

**PROJECT REVIEW**

**CASE 24.079, 118-126 BENEVOLENT STREET, Vacant lot (POWER-COOKE)**

Vacant lots within the Hope-Power-Cooke Streets NRHD.



Arrow indicates 118-126 Benevolent Street



Arrow indicates project location, looking north.

**Applicant/Architect:** KITE Architects, One Central Street, Providence, RI 02907

**Owner:** Cooke Twenty-Five Realty, 42 W 39<sup>th</sup> Street, New York, NY 10018

**Proposal:** The scope of work proposed consists of New Construction and includes:

- The applicant is requesting the new construction of three single-family residences with detached garages.

**Issues:** The following issues are relevant to this application:

- The existing properties 118-126 Benevolent St. are to be subdivided into three equal lots, each with  $\geq 50'$  wide street frontage. Upon each lot will be a new three-story single-family residence (each with 1490sf footprint, 40' height) over full basements with detached garages (each with 620sf footprint, 20' height). Private driveway access for each property will extend from Benevolent St. to the north end of each site. Some regrading of the lots will be required.
- At the July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting, the matter was continued by the Commission which had requested additional information be submitted showing massing studies of the proposed buildings in context with the immediate area, including streetscapes of the proposed construction for the north and south sides of Benevolent Street, between Cooke and Governor Streets.
- An Exhibit has been submitted from the applicant showing the requested information.
- Since the July 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting information has been submitted to the Commission in the form of a letter from the Rhode Island Historical Society (RIHS, dated 08/07/24, PC Exhibit 1) stating that they have a restrictive covenant on the property (dated December 1974, PC Exhibit 2). In the letter the RIHS states that in 2013, in conjunction with the RI Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, the Providence Revolving Fund and neighbors, they undertook an extensive planning process before selling the land where it was determined that three parcels were the appropriate divisions of land for the parcel that included 253 George Street and 118-126 Benevolent Street. These parcels were one larger parcel to the north along George Street and two equal sized parcels on Benevolent Street. It is appropriate for the Commission to consider this information in the formulation of any decision regarding the property.
- Prior to the August 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, a letter was submitted from the City Forester regarding a significant tree abutting the property and the siting of the proposed buildings as well as overall canopy loss.
- At the August 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, the item was continued at the request of the applicant in order to allow for the submission of a revised Exhibit to the Commission addressing the City Forester's letter.
- The applicant subsequently submitted a revised application to the Commission with a change in the proposed siting of a garage.
- The Commission has received additional correspondence from the City Forester. In this letter the Forester states that the revised plan is compliant with the Ordinance, while stating concerns that the overall effect on the significant tree may still be detrimental. In his letter he also includes information related to the abutting parcel at 112 Benevolent Street, which does not contain "significant" trees, but does contain several mature trees whose root systems are also located on the subject parcel, and the proposed driveway abutting would have a detrimental effect on the trees to include the potential loss of 6,000 sq. ft. of canopy.
- It has been requested that the Board render a decision on the revised application presented, which is for the new construction of three single family residences with detached garages. It is appropriate for the Commission to consider both the official and the public correspondence it has received.

**Recommendations:** The staff recommends the PHDC make the following findings of fact:

- a) 118-126 Benevolent Street are currently vacant parcels of approximately 16,427 sq. ft. in the R-1 zone within the Power-Cooke local historic district, being also located in the Hope-Power-Cooke Streets National Register Historic District;
- b) The revised application for New Construction is considered complete for conceptual review; and,
- c) The following Standards may be relevant to the proposed new construction and its appropriateness -- Standard 7: "When historical architectural or site features are determined by the Commission to contribute to the historical character of the property or district, proposed alterations or additions affecting such features shall be judged more stringently," and Standard 8: "New additions, exterior alterations or new construction shall not destroy historic materials or general features that characterize the property. The new work may be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of the property and the surrounding neighborhood, to protect the historic integrity of the property and the site."