuss the plans.

As a neighbor, I am concerned about [Briefly Mention Your Specific Concerns, e.g., “the scale of the proposed properties,” “the impact on existing trees,” “architectural compatibility,” etc.]. I believe that further discussion with the neighborhood is necessary to ensure that the development aligns with the character of our historic district.

Thank you,
Birgit Leitner-Mittersinker

From: [Jon Wolston](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 2:51:38 PM

Dear Members of the Providence Historic District Commission:

I am a resident of 6 Cooke Street and am writing to request a continuance of the review process for the proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent Street. Such a continuance will allow more time for the community and neighborhood to review and discuss the plans.

I have lived on Cooke Street for 39 years and this is not the first time that neighbors have banded together to bring to the HDC's attention matters that concern us. Fortunately I learned of the Benevolent proposal yesterday in time to have a voice in the proceedings and review.

The drawings I reviewed show 3 homes and 3 2-story garages "shoe-horned" into a lot, creating a crowded effect with no green space that is inconsistent with the neighborhood and out of character with this Historic District. To judge their architectural compatibility is impossible at this time given the primitive nature of the drawings. They have an odd "Disney-fied" character.

The drawings appeared to be hastily prepared. For example, no grading of the property was included and there is as yet no information on the impact on existing trees. Why is there no mention of the adjoining trees so stunning in their beauty, trees that have been carefully tended for generations?

To ensure that this development aligns with the character of our historic district, I respectfully ask for further discussion with the neighborhood.

Jon Wolston
6 Cooke Street
Providence, RI

From: [Nancy Wolston](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent Street
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 2:45:43 PM

Jason Martin
Preservation Planner
jmartin@providenceri.gov

Nancy Laser Wolston
6 Cooke Street
Providence, RI 02906

Dear Members of the Providence Historic District Commission,

I am a resident of 6 Cooke Street and am writing to request a continuance of the review process for the proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent Street. This will allow more time for the community and neighborhood to review and discuss the plans.

As a neighbor, I am concerned about the negative impact of continued growth and urban density. This is especially important to me as it impacts on Architecturally Correct, and carefully maintained homes in the Providence Historic District. Having lived at 6 Cooke Street for 39 years, much has changed. It was once a quiet street with ample parking and abundant street trees. Now it is parked solid and several trees have died.

Each and every one of the houses on Cooke represent the Architectural Period in which it was built. This includes size, scale and architectural features. In the past neighbors have worked together to prevent new building efforts that would “mimic” the district’s style, but would only be a “Disneyesque Copy” and thus, change the nature of the district. The neighborhood’s efforts have also saved several beautiful trees.

I strongly feel that the ersatz visual effect and scale proposed for the “subdivision development” at 118-126 Benevolent Street is inappropriate and will negatively impact our Historic district’s character. It is too big and dense for the lot and I question if setbacks and distances between structures, sidewalks and abutting neighbors meet zoning requirements?

I also feel that the disruption or removal of old growth trees or building construction which disturbs abutting neighbors tree growth should be avoided at all costs. Trees are important for our environment and enjoyment.

I believe that further discussion with the neighborhood is necessary to ensure that the development aligns with the character of our historic district.

Thank you,
Nancy Laser Wolston

From: [Norma J Anderson](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#); [John Goncalves](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Benevolent St Project at 128 to 126 Benevolent St
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 10:42:27 AM

Dear Mr Martin,

I have lived in the neighborhood over 20 years. I look at that lot every time I walk my dog. I can't see how three 3 story houses with detached garages can fit on it.

It seems like that would look very crowded.

I live at 51 East George St in a little house.

I would not like to live next to this project!

(No consideration for the space it would occupy).

Norma J Anderson

Sent from my phone

From: [Peter Brown](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 118-126 Benevolent Street
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 10:39:58 AM

Dear Members of the Providence Historic District Commission,

I am a resident of 90 Benevolent Street with my spouse and young kids and am writing to request a continuance of the review process for the proposed development at 118-126 Benevolent Street. This will allow more time for the community and neighborhood to review and discuss the plans.

As a neighbor, I am concerned about:

Construction

- parking disruption for Brown University employees
- respecting the neighbors

Building

- appearance of a development (3 very similarly sized building)
- restrictions on accessory structure (use, etc)

I believe that further discussion with the neighborhood is necessary to ensure that the development aligns with the character of our historic district.

Thank you,
Peter Brown

90 Benevolent Street, Providence, RI 02906

Sent from my iPhone so please excuse my typos

From: [Lauren Allister](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Cc: [Joshua Kennedy](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] New Benevolent Street Development Proposal
Date: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 6:34:53 PM

Mr. Martin,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Lauren Allister, and I am writing on behalf of myself and my husband, Joshua Kennedy. We are residents of 5 Cooke Street and have been part of the Historic District since 2017.

I am writing upon hearing about the proposed development on the land between 118 and 126 Benevolent Street. I understand that the HDC has the authority to state that the proposed development is too dense for our neighborhood, as it would likely be an active detriment to both the area's historical significance and livability.

We share the Commission's deep love of our neighborhood and desire to maintain its prosperity and natural beauty. This is why we ask the HDC to strongly consider opposing this proposal as it stands now. While we support development in the name of progress and amplifying the community's existing value, we believe that the developers who have bought this land seek to build these homes without regard for the historical importance of the land beneath them and the surrounding community. We would like the HDC to consider its responsibility in preserving the nature, beauty, and importance of Benevolent Street and the Historic District when hearing this proposal.

A collection of 3 40-foot homes, in both height and density would drastically alter the appearance of our neighborhood. Additionally, the construction of so many new buildings could kill many of the existing trees and plant life on and around the bought land, leaving a large number of wildlife vulnerable and without a natural habitat.

When this land is developed, we hope that it is done so in a respectful and deliberate manner that will welcome new residents who love their home and neighborhood as much as we do.

With deep gratitude,

Lauren Allister and Joshua Kennedy
5 Cooke Street

Lauren Allister
laurenallister@gmail.com

Martin, Jason

From: Carolyn Mark <carolyn.mark.ri@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 26, 2024 8:59 AM
To: Martin, Jason
Cc: Bill Stone
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] 118-126 Benevolent Street

Thank you.

Carolyn and Bill

Carolyn Mark, Mediator (she/her/hers)

Carolyn.Mark.RI@gmail.com

(401) 862-0354



My CliftonStrengths: Harmony | Communication | Arranger | Responsibility | Input

On Mon, Aug 26, 2024 at 8:56 AM Martin, Jason <jmartin@providenceri.gov> wrote:

Hi Carolyn and Mark -

Thank you for your comments. Written public comment received before the hearing is distributed to members before the meeting as part of their meeting package, and as a supplemental package in cases where the meeting package has been issued, such as in this instance. When the Commission hears public comment, it will be entered into the record.

Respectfully,

J



Jason Martin

Preservation Planner
Department of Planning and Development
Joseph A. Doorley Municipal Building
444 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
jmartin@providenceri.gov
(401) 680-8517
Fax: (401) 680-8492
Call to Connect | PVD311
TTY Relay: via 711

From: Carolyn Mark <carolyn.mark.ri@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 23, 2024 3:54 PM
To: Martin, Jason <jmartin@providenceri.gov>
Cc: Bill Stone [REDACTED]
Subject: [EXTERNAL] 118-126 Benevolent Street

Dear Mr. Martin,

My husband Bill and I live at 37 Cooke Street. I happen to have a Masters in City Planning, so I understand all too well the tensions associated with developments such as the one proposed on this vacant lot, particularly given that it is in an historic district.

Bill and I are generally in favor of the plan to build multiple dwellings on this lot as we are both well aware of how desperate our city is to increase the housing stock at multiple price points. I suspect we are more open to density than perhaps some of our neighbors.

I am concerned, however, about the tree canopy, and fail to understand why houses that are under 1500sqft require detached 2-car garages. Our house is over 6000sqft and we have no garage at all, which I think is true of many historic homes. While I see the value of accounting for parking so as to not overly crowd the street parking situation, it would seem to me that building two-car garages precludes the replacement of some of the trees that will be lost. Of course, another option would be to build two houses instead of three. Either way, it seems to me that the tree canopy ought to be taken into consideration since the loss of those trees will leave a significant hole in the canopy on that street.

We hope it's not too late for such concerns to be taken into consideration, and would be grateful for a response. We're not yet sure if we can attend the meeting on Monday.

Kind regards,

Carolyn

From: [Carolyn Mark](#)
To: [Martin, Jason](#)
Cc: [Bill Stone](#)
Subject: Re: [EXTERNAL] 118-126 Benevolent Street
Date: Monday, August 26, 2024 8:58:56 AM

Thank you.

Carolyn and Bill

Carolyn Mark, Mediator (she/her/hers)

Carolyn.Mark.RI@gmail.com

(401) 862-0354



My [CliftonStrengths](#): Harmony | Communication | Arranger | Responsibility | Input

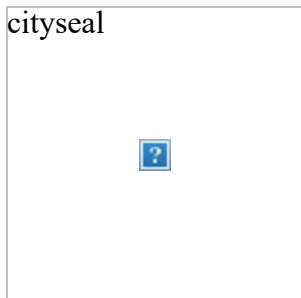
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Jason Martin

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TTY Relay: via 711

From: Carolyn Mark <carolyn.mark.ri@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, August 23, 2024 3:54 PM
To: Martin, Jason <jmartin@providenceri.gov>
Cc: Bill Stone <williamcstoneri@gmail.com>

Subject: [EXTERNAL] 118-126 Benevolent Street

Dear Mr. Martin,

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Kind regards,

Carolyn

Carolyn Mark, Mediator (she/her/hers)

Carolyn.Mark.RI@gmail.com

(401) 862-0354

From: [Martin, Jason](#)
To: ["Lauren Allister"](#)
Cc: [Joshua Kennedy](#)
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] New Benevolent Street Development Proposal
Date: Thursday, August 22, 2024 8:50:03 AM

Hi Lauren and Joshua -

Thank you for your comments. Written public comment received before the hearing is distributed to members as part of their meeting package.

When the Commission hears public comment, it will be entered into the record.

Respectfully,

J



Jason Martin
Preservation Planner
Department of Planning and Development
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From: Lauren Allister
Sent: Wednesday, August 21, 2024 6:35 PM
To: Martin, Jason <jmartin@providenceri.gov>
Cc: Joshua Kennedy
Subject: [EXTERNAL] New Benevolent Street Development Proposal

Mr. Martin,

I hope this email finds you well. My name is Lauren Allister, and I am writing on behalf of myself and my husband, Joshua Kennedy. We are residents of 5 Cooke Street and have been part of the Historic District since 2017.

I am writing upon hearing about the proposed development on the land between 118 and 126 Benevolent Street. I understand that the HDC has the authority to state that the proposed development is too dense for our neighborhood, as it would likely be an active detriment to both the area's historical significance and livability.

We share the Commission's deep love of our neighborhood and desire to maintain its prosperity and natural beauty. This is why we ask the HDC to strongly consider opposing this proposal as it stands now. While we support development in the name of progress and

amplifying the community's existing value, we believe that the developers who have bought this land seek to build these homes without regard for the historical importance of the land beneath them and the surrounding community. We would like the HDC to consider its responsibility in preserving the nature, beauty, and importance of Benevolent Street and the Historic District when hearing this proposal.

A collection of 3 40-foot homes, in both height and density would drastically alter the appearance of our neighborhood. Additionally, the construction of so many new buildings could kill many of the existing trees and plant life on and around the bought land, leaving a large number of wildlife vulnerable and without a natural habitat.

When this land is developed, we hope that it is done so in a respectful and deliberate manner that will welcome new residents who love their home and neighborhood as much as we do.

With deep gratitude,

Lauren Allister and Joshua Kennedy
5 Cooke Street

JP COUTURE, ARCHITECT, INC.

Jon-Paul Couture, AIA

In 2004 Jon-Paul founded Couture Design Associates, Inc. in Providence after working for nearly 13 years at the leading architectural firm in Newport, Rhode Island where he was an Associate. He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Roger Williams University in 1992 and is a registered architect in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. His focus has been on new custom residential projects, private schools, the planning of country houses in estate settings, historic preservation and renovations in Rhode Island and along the east coast including Hancock Point in Maine, Nantucket, Boston, New York and Sarasota Florida.

Over the last 28 years Jon-Paul has been a project designer and manager and has been responsible for over 100 residential projects and institutional buildings for local private high schools such as Portsmouth Abbey and Tabor Academy where he was the project designer for their award-winning Marine Science Facility. In higher education he completed numerous projects at Newport's Salve Regina University with construction budgets ranging from \$100,000.00 to \$15,000,000.00. His long-standing love for residential architecture has informed his designs with sensitivity to the existing fabric of historic structures and the context in which new projects are to be built. Past and present projects show a respect for tradition while providing for today's needs and changing lifestyles with an emphasis on high-quality construction.

In his spare time Jon-Paul volunteers for numerous organizations related to Preservation and the Arts with a particular interest in the built environment of Providence and programs that support creativity and advancement for children.

JP COUTURE, ARCHITECT, INC.

Affiliations

American Institute of Architects
2014-Present, Fellow – Royal Society of Arts
2006-2019, Board of Trustees, Providence Preservation Society
2016-2018-President, Providence Preservation Society
2015-Present, Board Member – International House
2013-2018 (Trustee) - Historic New England
2014-Present, Properties Committee – Historic New England
2009-2017 Commissioner, Providence Historic District Commission
2008-2012 Board Member, Providence Revolving Fund
1998-2004 Board Member, Providence CityArts! for Youth

Honors and Publications

February 1996 cover story “Renewal in Newport” **Architectural Digest**
1996 Newport Historical Society Honor Award “Rockry Hall”
1997 Newport Historical Society Honor Award “Fairlawn”
1999 Segment on “Restore America with Bob Villa” Rockry Hall
2004 **Private Newport** features two residential projects designed by JP Couture.
2005 AIA Honor Award for the Design of Tabor Academy’s new Marine Science Facility
2005 AIA Honor Award for the Interiors of St. Andrew’s School’s McCulloch Performing Arts Center Interiors.
2006 **New York Times** article “The House of Worth”
2007 **Spectacular Homes of New England**
2007 **Rhode Island Monthly** article “At Home”
2008 **Rhode Island Monthly** article “Vintage Rooms”
2009 **Newport Villas, The Revival Styles, 1885-1935**; Michael Kathrens, W.W. Norton & Company
2011 **Design New England** article “Newport Follies”
2012 **Planning Magazine** article “Preserve and Protect”
2015 **Architecture Here and There** article “Flemish “park” on Bellevue”
2017 **Newport Harbor Guide** “A Grand First Impression”
2020 **The Adventures of a Narrative Gardener: Creating a Landscape of Memory**; Ronald Lee Fleming, Giles Publishing
2021 **Avenue Magazine** article “Landscape Artists”

CREDENTIALS OF DAVID SCHWARTZ

Owner and operator of Schwartz Tree & Landscape since 1984
Practicing Arborist since 1969, licensed State of RI #123, Consulting Arborist
International Society of Arboriculture – Certified Arborist NE-0545
Member National Tree Care Industry Association
Member American Society of Consulting Arborists
Member Rhode Island Nursery Landscape Association

Master Gardener with University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension since 1987
Inducted into the Master Gardener 'Hall of Fame' year 1997
Instructor for Master Gardener course from 1988-2001 & 2008 - 2010
Frequent lecturer for Garden Clubs and Industry Groups
Presenter - URI Master Gardener 'Advanced Training' 11/11/95 & 2008
Presenter - URI Greenshare "Field Day" 1995, & 4/18/98
Attended URI Greenshare 'Winter School' 1996, 1997, 1998 & 2004
Completed URI Greenshare 'Short Course' 1999

Graduate University of Massachusetts 'Green School' 1994

Presenter at 5th Annual Conference RI Tree Council 'Building with Trees' 1997

Presenter Cranston Conservation Commission 'Tree Preservation' 1996

Lecturer on plant material and cultural practices for University of Rhode Island's Landscape Architecture & Arboriculture Courses

Lecturer for Rhode Island School of Design – Landscape Architecture Department

Tour Guide for RISD 'Landscape Architecture Course' – 10/16/96 & presentation for
'Landscape Architecture Course' May 1998

Presenter at Rhode Island Spring Flower & Garden Show – 1995, 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004

Instructor RI Urban & Community Forestry Council – 9/20/95 & 10/2/2000

Presenter for RI Wild Plant Society on 'Plant Material' – 5/16/96
& 'Construction Damage to Trees' – 12/3/99

Presenter for the Associated Landscape Contractors of Massachusetts; April 25, 2000 – Pruning & Cultural Practices; 'The good, the bad & the ugly'

Coventry Conservation Commission – Presentation 4/11/2000 'Preserving the Value of Trees'

Presenter at 'Building with Trees' conference National Arbor Day Foundation; March 2001 Nebraska City

Presenter for Lesco Massachusetts Winter Program 'Pruning & Cultural Practices' 2/21/01
Lesco New Jersey Winter Landscape Conference

Authored two articles for TREE CARE INDUSTRY

July 2001 issue, Article titled: 'De-Construction; Preserving Trees & Soil during Construction'

February 2002 issue, Article titled: 'A Lion's Tale; A Photo Essay'

Presenter RI Nursery & Landscape Association – 1/31/02

Presenter Massachusetts Arborist Association – 4/23/02

Presenter at Pennsylvania Community Forestry Conference; October 18, 2002 – Pruning & Cultural Practices;
'The good, the bad & the ugly'

Presenter for Michigan Green Industry Association; March 6, 2003 – Pruning & Cultural Practices 'The good,
the bad & the ugly'

Presenter for RI Association of Conservation Commissions; May 24, 2003 – Construction Damage; 'The quiet
epidemic'

Presenter for the Michigan Green Industry Association; February 2004 - 'From the Drafting Board to a Healthy
Mature Property'

Presenter at the International Society of Arboriculture National Conference; Pittsburg, Pennsylvania; August 9,
2004 – Pruning & Cultural Practices 'The good, the bad & the ugly'

Presenter for the Tree Care Industry Association; November 11, 2005 – Pruning & Cultural Practices 'The
good, the bad & the ugly'

Authored two articles for THE LANDSCULPTOR; a publication of the Michigan Green Industry Association

February 2005 issue, Article titled: 'We Need to Save a Tree'

February 2006 issue, Article titled: 'Landscaping for the Future'

Authored article for TREE CARE INDUSTRY magazine, the official publication of the Tree Care Industry
Association, April 2007, titled '*Battle of the Beech*'.

Tree Warden for Town of Coventry: 2003 – 2008

Authored article for TREE CARE INDUSTRY magazine, the official publication of the Tree Care Industry
Association, December 2010, titled '*Bad Pruning is an Expensive way to Save Money*'

Presenter: Plant Maintenance Tour; Roger Williams Park Botanical Center – May 22, 2010

Presenter to the Cranston City Council about the poor pruning done by the Public Works Department on the
Rolfe Square Locust trees – September 27, 2010.

02/01/11 – Presenter for the Advanced URI Master Gardeners; 'Soul of the Plant'

04/05/11 – Presenter for the Advanced URI Master Gardeners: ‘Pruning & Cultural Practices’

09/12/11 – Lecturer for PLS-306 URI Horticulture class for Dr. Brian Maynard

11/03/11 – Presenter for Tree Care Industry Association Expo ‘Pruning & Cultural Practices’

02/08/12 – Presenter for the Attleboro, MA Garden Club ‘Pruning & Cultural Practices’

02/29/12 – Presenter for the John Deere Corp., Taunton, MA ‘Pruning & Cultural Practices’

03/24/12 – Presenter for the Advanced URI Master Gardner Training Botanical Center Roger Williams Park

May 2012 - Published article for Tree Care Industry magazine: ‘Pruning: Pieces of the Puzzle’

February 2015 - Tree Risk Assessment Qualification – International Society of Arboriculture

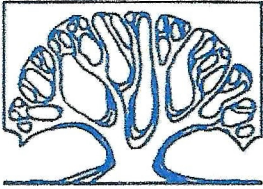
March 2015 - Authored article for TREE CARE INDUSTRY magazine, the official publication of The Tree Care Industry Association, - titled ‘*Customer Service – On the Same Page*’

February 12, 2018 – Presenter for the RINLA Apprenticeship program – ‘Pruning & Cultural Practices’

1/24/19 – Presenter for RI Woodland Partnership – ‘Construction Damage to Trees & Soil’

10/24/19 – Presenter for HalfMoon Education, Inc., Natick, MA – ‘The Tree Course: Health, Maintenance and Design’.

David L. Schwartz, President, Schwartz Tree Care, Inc.
P. O. Box 10301, Cranston, RI 02910 401-941-4440



SCHWARTZ

TREE CARE

LANDSCAPING

P.O. Box 10301, Cranston, Rhode Island 02910 (401) 941-4440

August 26, 2024

118-126 BENEVOLENT ST PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT IMPACT REPORT ON HISTORIC TREES AND CANOPY

ASSIGNMENT

To determine the effects on the neighborhood if a proposed development is allowed to proceed.

DESCRIPTION OF LOT

The undeveloped lot in question is 109' 6.75" deep with a frontage of 150' 4.5". Within this area lies one of the most lush naturalized canopies on the Historic East side.

TREE INVENTORY

All measurements are in DBH [Diameter Breast Height] 4.5' above grade

Fraxinus pennsylvanica 'Summit'

1. 10" DBH
2. 8"
3. 8"
4. 11"

Quercus rubra

5. 2 leader, 16" and 18"
6. 19"

Acer pseudoplatanus

7. 2 leader 11", 11"

8. 3"

9. 6"

10. 7"

11. 3"

12. 4"

13. 2.5"

14. 9"

15. 9"

16. 8"

17. 11"

18. 9"

19. 12"

20. 16"

21. 12"

22. 2"

Acer platanoides

23. 2"

24. 3"

25. 2.5"

26. 2.75"

27. 4"

28. 2.5"

29. 3"

30. 7"

- 31. 7"
- 32. 1.75"
- 33. 7"
- 34. 3"
- 35. 1.75"
- 36. 7"
- 37. 8"
- 38. 7"
- 39. 8"
- 40. 13"
- 41. 1.75"
- 42. 3"
- 43. 19"
- 44. 4"
- 45. 5"
- 46. 3"
- 47. 2"
- 48. 1.25"
- 49. 2.5"
- 50. 1.75"
- 51. 3"
- 52. 12"

Prunus serotina

- 53. 13"
- 54. 8"

Tilia cordata

- 55. 14"

Morus

56. 9”

Fraxinus

57. 10 4” stalks

SURROUNDING PROPERTIES

To the West of the area in question, lies a Historic border, containing a greenhouse and a linear grouping of 7 *Cedrus atlantica* ‘Glauca’, or Atlas Blue Cedar. The branches of these trees extend 23’ beyond the fence line. Abutting the rear of the property, there is a 35” DBH *Acer pseudoplatanus* belonging to a home on George St. According to the Providence tree ordinance, this is a significant tree that is protected by law. The branches extend 26” over the property in question.

EFFECTS OF THE CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

The proposed construction would alter the complete lot. All of the soil and tree roots within would be removed. The 26’ of the Atlas Blue Cedar branches that would have to be removed to the property line to gain equipment access. This would render these historic trees aesthetically useless. The loss of root system will kill them. The same is true of the Significant Maple on the adjoining George street property. The East border is one of the richest canopies left in this neighborhood. The loss of this lush, existing canopy will never be regained. Besides the loss of a sheltering environment, this will create a heat island that will detrimentally change the nature of the surrounding neighborhood. The loss of the viable soil profile will severely limit all plant result. In exhibit 3A of the HDC Conceptual Review #2, the drawings suggest that newly planted trees would attain a size as depicted in the drawing. With a limited planting pit, I don’t see how this could be possible. I have observed the newer construction methods on the East side of Providence. Neither the tree root systems or the soil profile is left intact. The Balton Rd. project lost 6-7 mature Beech trees within 3 years of construction because neither the tree roots or the health of the soil as a growing medium was taken into account. There is one remaining mature Oak left. This Oak is in the process of dying. Most, if not all of the mature trees that were left at the Slater Av. project are in the process of dying. With proper planning, this is avoidable. More than trees will be lost by the proposed construction. Gone also will be the economic, social, and environmental benefits that these trees provide the neighborhood and all that live near. These benefits include clean air, lower energy costs associated with reduced air conditioning and heating, and improved storm water management.

On any Historic property that I have worked on in my 55 year career, there is an interaction between the trees and the architecture. The trees provide a nurturing setting for the architecture. Creating elegant living spaces is the hallmark of the Historical district.. I am not seeing that in this project.

General Standard 7 of the Providence Historic District General Standards states that “[w]here historic architectural or site features are determined by the Commission to contribute to the historic character of the property or district, proposed alterations or additions...shall be reviewed more stringently.” The trees and canopy on 118-126 Benevolent and the adjacent lots that will be affected contribute to the historic character of the district and should trigger more stringent review by the Commission.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David L. Schwartz - PRES". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'D'.

David L. Schwartz, Pres.
Schwartz Tree Care, Inc.
Consulting Arborist
RI Arborist #123
ISA Member #NE-0504

Enclosures: photographs

PICTURES

1. This picture is from a previous development. These trees were planted in 2018. Their development is slow at best, and will never attain the size or scale of the parent property. This is due to the soil damage done in the development process.
2. This is the interface between the parent property and the newer development. Notice the difference in scale.
3. This is the existing East face of the property in question.
4. This is the existing West face.
5. South face.
6. North face.
7. This picture is from the Slater Av. development. Because of the construction methods, this tree will last only a few more years.
8. These dying trees are the rule rather than the exception.