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**Bristol Historical District Commission**  
**Atten: Nicholas Toth**  
**235 High Street, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor**  
**Bristol RI 0289**

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: **Project Narrative for HDC Concept Review**  
PROPERTY ADDRESS: **Single Family Residence conversion of existing former mixed-use (1) apartment over (2) retail spaces**  
**99 Bradford Street, Bristol Historic District.**

Historic District Commissioners:

JHL Tecture PC, (JHLT) has recently conferred with the new owner of 99 Bradford Street, Carl Pearson, who has been in discussions with the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society and is seeking a harmonious renovation of a historic structure which no longer meets the needs of the times. The following Project Narrative addresses a Concept Review of the Historical /district Commission and will illustrate the design steps taken to resolve the conversion of this structure to reflect the changing land use market and housing goals of the town and while maintaining some historical continuity in the district. Our firm has been involved with such conversions, and we find that there is a solution that listened to all the parties involved and will result in an upgraded structure that will fit with its neighborhood while meeting current energy codes, as well as addressing the privacy and related issues of such a residential conversion.

**PROJECT UNDERSTANDING:**

The context of the building situation is that the two-story structure was built in the 1900-1913 timeframe and had two retail units at the ground floor with an apartment above in a format popular to that era. It is on Lots 99 & 101 and is a 2,522 SF, 2-story structure on a 2,178 SF lot. For many years the ground floor commercial spaces housed shops and, notably, for many years, a local barber shop.

The Bradford Street façade features two large wood storefront windows cornice and sidelights flanking an indented, covered entry alcove for the two doorways to each establishment and its connected apartment above in a mixed-use duplex arrangement. A wooden cornice of approximately 18” depth projects over the retail windows (and property line, apparently) and is continuous across the entire front (south-facing) façade.

The upper apartment windows are conventional two over two, double hung units of approximately 32 x 54 inches, matching those of the neighborhood. There is a flat roof (rubber membrane) common to such retail buildings of that time. The structure was clad with a yellow vinyl siding in the late 1980s.

The proposed renovation is to create a single-family residence, preserving almost all the framing and footprint of the original building. Interior partitions would be rearranged, including stairways, but the overall volume and footprint would be largely intact.

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The issues we are addressing here are those affecting the converted exterior appearance and are limited to just the ground floor elevation of the frontage along Bradford Street.

Converting commercial spaces to residential uses has become a current issue necessary to the changing land use patterns of our present era. There is no longer a demand for such streetside retail spaces, especially when they are not on a main commercial thoroughfare like Hope Street. Residential conversions have been made to similar former shops along High Street and recently at 86 State Street.

Moreover, there has been a critical shortage of residential units in the town. We find this type of conversion fits with current goals for the town and the remaining issue is the compatibility of such a conversion with Bristol's heritage and the Historic District of which it is a part.

Our approach as architects has been to understand the context and listen to the needs of both the new owners and the concerns of the historical preservation community and the Historic District Commission.

This we have done, and thinking visually, we have prepared some sketches that illustrate our process and the conversations we have had with these parties. In the sketches that follow, we will show the process of deliberation and design that has evolved and will enable determining a proposed solution that we hope is inclusive of the concerns of both the owners' comfort and equity, as well as the community's goals of harmonious development respecting the past while adapting to the present.

Adaptive Reuse has been a hallmark of much of our firm's work, and we begin our process by what we like to call "listening to the building." In this case the building is familiar and appreciated as a part of the great Bristol fabric. We noted the storefront bays and the cornice and found them to be significant elements to be maintained if possible. The two entrances would no longer be needed and so our first approach was to keep all intact and simply change the front entrance to a single door and, in imagining living in such a ground floor, directly adjacent to the sidewalk, we immediately saw a need to create more privacy for the inhabitants (and security) and so added a low bulkhead wall to the retail window bays, to mitigate such a large glass exposure, both thermally and socially.

The first drawing is the proposed elevation prepared by the owners and presented to the Bristol Historical Preservation Society as a way of seeking review and comments. That review resulted in our firm being asked to explore other options that represented more of the historical precedent (the retail storefront bays, primarily) in the design.

The initial sketch shows a slightly modified preserved structure approach, yet with an added short "bulkhead" type lower wall raising the front storefront sill, mitigating the privacy issues of the storefront to residential uses. This would have a single front door but does little else to reflect the new residential use of the building. The flat roof likewise does not indicate a residential pattern found on the adjacent residential structures of the neighborhood. We listened and explored further.

The next sketch, Concept A, features a sloped roof and a further articulation of the large glass window bays becoming a residential setting and even explored incorporating wood columns to create a pattern not unusual to the residential doorways found in this era and the town. The large window bays still posed the similar problems of southern and streetside traffic exposure noted before and so we went back to the drawing board, retaining the sloped roof which worked both functionally and contextually.

As we grew to imagine more of the living situation behind the large glass exposures and saw the building design also evolving into a residence we simplified the entry alcove and maintained the significant bay footprint and cornice eave. We added corner shear panels to the ground floor windows of the retail bays to provide better structure and thermal and privacy performance. This also aligned the first-floor glazing to the upper windows. We find the resulting design seen in Concept B incorporates the objectives of both the owners

and yet maintains the historical footprint and street pattern. Concept C is similar to B but simplifies the column to square and provides a bit more continuity with the past a more conventional ground floor living room window.

We feel this process has been fruitful and the design has evolved as we considered the many factors of historical forces and the adaptation to new land uses in the downtown.

We look forward to discussing these at the Concept Review at the next meeting with the HDC and are listening, as always, to find the best solutions.

### Existing Structure Spring 2026



Proposed conversion elevation



**1** BRADFORD ST. ELEVATION  
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

Initial thoughts



Concept A



Concept B



Concept C

