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# ZONING ADMINISTRATIVE MANUAL

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THE CITY *of* PHILADELPHIA  
Rev. August 22, 2012

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# Philadelphia Zoning Administrative Manual

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# Introduction

BEFORE YOU ASK FOR OUR APPROVAL, WE'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU OUR HELP

## DISCLAIMER:

*The Zoning Administrative Manual (ZAM) is intended as a general guide to users of Title 14 of the Philadelphia Code. It is NOT a substitute for any of the City of Philadelphia's adopted ordinances or codes. If this ZAM conflicts with Title 14 (or any other title of The Philadelphia Code), the provisions of The Philadelphia Code supersede the contents of this Manual.*

## Foreword

First of all, thank you for your interest in the development of Philadelphia. We understand that the city's Zoning Code can be daunting at first, which is why we created this Zoning Administrative Manual (ZAM) just for you. Whether you are a developer, an investor, or a concerned citizen, this step-by-step guide will help you navigate through Philadelphia's zoning process with the most up-to-date information on procedures, forms, and best practices.

## How to Use this Manual

### PART A: Procedures - How to Get a Zoning Approval

**Chapter 1** is an introductory overview of zoning administration in Philadelphia. In this chapter, learn about the reviewing and decision-making agencies, what kind of development activities require zoning approval, and how long to expect the zoning process to take.

**Chapters 2-7** are organized by type of zoning process, ranging from "by-right" development to projects that require a variance or City Council action. Each chapter provides step-by-step instructions on completing each process successfully.

### PART B: Zoning Toolbox and Other Resources

**The Zoning Permit Application Checklist** helps keep track of application materials and prerequisite plan reviews.

**The Development Standards Applicability Checklist** helps determine which standards in Chapter 14-700 (Development Standards) of the Zoning Code apply to a project.

**The Sky Plane Manual** provides step-by-step guidance on how to comply with the Sky Plane bulk controls for CMX-4 and CMX-5 properties. (See §14-701(5)(b) of the Zoning Code.)



**A Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board**

**Hearings** provides tips for satisfying the Zoning Code's public and registered community organization notice requirements and helpful guidelines for appearing before the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

**Best Practices for Registered Community Organizations**

includes information on registering a group with the City Planning Commission and recommendations for managing a registered community organization.

**Contacts and Additional Resources** provides information on how to get in touch with the City departments and agencies that may be of assistance to you and points to other City codes, regulations, plans, and online tools to help you navigate Philadelphia's development process.







The background of the page features a large, faint, light gray seal of the City of Philadelphia. The seal is circular with the words "SEAL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA" around the perimeter. In the center is a shield supported by two female figures, with a balance scale above them. The text "1776" is at the bottom of the shield.

# Part A

HOW TO GET A ZONING APPROVAL



# The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

EVEN THE MOST COMPLEX PROJECTS DESERVE A SIMPLE OVERVIEW

Here's where everything regarding the ins and outs of zoning in Philadelphia—and the future of your project—begins. In this chapter, you will learn the basics of zoning in the city, as well as how someone gains approval for a project. Even if you don't think of yourself as a developer, you may be one day when you decide to add an addition to your home or build a garage. Or, if there's development in your neighborhood, this information may help you understand the zoning process.

## When am I required to get a Zoning Approval?

Zoning is usually the first step in the development approval process. Each land use activity must demonstrate that it conforms with Philadelphia's zoning laws - whether it's simply a change in land use, a brand new construction project, or a rehabilitation project. Zoning regulations ensure that the land use, site layout, and building form on every parcel in the City of Philadelphia is compatible with its surrounding context.

Generally, a project will need a zoning approval if it involves:

- Changes of a use of a property
- New construction or additions
- Alterations that result in a change in gross floor area
- Carports, detached private garages, greenhouses and rear yard sheds for homes that are larger than 120 square feet or higher than 8 feet
- Installation of a fence that exceeds the height limits established by the Zoning Code
- Construction of a deck higher than 12" above ground
- Wind energy conversion systems or ground-mounted/freestanding solar collectors
- Creation of off-street parking or reconfiguration of existing parking
- Changes to a property's zoning classification ("zoning map revision")



## Who can apply for a Zoning Approval?

Property owners or agents of the property owner authorized in writing (such as tenants, family members, attorneys, licensed architects, licensed engineers, licensed contractors or licensed expeditors) may file a zoning application. See §14-303(1) of the Zoning Code.

First, check the allowed uses and dimensional standards for the base zoning district. In addition, other development standards may apply such as: form and design, landscape, trees, outdoor lighting, historic preservation, parking, and signage requirements. Next, check for any overlay zoning district requirements that apply to the subject property. An overlay district is superimposed on a base district and modifies or supplements the base zoning regulations.

## A PRIMER ON USING THE ZONING CODE

- 1) Look up the base and overlay districts that apply to the subject property on the City's web-based Zoning Overlay tool. Visit <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>
- 2) Determine if the proposed use is permitted in the base district by reviewing the Use Tables in §14-602 of the Zoning Code. The table points out any applicable use-specific standards for the proposed use (for example, a required permanent fence around the perimeter of a market farm) in §14-603.
- 3) Review the Dimensional Tables in §14-701 of the Zoning Code to see the permissible lot area, lot width, open area, building height, setbacks, and/or gross floor area related to the district.
- 4) The **Development Standards Applicability Checklist** in Part B is designed to help one determine which development regulations will apply. Check to see if Form & Design Standards (§14-703), Open Space and Natural Resources Standards (§14-704), Landscaping and Tree Standards (§14-705), Fencing and Wall Standards (§14-706), and/or Outdoor Lighting Standards (§14-707) apply to the proposed project. Applicability will depend on the base district, the proposed use, the lot size and the building size.
- 5) Review Chapter §14-800 to determine the vehicle and bicycle parking, and off-street loading requirements related to the base district.
- 6) Will the proposed use need an accessory sign? Review Chapter §14-900 to determine the sign requirements of the base district.
- 7) Other chapters of interest may be:
  - Subdividing lots onto newly platted streets? See §14-708.
  - In a historic district or interested in a historic property? See Chapter §14-1000.



# The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

EVEN THE MOST COMPLEX PROJECTS DESERVE A SIMPLE OVERVIEW

## Who evaluates my Zoning Application?

### The Decision-Makers:

**The Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I)** issues all zoning permits. L&I applies the code's prescriptive standards to determine whether a project complies with the code. For example, if the subject property is zoned RSA-1 where the height limit is 38 feet, L&I will verify that the proposed building height is 38 feet or less.

**The Zoning Board of Adjustment (Zoning Board)** makes discretionary decisions on zoning applications known as special exceptions and variances. The Zoning Board uses criteria that are outlined in the Zoning Code. For example, if the project proposes a variance to allow a commercial use in a zoning district that only permits residential uses, the Zoning Board will ask, among other questions, whether there are unique physical conditions at the property that prevent the owner from using the property as a residence. The Zoning Board also hears any appeal of a decision made by L&I.

**The City Planning Commission (Planning Commission)** makes decisions on two types of zoning applications:

- Subdivisions, or the creation of lots on newly platted streets.
- Minor amendments to Master Plans. Five special districts (RMX-1, RMX-2, SP-INS, SP-ENT and SP-STa) are regulated according to a "master plan," a land use development plan in the form of maps, text, and graphics. The Planning Commission has the authority to approve small changes to the master plan; otherwise, the amendment is considered a major change that requires a legislative amendment by City Council.

The Planning Commission, in addition to its decision-making roles for subdivisions and master plan amendments, makes advisory recommendations on certain zoning applications:

- Recommendations for approval or disapproval on all zoning applications that will be decided by the Zoning Board or City Council.
- The Civic Design Review Committee, a subcommittee of the Planning Commission, makes advisory recommendations on large projects that meet the thresholds for Civic Design Review (see Chapter 6).



**City Council** is the legislative body that adopts zoning amendments. To change the zoning classification for a property (called a zoning map amendment or a zoning map revision), City Council must adopt an ordinance implementing the requested change.

## The Reviewers:

There are several reviewers that examine zoning plans and make technical recommendations to L&I. This process is known as “prerequisite plan review.” The City Charter and Code give reviewers the authority to evaluate and comment on certain aspects of a zoning application. For example, the Streets Department will review a parking lot design to ensure it doesn’t negatively impact traffic flow, or the Philadelphia Water Department will conduct a review of a stormwater management plan, or the Planning Commission will review site plans for projects within a Master Plan district. All the applicable reviewers must approve plans before L&I can issue its final decision on a zoning permit application. The departments that may play a role in prerequisite plan review include:

- The City Planning Commission
- The Philadelphia Water Department (“Water Department”)
- The Philadelphia Streets Department (“Streets Department”)
- The Art Commission
- The Historical Commission\*

See the “Building Blocks of Philadelphia” diagram on the following pages for details on what each agency reviews.

## \*A SPECIAL NOTE ON THE HISTORICAL COMMISSION

### Historic Property Construction, Alteration or Demolition

*The Historical Commission must approve all construction, alteration and demolition activities for registered historic buildings, structures, sites, or objects or for buildings, structures, sites, or objects located within historic districts before L&I can issue a building permit (see Chapter §14-1000 of the Zoning Code). The building permit follows after the zoning permit process. Even though Historical Commission approval is not required before the zoning permit, early Historical Commission approval is recommended so that any historic preservation issues are identified early in the concept and design stage of the project.*

### Historic District Designations

*Any person or organization may nominate a building, complex of buildings, structure, site, object, or district of preservation. The Planning Commission must review and comment on the proposed creation of a historic district. The Historical Commission will take the Planning Commission’s recommendation into account when it decides whether to approve or disapprove the designation. (See §14-1004 of the Zoning Code for more information.)*



# The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

EVEN THE MOST COMPLEX PROJECTS DESERVE A SIMPLE OVERVIEW

## Summary Table of Decision-Makers

TYPE OF APPLICATION	ADVISORY AND DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY				
	✓ = Decision-making authority				
	L&I	Zoning Board	Planning Commission	Civic Design Review Committee	City Council
Zoning Permit	✓				
Special Exception		✓	(advisory)		
Variance		✓	(advisory)		
Subdivision			✓		
Civic Design Review				(advisory)	
Zoning Map Amendment			(advisory)		✓
Minor Master Plan Amendment			✓		
Major Master Plan Amendment			(advisory)		✓







# THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF PHILADELPHIA



## DECISION-MAKERS

### CITY COUNCIL

City Council is the legislative body for the City of Philadelphia. The powers of City Council related to the Zoning Code include:

- ZONING REMAPPINGS
- ZONING TEXT AMENDMENTS
- MASTER PLAN AMENDMENTS

### ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

The Zoning Board of Adjustment is an independent agency of L&I comprised of five members appointed by the Mayor. The Zoning Board of Adjustment hears and decides appeals in zoning matters, considers special ordinances, and grants special variances. The board handles the following matters:

- APPEALS OF ZONING DECISIONS MADE BY L&I
- DIMENSIONAL & USE VARIANCES
- SPECIAL EXCEPTION APPROVALS

### DEPARTMENT OF LICENSES & INSPECTIONS

L&I is the front door to any development or construction project in the city. As the issuer of permits and licenses and the provider of inspections, L&I ensures public safety and growth within the City of Philadelphia. Here are some of the services provided by L&I:

- USE REGISTRATION PERMIT
- ZONING PERMIT
- CONDITIONAL ZONING PERMIT

### CITY PLANNING

The City Planning Commission is charged with guiding the orderly growth and development of the City of Philadelphia. This involves the Commission in City-wide and community planning as well as project-specific reviews and approvals, such as:

- SUBDIVISION APPROVAL
- FLOODPLAIN APPROVAL
- REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENT ON LOTS LOCATED IN THE WISSAHICKON WATERSHED
- REVIEW OF WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATION FACILITIES
- REVIEW OF PARKING GARAGES
- FACADE REVIEWS
- REVIEW OF LANDSCAPE PLANS





## REVIEWERS

### HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Protecting three centuries of history, the Historical Commission is the regulatory agency responsible for preserving historical structures throughout the City of Philadelphia. Here are the main reasons a project would require the Commission's approval:

- ALTERATIONS TO A REGISTERED HISTORIC PROPERTY
- UNDEVELOPED PROPERTIES IN HISTORIC DISTRICTS

### ART COMMISSION

The Art Commission is responsible for the design of public buildings, works of art acquired by the City, and structures or architectural fixtures that extend over the city's public rights-of-way. Here are some projects that would need the Art Commission approval:

- SIGNS IN CERTAIN AREAS OF CENTER CITY AND OTHER COMMERCIAL CORRIDORS
- PUBLIC ART

### STREETS DEPARTMENT

The Streets Department is responsible for over 2,575 miles of streets and roads in the City of Philadelphia. The Department handles everything from building and maintaining the streets to trash collection and snow removal. Here are the most common reasons to interact with the Streets Department:

- SUBDIVISION REVIEW
- PARKING FACILITIES
- REVIEW OF CURB CUTS

### WATER DEPARTMENT

Whether providing safe water for residents to drink or supplying water for industries to manufacture goods here in Philadelphia, the task of the Water Department is to protect the region's water resources. Here are some projects that would require the Department's permission.

- STORMWATER MANAGEMENT



# The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

EVEN THE MOST COMPLEX PROJECTS DESERVE A SIMPLE OVERVIEW

## How do I get a Zoning Approval?

### Zoning Permits:

There are three main paths to getting a zoning permit from L&I: by right, by special exception, or by variance. In all of these cases, you must complete any applicable prerequisite plan reviews before L&I can issue a decision on your zoning permit application. But, if you still have some prerequisite approvals in the works, you can submit an application form and other available materials to L&I, and L&I will get a head start on its review of your application.

 **FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Please consult Chapter 2

#### 1) By Right (a.k.a. “As-of-Right”)

When the project proposal complies with all the zoning provisions applicable to the property (use, dimensions, parking, signs, etc.), it means an applicant can get a zoning permit from L&I “by-right” without any action by the Zoning Board, Planning Commission, or City Council. Certain large projects must go through an advisory Civic Design Review process (see Chapter 6).



 **FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Please consult Chapter 3

#### 2) By Special Exception

The Zoning Code permits certain uses and development by special exception, which is granted by the Zoning Board if the project is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. Special exception uses are identified by an “S” in the use tables of §14-602 of the Zoning Code. L&I will first review the application, then issue a “referral” so that the applicant can file for a hearing at the Zoning Board. The Zoning Code may also require special exception approval of other aspects of a development proposal, such as signage or parking. The Zoning Board will hold a public hearing and use the criteria specified in §14-303(7) to ensure that the proposal does not adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood. Before the



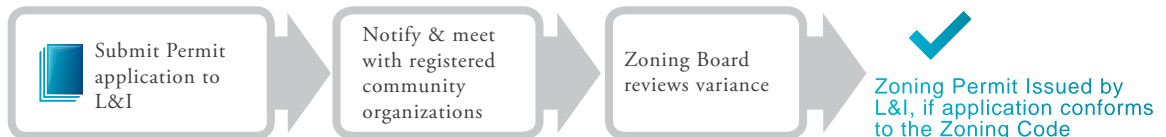
public hearing, the applicant needs to post notice of the hearing on the subject property and notify and meet with registered community organizations in the project area. If the Zoning Board approves of the special exception, the applicant can pick up the zoning permit from L&I.



 **FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Please consult Chapter 4

### 3) By Variance

Sometimes special circumstances prevent projects from conforming to the Zoning Code standards. In these instances, applicants must obtain a variance from the Zoning Board in order to deviate from the zoning standards. L&I will review the application, then issue a “refusal” since the project proposal does not comply with the Zoning Code. The applicant may then choose to either 1) alter the project to make it conform to the Zoning Code, or 2) appeal the refusal to the Zoning Board for approval of the variance. The Zoning Board will hold a public hearing and use the criteria in §14-303(8) of the Zoning Code to verify that there are special circumstances at the property presenting an unnecessary hardship in complying with the Zoning Code. Before the public hearing, the applicant needs to post notice of the hearing on the subject property and notify and meet with registered community organizations in the project area. If the Zoning Board approves of the variance, the applicant can pick up the zoning permit from L&I.





# The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

EVEN THE MOST COMPLEX PROJECTS DESERVE A SIMPLE OVERVIEW

## Special Approvals: Subdivisions and Civic Design Review

Any projects involving subdivisions or civic design review need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission. These reviews can take place concurrently with and on a parallel track to L&I's review of the zoning permit application. However, the applicant needs subdivision approval or a recommendation from the Civic Design Review Committee of the Planning Commission before L&I can issue the zoning permit.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Please consult Chapter 5

### Subdivisions

If the application proposes to subdivide lots onto newly platted streets, L&I will not issue a final zoning permit until **all** of the following has occurred:

- The Planning Commission approves of the subdivision plat.
- The applicant has registered the deed(s) with the Department of Records.
- The Office of Property Assessment has established a tax account for each lot. See §14-304(7) of the Zoning Code for detailed procedures.



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Please consult Chapter 6

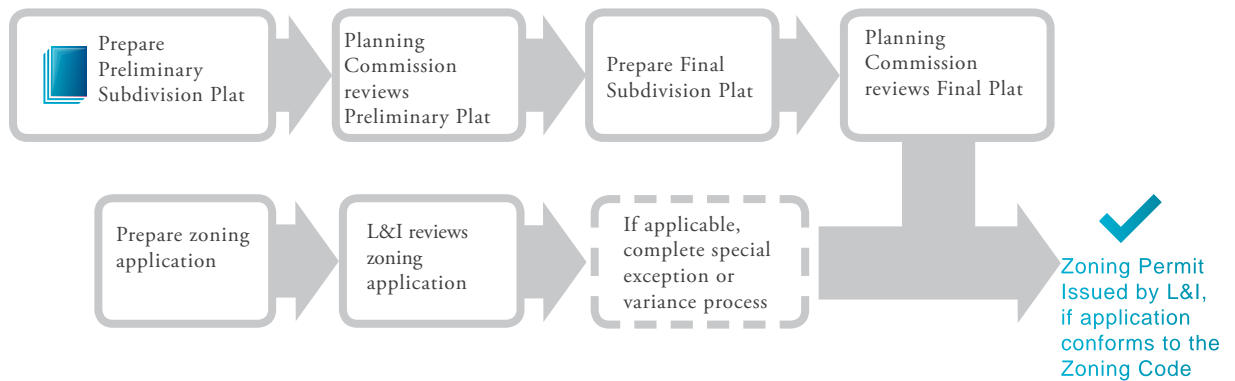
### Civic Design Review

Civic Design Review, carried out by a subcommittee of the Planning Commission (the "Civic Design Review Committee"), applies to major projects with the potential for great impact on the surrounding community.

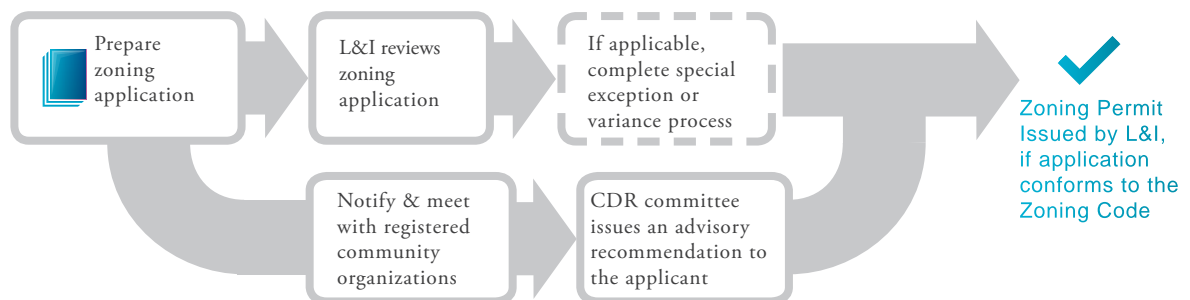
- Before the Committee's meeting, the applicant needs to notify and meet with registered community organizations in the project area to discuss how the project will impact their neighborhoods and any potential design improvements.
- The Committee evaluates and makes advisory recommendations on each project at a public meeting using a set of design guidelines adopted by the Planning Commission.
- The zoning code provides applicants of Civic Design Review projects the option to apply for a zoning permit in two stages. The applicant may choose to complete Civic Design Review during either stage.



## Subdivision Process



## Civic Design Review Process





# The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

EVEN THE MOST COMPLEX PROJECTS DESERVE A SIMPLE OVERVIEW

 **FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
Please consult Chapter 7

## Zoning Map Revisions

### An Overview

Revisions to the zoning map require legislative action by City Council and the Mayor's approval. The request for a zoning map revision may be initiated by a variety of sources, including City Council, the Planning Commission, or a property owner. In any case, City Council must introduce a zoning map revision ordinance and hold a public hearing. The Planning Commission must review and make a recommendation on the ordinance. The zoning map revision becomes law once the Mayor signs the bill.



### Special Procedures for Unique Districts

Master plan districts and neighborhood conservation overlay districts require additional steps in the zoning map revision process.

#### 1) Master Plan Districts

Certain districts (RMX-1, RMX-2, SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STa) are mapped according to a “Master Plan.” In these cases, a master plan must be approved before a zoning map revision ordinance can become effective. Once the master plan is approved and adopted, any future amendments must be approved by either the Planning Commission or City Council. The Planning Commission is responsible for approving minor amendments (such as swapping one permitted land use with another or deviating slightly from the building, parking, landscaping or open area dimensions indicated on the adopted Master Plan), and City Council is responsible for approving all other amendments. For more information, see §14-304(3)(e) of the Zoning Code.



## 2) Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Districts

Neighborhood Conservation Overlay Districts (NCO) are initiated via petition signed by a Local Registered Community Organization located within the proposed district or at least 30% of all property owners and homeowners. The Planning Commission reviews the petition at one or more public meetings and drafts design guidelines for the proposed district before City Council considers the zoning map revision ordinance that establishes the NCO district. City Council cannot adopt a zoning map revision ordinance to establish a NCO district if 51% or more of property owners and homeowners file statements of opposition in writing. For more information, see §14-304(3)(f) of the Zoning Code.

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## What is the average zoning permit processing time?

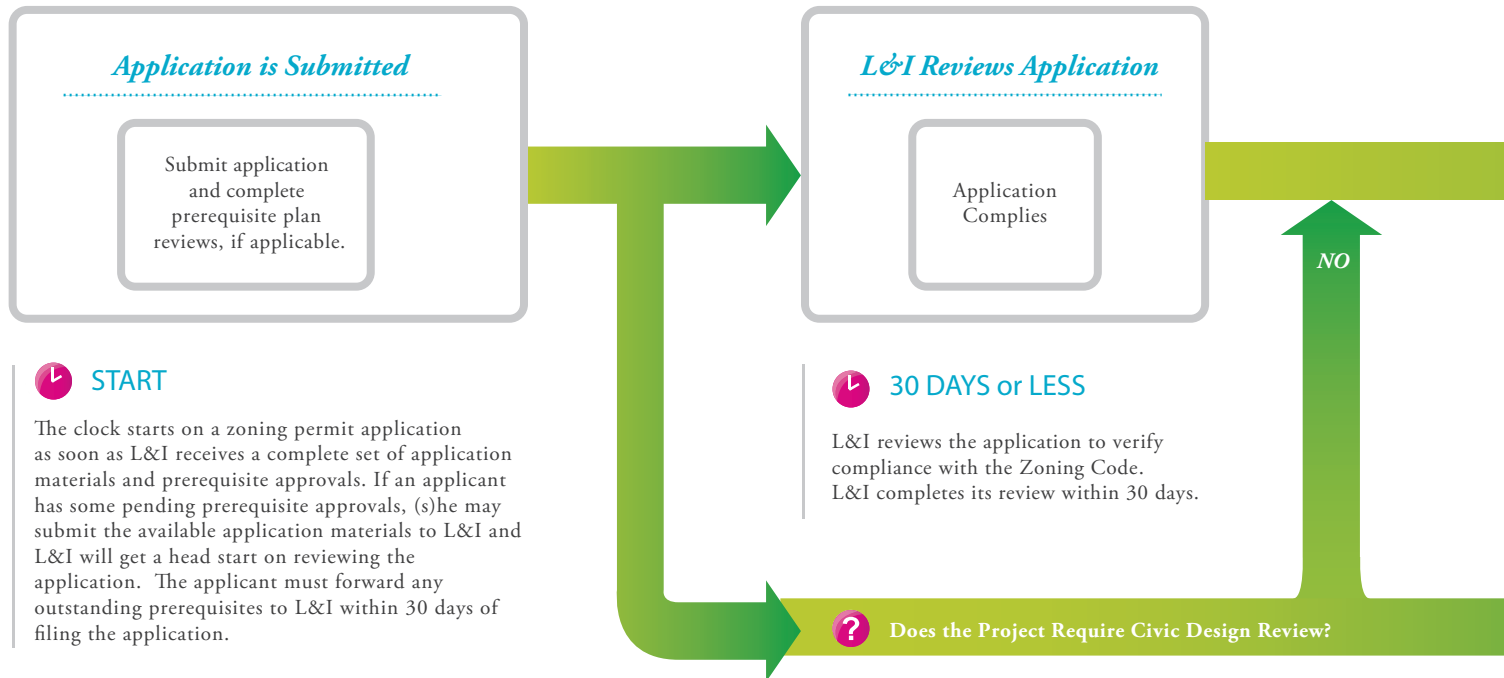
The total Start-to-Finish time for the zoning permit approval process depends on the project. At the short end of the spectrum, L&I will review and approve a by-right project within 30 calendar days (although L&I can approve permits for simple projects, such as decks, in as little as one day). At the longer end of the spectrum, the total zoning process can take 210 days to complete, on average, if the project requires Civic Design Review and Zoning Board approval of a special exception or variance.

**Pages 22-27 illustrate the zoning permit processing times for by-right and not-by-right projects.**



# By-Right Project

## WHAT IS THE AVERAGE PERMIT PROCESSING TIME?



KEY:



Procedural Step



Advisory Recommendation



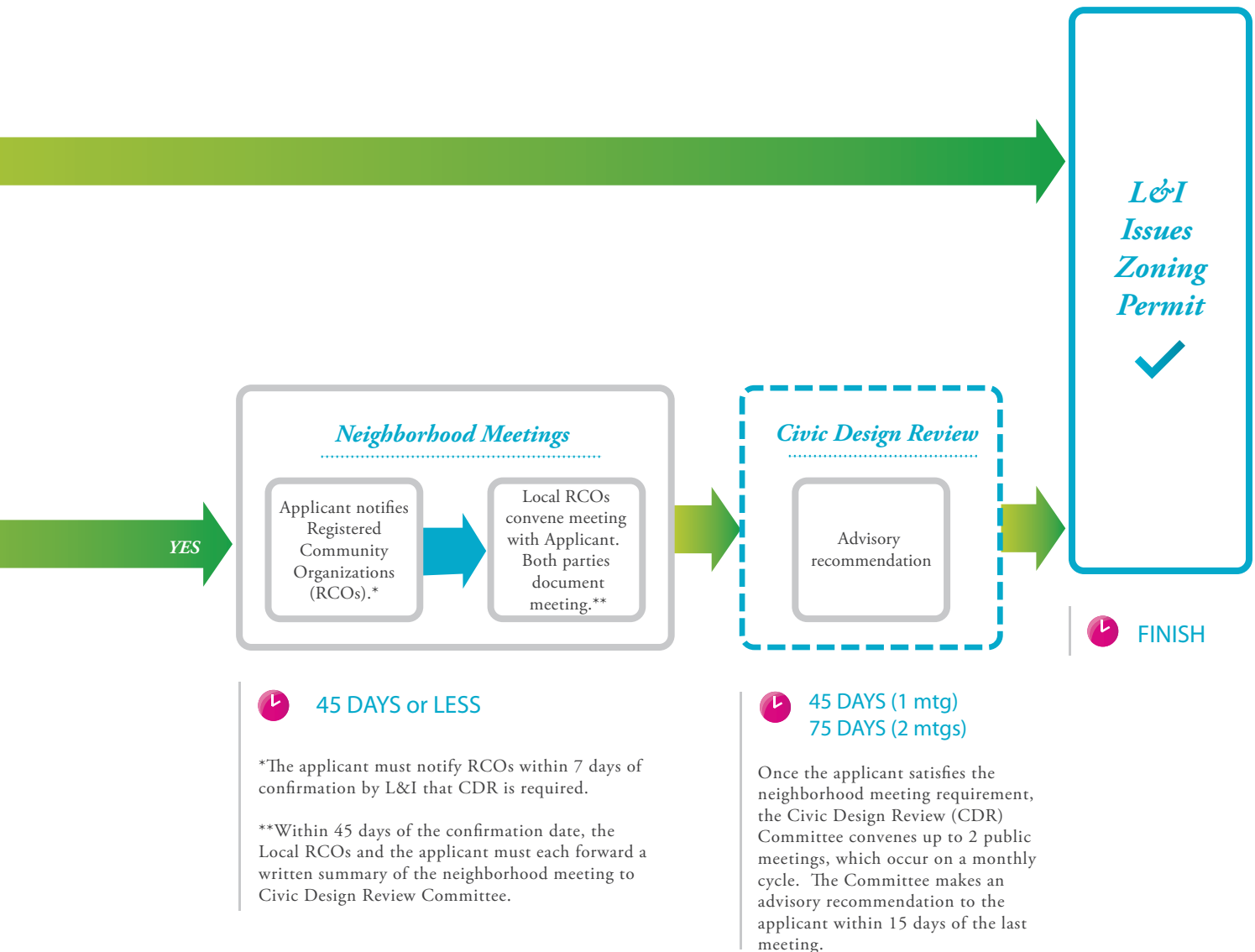
Decision

## TOTAL PERMIT PROCESSING TIME - CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW NOT REQUIRED





# Chapter 1



## TOTAL PERMIT PROCESSING TIME - CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW REQUIRED (*Times shown are maximums*)

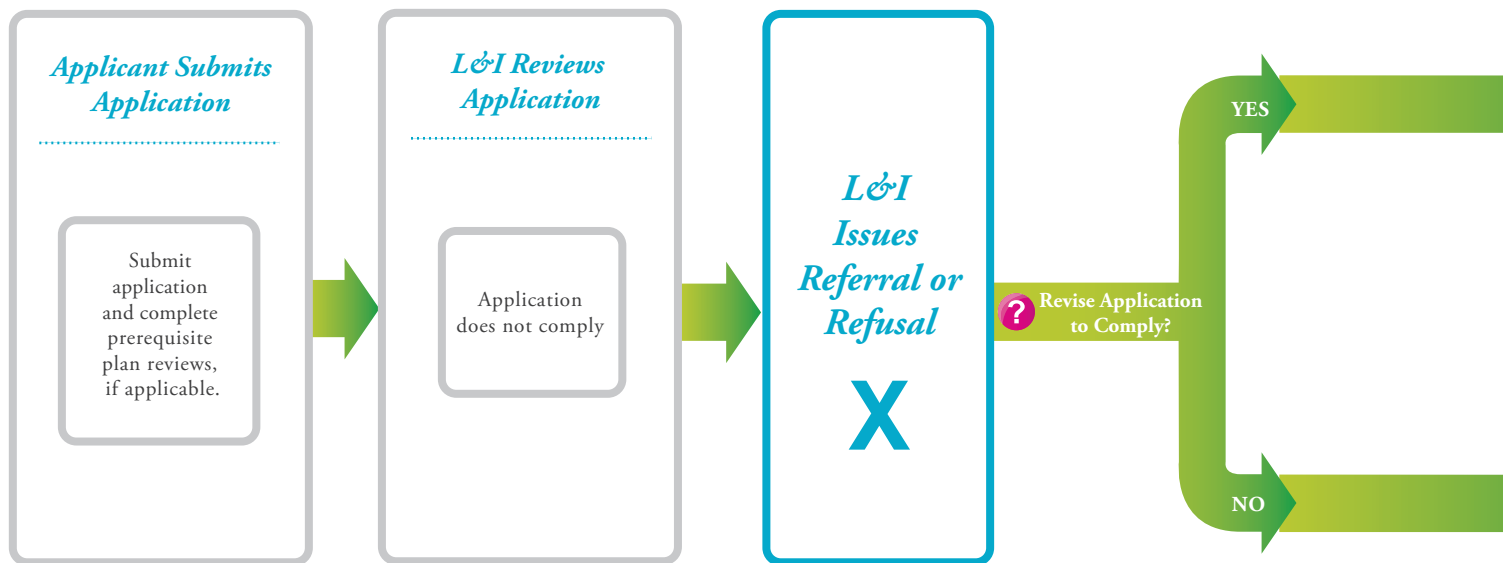




# Not By-Right Project

## Civic Design Review not required

WHAT IS THE AVERAGE PERMIT PROCESSING TIME?



### START

The clock starts on a zoning permit application as soon as L&I receives a complete set of application materials and prerequisite approvals. If an applicant has some pending prerequisite approvals, (s)he may submit the available application materials to L&I and L&I will get a head start on reviewing the application. The applicant must forward any outstanding prerequisites to L&I within 30 days of filing the application.

### 30 DAYS or LESS

L&I reviews the application to verify compliance with the Zoning Code. L&I makes its decision within 30 days.

KEY:

Procedural Step

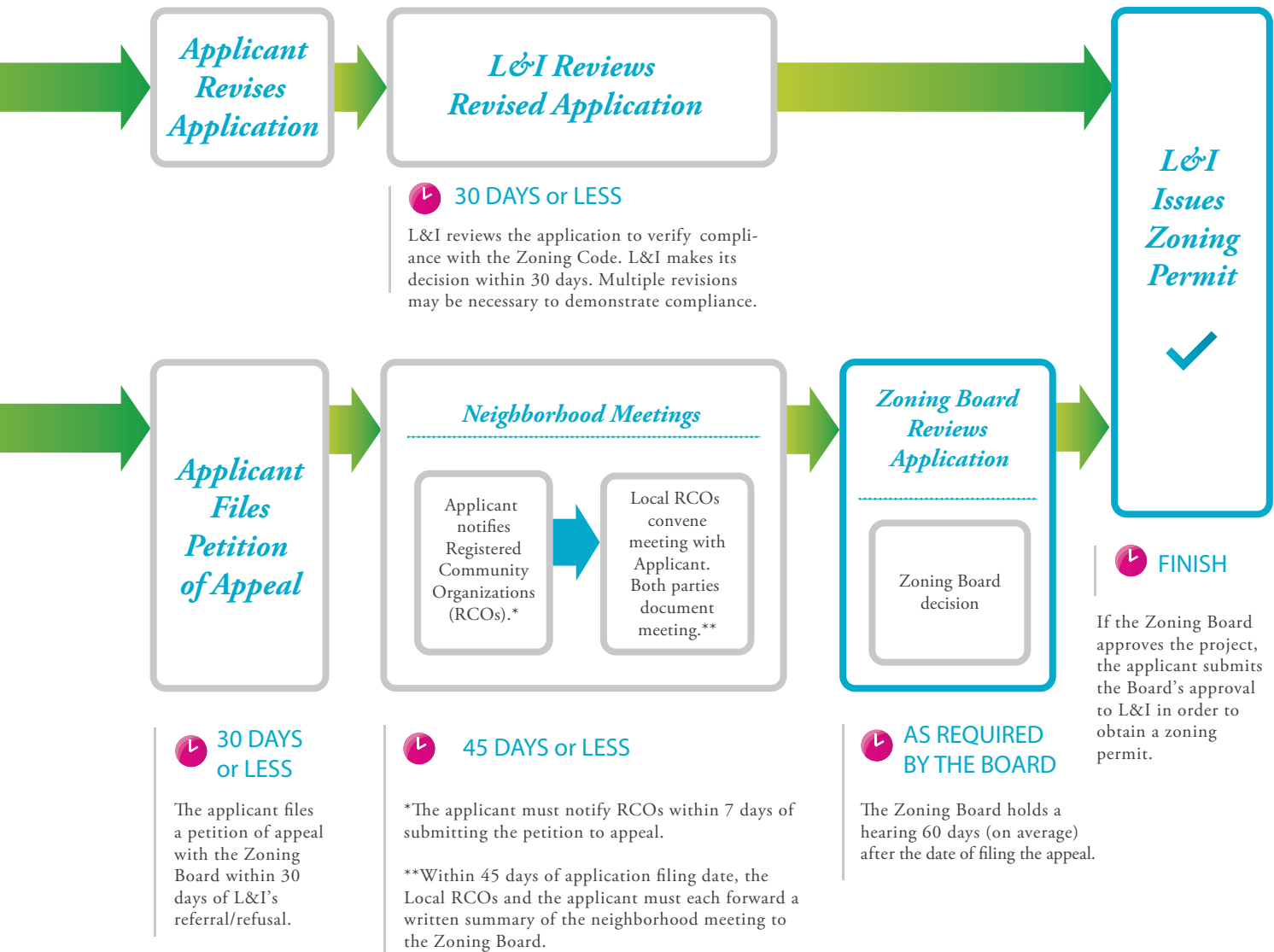
Decision

## TOTAL PERMIT PROCESSING TIME - APPLICANT REVISES APPLICATION *(Times shown are maximums)*





# Chapter 1



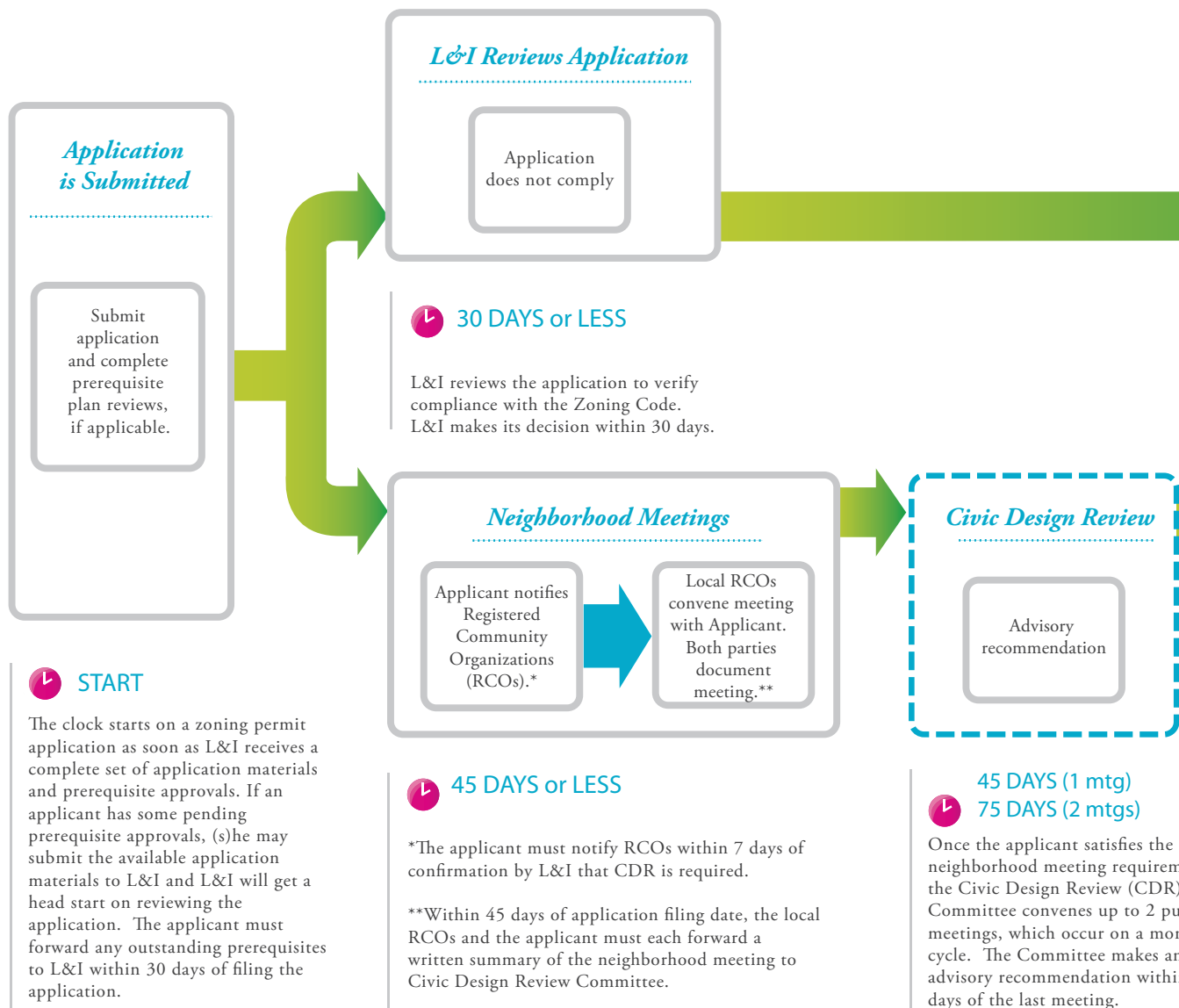
## TOTAL PERMIT PROCESSING TIME - APPLICANT APPEALS APPLICATION *(Times shown are maximums)*





# Not By-Right Project

## Civic Design Review Required

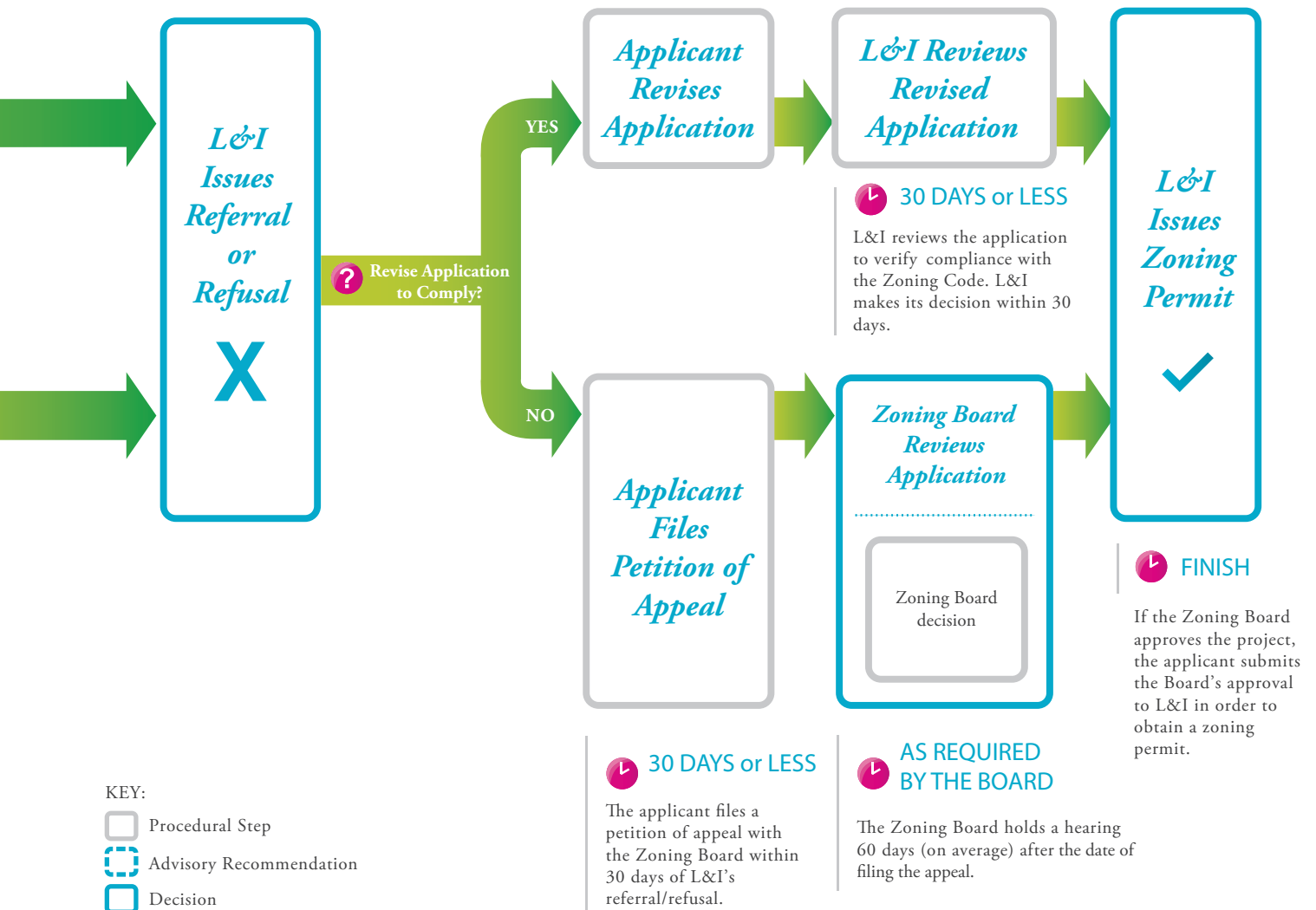


### TOTAL PERMIT PROCESSING TIME - APPLICANT REVISES APPLICATION (*Times shown are maximums*)

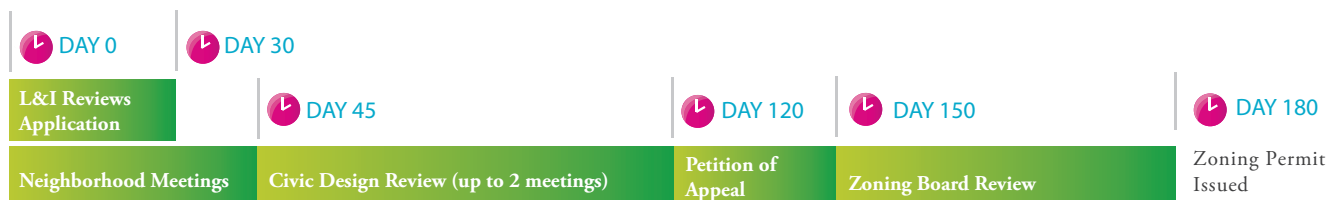




# Chapter 1



## TOTAL PERMIT PROCESSING TIME - APPLICANT APPEALS APPLICATION *(Times shown are maximums)*





# My Project is By-Right

JUST ONE GO-AHEAD AND YOU'RE GOOD TO GO

In this chapter, you will learn how to obtain approval of a by-right project, as well as which projects are not by right.

*Q: What should I do if L&I determines my project is not "By-Right?"*

*A: L&I will issue a refusal to the application. If a refusal is issued, the applicant has two options:*

*Option 1: Revise the application to bring it into compliance.*

*Option 2: Appeal L&I's decision to the Zoning Board and request a variance. Go to Chapter 4 (Variances).*

## The Step-by-Step Process

### Step 1.

Apply for a zoning permit at the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I). Bring all of the required application materials. Use the **Zoning Permit Application Checklist** in Part B of the manual to help keep track of the submittals.

### Step 2.

L&I confirms whether the project needs Civic Design Review. If the project needs Civic Design Review, L&I cannot issue a zoning permit until the applicant completes Chapter 6 (Civic Design Review). Go to Chapter 6 before continuing on to Step 3.

### Step 3.

L&I reviews the application to confirm that it satisfies all of the zoning provisions of the base district and any applicable overlay districts.

### Finish.

L&I has determined that the application complies with the Zoning Code. L&I will approve and issue a permit. Post a copy of the permit on the property for 30 days. The permit application will be valid for 3 years (or 6 months, if the application is for a change of use only). If the applicant does not start construction (or apply for a Certificate of Occupancy if the application is for a change of use only) within this timeframe, the zoning permit will expire. The applicant can ask for 1 one-year extension if more time is needed.



## The “Two-Step” Permit Option for Civic Design Review

L&I offers a two-step zoning permit option for Civic Design Review projects that do not require a special exception or variance approval. In the first step, the applicant submits an application for a “conditional zoning permit.” The conditional zoning permit provides early confirmation that a zoning application will comply with the use, dimensional, and parking requirements of the Zoning Code. In the second step, the applicant submits a full zoning permit application that attaches the building design, landscape details, lighting, and other design aspects of the project to the conditional zoning permit obtained by the applicant during the first step.

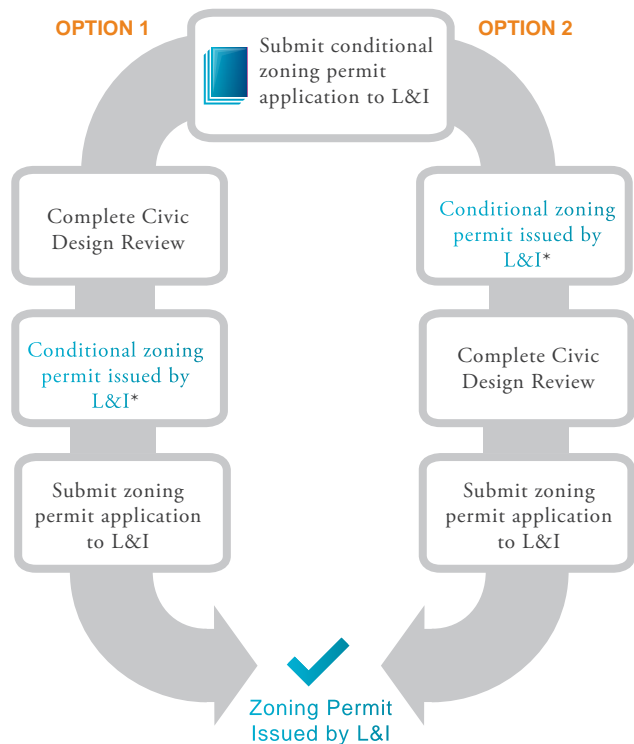
The two-step permit process enables an applicant to identify potential issues with the development proposal early in the process, to make informed decisions on the project’s design, and to invest in the project with a reasonable level of predictability in the outcome of the final zoning permit review.

The applicant can elect to complete the CDR process (and the related notice to and meetings with Registered Community Organizations) at either the conditional zoning permit or the subsequent zoning permit review phase. If the applicant completes the CDR process prior to the issuance of the conditional zoning permit, CDR need not be repeated during the second step.

### One Step:



### Two Step:



\* The applicant must notify any Registered Community Organizations in the project area of the conditional zoning permit within 15 days of receipt of the permit.



# My Project is a Special Exception

## HOW YOUR PROJECT GOES FROM “IF...” TO “OF COURSE.”

### TO MEET THE SPECIAL EXCEPTION CRITERIA THE APPLICANT MUST SHOW HIS OR HER PROJECT:

*Complies with the required dimensional standards and the conditions applicable to the proposed use, including the Use-Specific Standards in §14-603, and will not cause the following detrimental impacts to the neighborhood beyond what might normally be expected:*

*Congestion in the public streets or transportation systems, or*

*Overcrowding of the land, or*

*Impairing an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent property, or*

*Burdening water, sewer, school, park, or other public facilities, or*

*Impairing or permanently injuring the use of adjacent conforming properties, or*

*Endangering the public health or safety through fire or other means, or*

*Inconsistency with the Comprehensive Plan of the city.*

In this chapter, you will learn about the criteria, requirements, and approval process necessary for receiving a permit for a project that requires a special exception.

## The Step-by-Step Process

### Step 1.

Apply for a zoning permit at the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I). Bring all of the required application materials. Use the **Zoning Permit Application Checklist** in Part B of this manual to help keep track of the submittals.

### Step 2.

L&I confirms whether the project needs Civic Design Review. If the project needs Civic Design Review, L&I cannot issue a zoning permit until the applicant completes Chapter 6 (Civic Design Review). Go to Chapter 6 before continuing on to Step 3.

### Step 3.

L&I reviews the application to confirm that it requires a special exception approval, and that all other aspects of the application satisfy the zoning provisions of the base district and any applicable overlay districts. At this point, L&I issues a referral to the Zoning Board.

### Step 4.

Submit a “Petition to Appeal” to the Zoning Board within 30 days of L&I’s referral. Remember to submit an original signed copy of L&I’s referral and the Zoning Board filing fee with the Petition to Appeal. L&I provides the Petition to Appeal form.





## FOR MORE INFORMATION

about the difference between Local RCOs and other RCOs, refer to *Best Practices for Community Organizations: Registered Community Organizations* in Part B of the Manual.

### Step 5.

Notify the Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) in the project area about the special exception application within 7 days of submitting the petition to appeal. The Planning Commission maintains the registry and can provide the contact information for any group whose boundaries include the project. Schedule a time to meet with the **Local** RCOs to discuss the application and send a written summary of that meeting to the Zoning Board no later than 45 days from the submission date of the petition to appeal. The Zoning Board will not hear the appeal until the applicant has documented the meeting with the Local RCOs. Use **A Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings** in Part B of the manual for recommended RCO notification procedures.

### Step 6.

Satisfy the public notice requirements by posting a sign at least 21 days before the Zoning Board hearing. See **A Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings** in Part B of the manual for recommended sign posting procedures.

### Step 7.

Attend the scheduled Zoning Board hearing for the application. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Zoning Board. If the Zoning Board determines that the application meets the criteria for special exception approval (see §14-303(7) of the Zoning Code), then the Zoning Board will approve the special exception in a Notice of Decision. The Zoning Board may attach conditions on the application to make sure that it complies with the code and satisfies the special exception criteria.

### Finish.

Fulfill the zoning-related conditions imposed by the Zoning Board, if any, and return to L&I within 1 year of the Notice of Decision to receive the permit. Post a copy of the permit on the property for 30 days. The permit will be valid for 3 years (or 6 months, if the application is for a change of use only). If the applicant does not start construction (or apply for a Certificate of Occupancy if the application is for a change of use only) within this timeframe, the zoning permit will expire. The applicant can ask for 1 one-year extension if more time is needed.



# My Project needs a Variance

## WHEN YOUR PROJECT IS THE EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

### THE UNNECESSARY HARDSHIP STANDARD

*A critical question in variance cases is: would the denial of a variance result in an unnecessary hardship for the applicant? The answer is yes if the applicant can show that he or she did not create the hardship and:*

#### For Use Variances

*There are unique physical conditions on the property (such as irregular lot shape or topography, and*

*The variance is therefore necessary to enable the viable economic use of the property, and*

*The use variance will not alter the essential character of the neighborhood, substantially impair the appropriate use of adjacent property, or be detrimental to the public welfare, and*

*The hardship cannot be cured by granting a dimensional variance.*

#### For Dimensional Variances

*The Zoning Board may consider the economic detriment to the applicant and the financial burden created by any work necessary to bring the application into compliance.*

In this chapter, you will learn about variances — that is, approval for a project that does not conform to Philadelphia’s Zoning Code. Specifically, you will learn about the criteria, requirements, and approval process necessary for receiving a variance for a project.

## The Step-by-Step Process

### Step 1.

Apply for a zoning permit at the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I). Make sure to bring all of the required application materials. Use the **Zoning Permit Application Checklist** in Part B of the manual to help keep track of your submittals.

### Step 2.

L&I confirms whether the project needs Civic Design Review. If the project needs Civic Design Review, L&I cannot issue a zoning permit until the applicant completes Chapter 6 (Civic Design Review). Go to Chapter 6 before continuing on to Step 3.

### Step 3.

L&I evaluates the application against all of the zoning provisions of the base district and any applicable overlay districts in which the project lies. L&I determines that the proposal does not satisfy the Zoning Code and issues a refusal to the application. The applicant has the option to amend the application to bring it into code compliance. If this option is chosen and L&I verifies compliance, go to FINISH line.

### Step 4.

Submit a “Petition to Appeal” to the Zoning Board within 30 days of L&I’s refusal. Remember to submit an original signed copy of L&I’s refusal and the Zoning Board filing fee with the Petition to Appeal. Applicants seeking a Fast Track review must also submit the “Fast Track Variance Form” with the petition. L&I provides the Petition to Appeal and Fast Track Variance forms.





## FOR MORE INFORMATION

about the difference between Local RCOs and other RCOs, refer to *Best Practices for Community Organizations: Registered Community Organizations* in Part B of the Manual.

### Step 5.

Notify the Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) in the project area about the variance request within 7 days of submitting the petition to appeal. The Planning Commission maintains the registry and can provide the contact information for any group whose boundaries include the project. Schedule a time to meet with the **Local** RCOs to discuss the application and send a written summary of that meeting to the Zoning Board no later than 45 days from the submission date of the petition to appeal. The Zoning Board will not hear the appeal until the applicant has documented the meeting with the Local RCOs. Use **A Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings** in Part B of the manual for recommended RCO notification procedures.

### Step 6.

Satisfy the public notice requirements by posting a sign at least 21 days before the Zoning Board hearing. See **A Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings** in Part B of the manual for recommended sign posting procedures.

### Step 7.

Attend the scheduled Zoning Board hearing for the application. The Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the Zoning Board. If the Zoning Board determines that the application meets the criteria for variances (see §14-303(8) of the Zoning Code), the Zoning Board will approve the variance in a Notice of Decision. The Zoning Board may attach conditions on the application to make sure it satisfies the variance criteria.

### Finish.

Fulfill the zoning-related conditions imposed by the Zoning Board, if any, and return to L&I within 1 year of the Notice of Decision to receive the permit. Post a copy of the permit on the property for 30 days. The permit will be valid for 3 years (or 6 months, if your application is for a change of use only). If the applicant does not start construction (or apply for a Certificate of Occupancy if the application is for a change of use only) within this timeframe, the zoning permit will expire. The applicant can ask for 1 one-year extension if more time is needed.



# My Project needs a Subdivision Approval

## HOW SUBDIVISIONS ADD UP

In this chapter, you will learn about the criteria, requirements, and approval process necessary for subdividing land into 3 or more lots onto newly platted streets.

### WHEN DO I NEED A SUBDIVISION PLAT APPROVAL?

*The Planning Commission considers the creation of lots on existing streets to be a lot adjustment. The Planning Commission reviews all lot adjustments as a prerequisite plan review.*

*The Plat Approval process described in this Chapter applies to a subdivision of land into 3 or more lots where at least one of the created lots does not have street frontage on an existing legally open, physically improved street shown on the City Plan. During the Plat Approval process, the Planning Commission verifies that the subdivision complies with the subdivision standards in §14-708 of the Zoning Code.*

*If an applicant pursues zoning approval for lots together with subdivision approval, L&I cannot issue a final zoning approval until the Planning Commission has approved the Final Subdivision Plat.*

## The Step-by-Step Process

### Step 1.

Prepare required plans:

- Property Data Map that shows all existing and planned conditions affecting the property to be subdivided. The Streets Department Survey District will verify the accuracy of the Property Data Map.
- Preliminary Plat that identifies proposed street and lot layouts, sewerage, drainage and water supply in sketch form on the Property Data Map.

### Step 2.

Submit the completed Property Data Map and Preliminary Plat to the Planning Commission for review and approval. The Planning Commission will distribute copies of the Preliminary Plat to the Water Department for review and approval of the proposed method of stormwater run-off.

### Step 3.

Attend the scheduled public Planning Commission meeting to present the subdivision plans. The meeting must be held within 30 days from the date of filing the plans with the Planning Commission. If the proposed lots meet the requirements of the Zoning Code, the Planning Commission will approve the Preliminary Plat and forward a copy of the approved Preliminary Plat to the Department of Streets.



## Step 4.

Prepare the Final Plat and get approvals from the following agencies:

- Water Department verifies that the proposed sewerage, drainage, including the method for the control of on-site stormwater runoff, and water supply satisfy Water Department Regulations.
- Streets Department verifies that the proposed street design satisfies the Streets Code and Street Department Regulations. If the subdivision plans propose a new right-of-way, alterations to a right-of-way, or vacating a right-of-way, the Survey Bureau will require you to apply for a City Plan Action to modify the official City Plan through City Council Ordinance.
- Parks and Recreation Department verifies that the subdivision meets the street tree planting requirements (see §14-705(2)).
- Office of Property Assessment assigns temporary addresses and tax accounts.

## Step 5.

Submit the Final Plat to the Planning Commission for review and approval within 15 months after approval of the Preliminary Plat. An applicant may file for an extension if more time is required. The Planning Commission verifies administratively (no public meeting required) that the subdivision satisfies the standards in §14-708. If the Planning Commission does not make a decision on the Final Plat within 45 days, the subdivision is deemed approved. An approved Final Plat is valid for 3 years. In the event of disapproval, the Commission must notify the applicant within 7 days of its decision and provide the reason(s) for disapproval.

## Finish.

In the 3-year period in which the Final Plat is valid,

- Complete and submit a final as-built survey of the subdivided lots to the Planning Commission and Streets Department, and
- Go to the Records Department to record the Final Plat, conveyance, and confirmatory deed document in the public records.



# My Project needs a Subdivision Approval

## HOW SUBDIVISIONS ADD UP

### Property Data Map

(2 copies)

### Plat Submission Requirements

- ☐ Name and seal of PA-licensed engineer, architect, or surveyor who prepared the map
- ☐ Scale 1"=100' or less, North Arrow and Date
- ☐ Names of subdivider and registered owner
- ☐ Tract boundaries with bearings and distances
- ☐ Topography with elevations based on City Datum at 5' contour interval
- ☐ Approximate location of water courses, tree masses, rock outcrops, existing buildings
- ☐ Actual location of sewers, inlets, water mains, easements, fire hydrants, railroads, existing or confirmed streets and their established grades
- ☐ Adjacent streets

### Preliminary Plat

(25 copies)

- ☐ Scale 1"=100' or less, North Arrow and Date
- ☐ In sketch form, may be on the Property Data Map
- ☐ Proposed street layout, street names, lot-lines, and lot identification numbers. Lots shall show approximate dimensions and areas when required by the Planning Commission; streets shall indicate proposed cartway and right-of-way widths, approximate radii of curvature and approximate grades
- ☐ Sites dedicated or reserved for non-residential purposes
- ☐ Proposed sewerage, drainage, including the method for the control of on-site stormwater runoff, and water supply
- ☐ Subsoil conditions, only if requested by the Planning Commission



## Final Plat

(25 print copies plus  
1 stable reproducible  
copy)

- ☐ Printed on reproducible material, such as mylar
- ☐ Name and seal of PA-licensed engineer, architect, or surveyor who prepared the map
- ☐ Scale 1"=100' or less, North Arrow and Date
- ☐ Names of subdivider and registered owner
- ☐ Primary control points, approved by the Department of Streets, or ties to such control points to which all pertinent engineering data shall be referred
- ☐ Boundaries, with distances, bearings, and location of monuments. Such dimensions shall be in feet and hundredths of a foot
- ☐ Street lines, street names, lot names, and lot identification numbers, easements, and other land divisions and their purpose
- ☐ Radii, lengths of curves, and tangent bearings for all streets
- ☐ Right-of-way and cartway widths for all streets
- ☐ When required by the Department of Streets, street profiles, details of culverts or other necessary data
- ☐ Building lines or street set-back lines
- ☐ Calculated area of all lots where area approximation is within 5% of the minimum area requirements
- ☐ Location and boundaries of all non-dedicated ways or easements, and of drainage ways
- ☐ Location and outline place of all existing structures to remain
- ☐ Location of all watercourses
- ☐ When required by the Planning Commission the location, depth, and size of sewers, storm water drains, waterlines, location of wells and cesspools or septic tanks
- ☐ A certification showing that applicant is owner of the land
- ☐ Statement dedicating streets, rights-of-way or other areas for public use as may be required by the City
- ☐ Such other certificates, affidavits, or endorsements as the Planning Commission may require for the enforcement of §14-708 of the Zoning Code



# My Project needs Civic Design Review

## NEIGHBORHOODS THRIVE ON GOOD COMMUNICATION

The creation of master plan districts and major development projects may require Civic Design Review as a part of their approval process. In this chapter, you will learn about the criteria, requirements, and process for Civic Design Review.

### The Step-by-Step Process

#### Step 1.

Confirm that Civic Design Review is required. An application requires Civic Design Review if it proposes:

- A rezoning of land into a master plan district (SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STA, RMX-1, RMX-2), or
- A building that exceeds the Civic Design Review thresholds provided in §14-304(5) of the Zoning Code (and summarized in the following pages).



#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

*about the difference between Local RCOs and other RCOs, refer to Best Practices for Community Organizations: Registered Community Organizations in Part B of the Manual.*

#### Step 2.

Notify the Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) in the project's area about the Civic Design Review project within 7 days of filing the zoning application with L&I. The Planning Commission maintains the registry and can provide contact information. Schedule a time to meet with the **Local** RCOs to discuss the application and send a written summary of that meeting to the Civic Design Review (CDR) Committee no later than 45 days from the application filing date. The CDR Committee will not review the application until the applicant has documented the meeting with the RCOs. Use **A Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings** in Part B of the manual for recommended RCO notification procedures.

#### Step 3.

Submit a site plan and other required design drawings, as listed on the following page.

#### Step 4.

Attend the scheduled CDR meeting to present the plan. The CDR Committee may provide advisory recommendations for improving the design. The CDR Committee may schedule a second CDR meeting within the next 30 days.

#### Finish.

If the applicant has incorporated the CDR's advisory recommendations into the design, the applicant must amend the zoning permit application to alert L&I of these changes.



## CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW AND THE CONDITIONAL ZONING PERMIT PROCESS

*The Zoning Code provides an option to apply for a zoning permit through a two-step process. Step one is called the conditional zoning permit, which includes the use, building dimensions, and parking. In the second step, the applicant submits a full zoning permit application including the building design, landscape details, lighting, and other design aspects of the project. Civic Design Review is required prior to the issuance of the final zoning permit. This provides two opportunities to complete Civic Design Review:*

### Opportunity #1

*Complete Civic Design Review while obtaining the conditional zoning permit. The applicant does not have to repeat the Civic Design Review process when applying for the final zoning permit.*

### Opportunity #2

*After the applicant receives his or her conditional zoning permit approval, complete Civic Design Review while obtaining approval of the final zoning permit.*

## Civic Design Review Submission Requirements

### Rezoning of land into a master plan district

Submission requirements will vary according to the master plan district, but at a minimum will require the following. For more information, refer to the Planning Commission's Master Plan District regulations.

- ☐ Statement of existing conditions
- ☐ Statement of impacts of proposed new conditions
- ☐ Site plan showing the street layout, buildings, uses, parking, and open spaces.

### Buildings that exceed the Civic Design Review Thresholds

Applicants must submit a digital .PDF file and 10 bound color copies of the following in 11" x 17" format. Plans must be drawn to a scale where the relationship of outside spaces to inside spaces can be understood.

- ☐ Photographs of proposed building site and immediate area.
- ☐ Site plan.
- ☐ Ground floor plan.
- ☐ Landscape plan.
- ☐ Conceptual elevations of all sides of the proposed building(s).
- ☐ Site sections (minimum of two) showing the relationships to adjacent buildings and spaces.
- ☐ Perspective renderings (minimum of two views including at least one at street-level perspective).
- ☐ Digital or physical 3D massing model that shows the proposed development within the context of surrounding buildings.
- ☐ A written summary of intended sustainable design elements, if applicable.
- ☐ A written description of the building materials and its texture, color, and general fenestration patterns and photographs of buildings of comparable design.



# My Project needs Civic Design Review

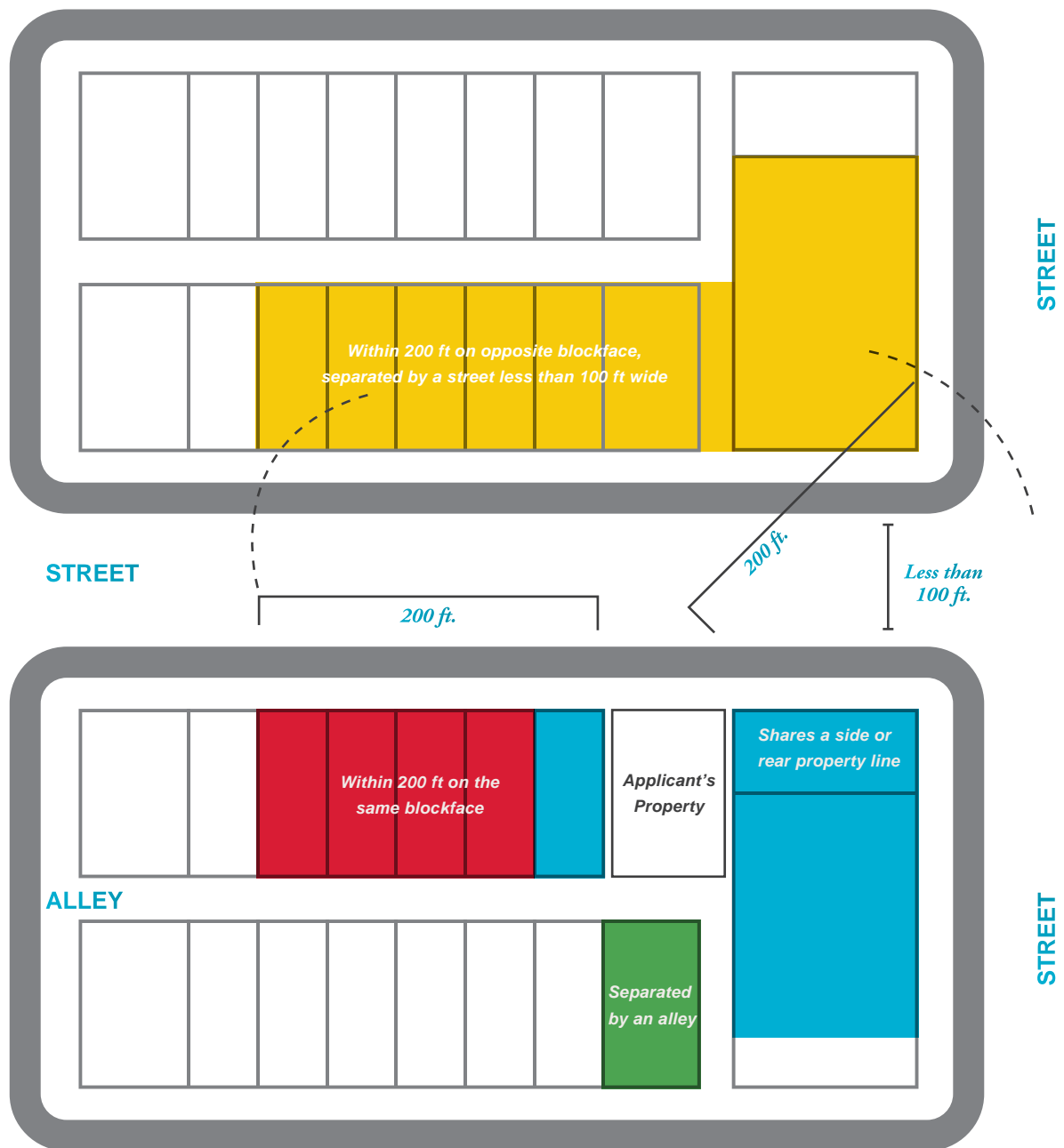
NEIGHBORHOODS THRIVE ON GOOD COMMUNICATION

## Does My Project Exceed the CDR Thresholds?

	LOCATION OF APPLICANT'S PROPERTY	LOCATION OF PROPERTY AFFECTED BY THE APPLICATION	COVERED TYPES OF APPLICATIONS
	<i>* In any case, industrial buildings in an industrial district, wireless service facilities, and any project in the SP-ENT, SP-PO, and SP-STA districts are exempt from civic design review.</i>		
CASE 1*	Any District	Any District	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Includes more than 100,000 sq. ft. of new gross floor area, or</li> <li>2. Includes more than 100 new dwelling units, or</li> <li>3. Proposes a rezoning of land into a Master Plan District</li> </ol>
CASE 2*	Commercial, Industrial, or Special Purpose district	RM or RMX district	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Includes more than 50,000 sq. ft. of new gross floor area, or</li> <li>2. Includes more than 50 new dwelling units, or</li> <li>3. Includes buildings that are more than 20 ft. taller than maximum permitted height of an affected RM- or RMX-zoned lot</li> </ol>
CASE 3*	RM, RMX, Commercial, Industrial, or Special Purpose district	RSD, RSA, or RTA district	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Includes more than 25,000 sq. ft. of new gross floor area, or</li> <li>2. Includes more than 25 new dwelling units, or</li> <li>3. Includes buildings that are more than 20 ft. taller than maximum permitted height of an affected RSD-, RSA-, or RTA-zoned lot</li> </ol>



## Properties "Affected" by an Application





# My Project needs a Zoning Map Revision

WHEN NEIGHBORHOODS EVOLVE, WE ADAPT

In this chapter, you will learn about the criteria, requirements, and approval process necessary for amending the official zoning map.

## THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

*The Planning Commission originates zoning map revision legislation from its comprehensive planning process. In 2010, the Planning Commission began Philadelphia2035, the City's first comprehensive planning process since 1960. The comprehensive plan consists of a citywide vision and 18 district plans that help identify and serve as a foundation for necessary zoning map revisions. The Planning Commission's comprehensive planning process is an ongoing cycle.*

*Building on the district plans, the Commission will manage a community-based process that may result in one or more zoning map revision ordinances to be introduced into City Council. Before Council adopts any zoning map revision ordinance, the Commission must review and make recommendations on the ordinance.*

*For more information about Philadelphia2035, visit the website at: [www.phila2035.org](http://www.phila2035.org)*

## The Step-by-Step Process

Revisions to the zoning map require legislative action by City Council and the Mayor's approval. The request for a zoning map revision may be initiated by a variety of sources, including City Council, the Planning Commission, or a property owner. The following is the proposed zoning map revision process designed to build upon the Planning Commission's comprehensive planning process. A zoning map revision ordinance prepared outside of the comprehensive planning process should start at Step 4.

### Step 1.

The steering committee established for the District Plan continues to meet during the zoning map revision process. The steering committee will invite additional representatives from areas likely to be affected by the zoning map revision process.

### Step 2.

The Planning Commission uses the District Plan's future land use map as a framework to prepare a draft zoning map for the district.

### Step 3.

The Planning Commission holds one or more public community-based meetings to review and discuss the zoning map proposals.

## Planning Process



## **SPECIAL PROCEDURES FOR REZONING INTO A MASTER PLAN OR NEIGHBORHOOD CONSERVATION OVERLAY DISTRICT**

*In master plan districts (RMX-1, RMX-2, SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STA), a master plan must be approved before the zoning map revision ordinance can become effective. Once the master plan is approved and adopted, any future amendments must be approved by either the Commission (minor amendments only) or City Council.*

*In neighborhood conservation overlay districts, the zoning map revision must be initiated via petition signed by a local Registered Community Organization located within the proposed district or 30% of all property owners and homeowners.*

### **Step 4.**

The Planning Commission prepares a final zoning map and ordinance on behalf of the originator of the remapping request, or in other cases, reviews the zoning map and ordinance drafted by others.

### **Step 5.**

City Council introduces the zoning map revision ordinance.

### **Step 6.**

The proposed zoning map revision ordinance is considered for approval at a public meeting of the Planning Commission. If approved, the Planning Commission action becomes a recommendation to City Council.

### **Step 7.**

The Rules Committee of City Council schedules a public hearing on the zoning map revision ordinance. At the hearing, the Rules Committee will hear testimony from the Planning Commission and from the public. If the Rules Committee recommends the bill, the whole of City Council considers it twice prior to passage.

### **Step 8.**

The zoning map revision ordinance is sent to the Mayor for approval, veto, or returned to City Council for further consideration.

### **Finish.**

After the bill is enacted into law with Mayor's signature, the Planning Commission will change City zoning maps to reflect the revisions.

## **General Zoning Map Revision Process**





SEPT. 21





# Part B

ZONING TOOLBOX AND OTHER RESOURCES



# The Zoning Permit Application Checklist

## Getting a Zoning Permit

Ready to get a zoning permit? This **Zoning Permit Application Checklist** will help applicants make sure they have all the information L&I will need to evaluate their zoning permit application.

Applicants should submit their application form, fees, plans, and pre-requisite approvals to the L&I Permit Services counter located in the concourse level of the Municipal Services Building at 1401 JFK Boulevard.

An L&I plans examiner will review the application to determine if it complies with the Zoning Code. The examiner will also answer any questions an applicant might have. If the applicant happened to miss something in his or her application, the examiner will provide direction on how to complete the application.



L&I PERMIT SERVICES COUNTER AT THE MUNICIPAL SERVICES BUILDING



## Permit or No Permit?

To start, let's see if you even need a permit. The answer is YES if your project involves one or more of the following:

- ☐ Change of a use of a property
- ☐ New construction or additions
- ☐ Alterations that result in a change in gross floor area
- ☐ Carports, detached private garages, greenhouses and rear yard sheds for homes that are larger than 120 square feet or higher than 8 feet
- ☐ Installation of a fence that exceeds the height limits established by the Zoning Code
- ☐ Construction of a deck higher than 12" above ground
- ☐ Wind energy conversion systems or ground-mounted/freestanding solar collectors
- ☐ Creation of off-street parking or reconfiguration of existing parking

## What Fees?

- ☐ Zoning Fee
  - \$30 for single- or two-family uses
  - \$125 for parcels  $\leq$  30,000 sq ft
  - \$250 for parcels  $>$  30,000 sq ft
- ☐ Use Registration Fee, \$125 per use
- ☐ Conditional Zoning Permit Fee, \$250
- ☐ Accessory Sign Fee, \$200 (not required for a face change)
- ☐ Zoning Board Fee (for special exceptions and variances only. Due at time of petition)
  - \$125 for single- or two-family uses
  - \$250 for all other applications
  - \$625 for an accelerated hearing, in addition to the fee specified above

## What Application Submittals?

You will need the following to complete your application.

- ☐ Application Form (1 copy, Go to <http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf>)
- ☐ Plot Plan (6 copies), except for applications that only involve a change of use
  - Professional seal not required
  - Minimum Sheet Size = 11" x 17"
  - Scale 1"=10', 20', 40', 50', 60' or 100'
  - Maximum Sheet Size = 24" x 36"
- ☐ Elevation Drawings (6 copies), for new construction, additions and alterations only
- ☐ Sign Drawings, if proposing an accessory sign
  - Sign elevation (6 copies)
  - Artistic rendering with dimensions on sign face (6 copies)
  - 3 photographs (1 set) of each building face that will display the sign



# The Zoning Permit Application Checklist

## What Prerequisite Plan Reviews?

### Related Code Section:

§14-304(6) or (7)  
§14-510  
§14-303(6)(d)(.1)(.c)  
§14-603(16)  
§14-701(5)  
§14-704(2)  
§14-704(4)  
§14-803(5)

§14-502(8)(a)

§14-803(4)(b)(.4)  
§14-509(3)(r)

§14-704(3)

Title 11 of The Phila. Code  
Title 11 of The Phila. Code

Title 11 of The Phila. Code  
§14-803(4)(a)(.3)  
§14-804

§14-803(4)(b)(.4)

L&I requires the following to complete its review of your application.

### **Planning Commission Approval**, if one or more of the following apply:

- ☐ Lot adjustments or subdivisions
- ☐ The Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District
- ☐ A Master Plan District (SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STA, RMX-1, RMX-2)
- ☐ Wireless telecommunication towers
- ☐ Buildings in CMX-4 or CMX-5 districts that elect to comply with Sky Plane
- ☐ Development in a Steep Slope Protection Area
- ☐ Development in a 100-year floodplain
- ☐ Landscape plans for parking lots/garages (except for single- and two-family uses)

*Optional at the zoning permit stage, but required for a building permit:*

- ☐ Construction or alteration of a facade on Chestnut/Walnut Streets between the Schuylkill and Delaware Rivers, Broad Street between S. Penn Sq. and Washington Avenue, and Market Street between Front Street and 5th Street
- ☐ Parking garage in a RMX-3, CMX-4, or CMX-5 District
- ☐ Development in the City Avenue Overlay District

### **Water Department Approval**, if the following applies:

- ☐ Earth disturbances greater than 5,000 square feet

### **Streets Department Approval**, if one or more of the following applies:

- ☐ Adding, striking, or adjusting streets on the official City Plan
- ☐ Curbs and curb cuts, parking lots and garages, loading areas, sidewalks, street lighting, street paving (except for single- and two-family uses)
- ☐ Encroachments or projections over public streets (e.g. projecting signs, bays)
- ☐ Surface parking lots serving three or more vehicles
- ☐ Bicycle parking facilities in public sidewalks

*Optional at the zoning permit stage, but required for a building permit:*

- ☐ Parking garage in a RMX-3, CMX-4, or CMX-5 District





**Related Code Section:**

§5-903 of The Charter

§14-502(7)

§14-503(5)

§14-904(7)

§14-702 or 14-405

§14-502(8)

Chapter 14-1000

Chapter 14-1000

**Art Commission Approval**, if one or more of the following applies:

- ☐ Structures (including signs) that project over any public street
- ☐ Signs in certain portions of the Center City Overlay District
- ☐ Signs in the Passyunk Avenue Neighborhood Commercial Overlay District
- ☐ Signs in the Cobbs Creek Parkway, Roosevelt Blvd, or Fairmount Park Areas
- ☐ Public art submitted to earn a floor area bonus or placed in the SP-ENT district

*Optional at the zoning permit stage, but required for a building permit:*

- ☐ Construction or alteration of a building abutting the Benjamin Franklin Parkway or the Independence Mall and Independence National Historic Park

*Optional at the zoning permit stage, but required for a building permit. Even though Historical Commission approval is not required before the zoning permit, early Historical Commission approval is recommended so that any historic preservation issues are identified early in the concept and design stage of the project:*

**Historical Commission Approval**, if one or more of the following applies:

- ☐ Construction, alteration, or demolition of a historic building, structure, site, or object
- ☐ Construction of a building, structure, site, or object within a historic district of the project.



# Development Standards

## Applicability Checklist

Section		Applies to	Exceptions
§14-701	Dimensional Standards	All primary and accessory structures.	See Table 14-701-6 for exceptions to height limits and yard, setback, and open space requirements. Examples of exemptions include balustrades, chimneys, roof-mounted solar energy collectors, and wind energy conversion systems.
§14-702	Floor Area Bonuses	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Properties zoned RMX-3, CMX-4, or CMX-5 with frontage on two or more streets, or</li> <li>2. Properties zoned CMX-3 and located within a /TOD overlay district.</li> </ol>	
§14-703	Form & Design Standards	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Five or more attached buildings developed as part of a single development project, or</li> <li>2. Multi-family buildings that contain 10 or more residential units, or</li> <li>3. Lots of 10,000 sq. ft or more or buildings with 10,000 sq. ft. or more of gross floor area that are located in an RM-2, RM-3, RM-4, RMX-3, or Commercial district.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Detached and semi-detached single and two-family residential buildings.</li> <li>2. An existing structure whose principal use is changed.</li> <li>3. Structures with one of the following principal uses: parks and open space; utilities and services (basic and major); wireless service facility; non-accessory parking; urban agriculture; and industrial.</li> </ol>
§14-704(2)	Steep Slope Protection	Lots located in a designated Steep Slope Protection Area.	
§14-704(3)	Stormwater Management	All earth disturbances greater than 5,000 square feet.	Development on lots that are part of a larger subdivision that has a stormwater management system previously approved by appropriate agencies.
§14-704(4)	Flood Protection	All development within Special Flood Hazard Area along the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers</li> <li>• Poquessing Creek</li> <li>• Byberry Creek</li> <li>• Walton Run</li> <li>• Pennypack Creek</li> <li>• Wooden Bridge Run</li> <li>• Tacony-Frankford Creek</li> <li>• Wissahickon Creek</li> <li>• Darby Creek</li> <li>• Cobbs Creek</li> <li>• Indian Creek</li> </ul>	




# Zoning Toolbox

Section		Applies to	Exceptions
§14-704(5)	Stream Buffers	All lots located along any water course listed on the city's adopted Hydrology Map.	
§14-705(2)	On-Site Landscape and Trees	Existing lots greater than 5,000 sq. ft.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lots having a principal use as a single- or two-family residence or a use in the parks and open space or urban agriculture categories.</li> <li>2. Parking lots and garages (these must comply with the parking landscape standards in §14-803(5)).</li> </ol>
§14-705(3)	Street Trees	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Existing lots greater than 5,000 sq. ft.</li> <li>2. Subdivisions of three or more lots.</li> </ol>	Lots having a principal use as a single- or two-family residence or a use in the parks and open space or urban agriculture categories.
§14-706	Fencing and Walls	All development in Residential and Commercial zoning districts.	
§14-707	Outdoor Lighting	All exterior site and parking lot lighting installed on private lots.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lighting for accessory and non-accessory signs.</li> <li>2. Outdoor lighting for a single-family or two-family dwellings.</li> <li>3. Outdoor lighting for public recreational activities, sporting events at stadiums and ball fields, concerts, plays or other outdoor events that are open to the public.</li> <li>4. Outdoor lighting for emergency equipment and work conducted in the interest of law enforcement or for public health, safety or welfare.</li> <li>5. Outdoor lighting for a temporary event lasting less than 14 days.</li> <li>6. Seasonal outdoor lighting used less than 60 days per calendar year.</li> <li>7. Outdoor parking lot lighting in Special Purpose zoning districts.</li> </ol>
§14-708	Subdivision Standards	Any subdivision of any part, lot, or area of land into three or more lots where one or more proposed lots does not have street frontage on an existing street shown on the City Plan.	



# The Civic Design Review Manual

 **Related Code Section:**  
§14-304(5)

## What is Civic Design Review?

Philadelphia's Civic Design Review process provides a forum for citizens, developers, and the City to engage in a conversation in order to advance the designs of major development projects. Civic Design Review is not an assessment of architectural style, but rather an assessment of the public realm elements of the project, including site layout, building design, parking design, public space, and sustainability. Through Civic Design Review, major projects can maximize the quality of their designs to build on Philadelphia's tradition of urban design excellence and enhance our civic pride. Civic Design Review is required by the Philadelphia Zoning Code, please reference §14-304(5).

Applicants will present their projects to the Civic Design Review Committee at up to two public meetings. The Committee, comprised of architects, planners, real estate professionals and community development experts, will advise applicants on their project designs based on their professional expertise and input from the public.

### CDR COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Architect (2)*

*Landscape Architect*

*Urban Designer*

*Builder/Developer*

*Person with civic  
association experience*

*Rotating seat for Local RCO*

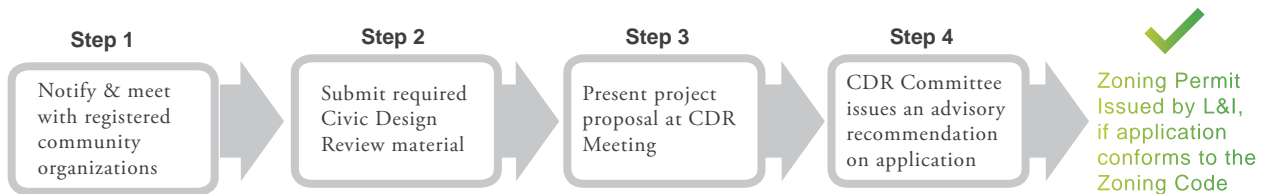



PROJECT PRESENTATION FOR THE PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION, 1515 ARCH STREET



## How to submit information for the Civic Design Review Committee

For projects that require Civic Design Review, the process consists of four steps. The following pages describe each step in more detail.



 **Related Code Section:**  
§14-303(12)

### RESOURCES

The website [www.phila.gov/map](http://www.phila.gov/map) shows RCO boundaries.

The website [www.phila.gov/cityplanning](http://www.phila.gov/cityplanning) lists the registry of RCOs.

### STEP 1: Notify and Meet with RCOs

- **Go to the zoning map website** to find out within which RCO boundary(s) the proposed project is located. The PCPC maintains the registry of RCOs.
- **Notify all RCOs.** The applicant must notify RCOs within 7 days of submitting the zoning permit application.
- **Meet with local RCOs and submit documentation** of the meeting. Within 45 days of the application filing date, the RCOs and the applicant must each forward a written summary of the neighborhood meeting to the CDR Committee



# The Civic Design Review Manual

Applicants must submit a digital .PDF file and 10 bound color copies of the materials in 11"x17" format.

## Step 2: Submit Required CDR Materials

The applicant must submit all application materials to the CDR Committee at least 14 days before the scheduled date of the CDR meeting in the following two ways:

### 1) Email materials to [CDR@phila.gov](mailto:CDR@phila.gov)

- Digital material must be in PDF format
- The PDF must be optimized for easy transfer and downloading

### 2) Mail or hand deliver 10 hard copies to:

Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
Attn: Civic Design Review  
1515 Arch St, 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102



## What are the submission requirements?

These requirements are listed in the Regulations of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Available at [www.phila.gov/cityplanning](http://www.phila.gov/cityplanning)

 *Applicants of new master plan districts only need to submit the first two items listed.*

- ☐ CDR application form, available on the PCPC website.
- ☐ Photographs of the proposed building site and immediate area and aerial photographs in plan and oblique views.
- ☐ Site plan, drawn to a scale where all elements of the streetscape are discernible and the relationship of outside spaces to inside spaces can be understood. The site plan must include all existing street elements.
- ☐ Ground floor plan, drawn to a scale where the relationship of outside spaces to inside spaces can be understood. The ground floor plan must show all buildings entrances and exits and vehicle loading and unloading areas.
- ☐ Landscape plan, drawn to a scale where all elements of the streetscape are discernible and the relationship of outside spaces to inside spaces can be understood.
- ☐ Elevations drawn to scale of all sides of the proposed building(s) with all exterior materials labeled.
- ☐ Site sections (minimum of two) showing the relationships to adjacent buildings and spaces.
- ☐ Perspective renderings (minimum of two views including at least one at street-level perspective). Exterior materials must be depicted in the renderings.
- ☐ 3D digital or physical massing model that shows the proposed development within the context of surrounding buildings.
- ☐ A written summary of intended sustainable design elements.
- ☐ A written description of the building materials and their textures and colors. The CDR Committee may request material samples.
- ☐ If applicable, the submissions required to demonstrate compliance with the sky plane controls of the Zoning Code.



# The Civic Design Review Manual

*The "public realm" is defined as sidewalks, public spaces, streets, and public and community facilities.*

## STEP 3: Present project proposal at CDR Meeting

The general intent of the CDR is focused on the assessment of the proposed characteristics and quality of the public realm that are an integral part or any large development project. CDR will address the way in which a large proposed development may have an impact on its neighborhood. The CDR process does not lend itself to precise quantifiable certainty, requiring members of the CDR Committee to use their professional expertise and judgment in rendering advisory action:

## When does the CDR committee meet?

The CDR Committee meets monthly on the first Tuesday of every month at 1:00 PM. Please check with the PCPC website ([www.phila.gov/cityplanning](http://www.phila.gov/cityplanning)) for the specific dates for the current year.

- Approved material must be received by the PCPC 14 days before the CDR meeting
- CDR meetings are generally held on the first Tuesdays of every month at 1:00 PM
- CDR meetings are held two weeks before the scheduled PCPC meetings (generally held on the third Tuesday of every month)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	 3 CDR meeting	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 PCPC public meeting	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				



## What are the review guidelines?

*Keep the following design review guidelines in mind as you design your project. The full requirements are listed in the Regulations of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission available at [www.phila.gov/cityplanning](http://www.phila.gov/cityplanning)*

### Site Design

- Continue the existing street and sidewalk grid
- Provide adequate sidewalk widths. Refer to the Planning Commission's Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan for guidance.
- Screen surface parking lots from street view.
- Provide clear pedestrian connections from buildings to public areas and streets.

### Building Design

- Build to the street line or prevailing setback on the block.
- Clearly define the building entrances.
- Maximize ground floor transparency.
- Incorporate windows and architectural details to create an interesting pedestrian experience at the street level.

### Parking Design

- Break up surface parking lots into smaller "pods"
- Build multi-level parking structures instead of surface lots.
- Incorporate commercial uses on the ground floor of parking garages. Screen the upper levels with architectural features or landscaped walls.

### Public Open Space

- Public open space should be visible from the street.
- Include multiple, direct access points from adjacent streets.
- Incorporate amenities such as benches, seats, tables, and water features, etc.

### Sustainable Design

- Reuse existing building stock when possible.
- Incorporate existing on-site natural habitats and landscape elements.
- Incorporate stormwater control features, such as green roofs, rain gardens, and swales.
- Maximize daylight for exterior spaces and minimize shading on adjacent sites.



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# The Civic Design Review Manual

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## **STEP 4: CDR Committee Issues an Advisory Recommendation on Application**

At the close of the CDR meeting, a summary of the Committee's recommendations will be given. This summary will also be reported to the Planning Commission at its next meeting.

- Applicant considers incorporating the CDR's design recommendations into the project proposal
- Applicant returns to L & I after completing the CDR process





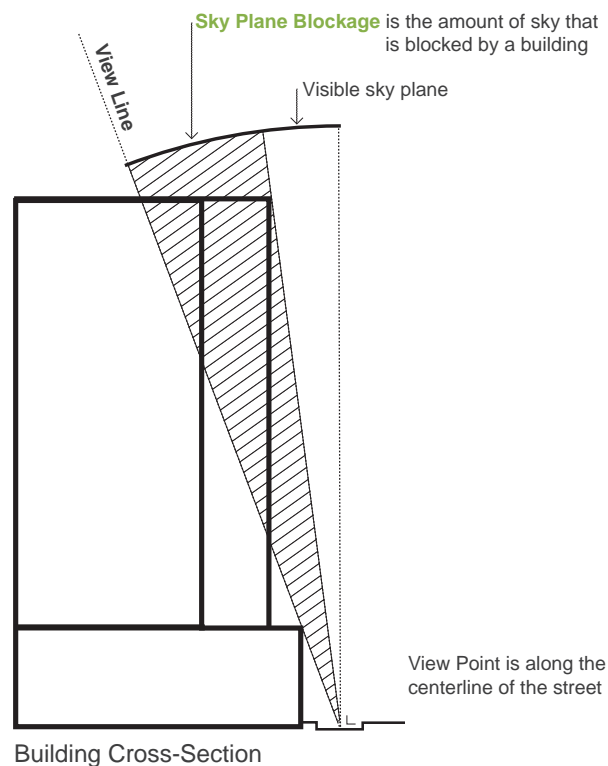


# The Sky Plane Manual

## What is Sky Plane?

Center City is Philadelphia's densest area of commercial and mixed-use activity. Density encourages the use of public transit and attracts a diverse retail and amenity base. However, tall buildings cast shadows that may darken city streets, creating a "dark canyon" effect.

Sky plane is one method used by the Zoning Code to prevent the dark canyon effect. It measures the exposure to light in a street as indicated by the amount of access to the open sky. For CMX-4 and CMX-5-zoned properties fronting on streets 50 ft. or more wide, the Zoning Code regulates the amount that a building can block access to the sky plane ("sky plane blockage"). These regulations divide the sky plane into six height intervals, which vary by street width, and establish a maximum sky plane blockage percentage for each interval.





# Zoning Toolbox

<i>Regulated Street Width</i>	<i>Regulated Height Interval</i>	<i>Allowed Blockage of Sky plane</i>
50-59 ft.  (including but not limited to Race and Locust Streets)	>575 ft.	0%
	285-575 ft.	60%
	150-285 ft.	70%
	90-150 ft.	80%
	65-90 ft.	85%
	<65 ft.	100%
60-69 ft.  (including but not limited to Chestnut and Walnut Streets)	>690 ft.	0%
	340-690 ft.	60%
	175-340 ft.	70%
	115-175 ft.	80%
	80-115 ft.	85%
	<80 ft.	100%
70-79 ft.  (including but not limited to Arch Street)	>825 ft.	0%
	415-825 ft.	60%
	200-415 ft.	70%
	135-200 ft.	80%
	100-135 ft.	85%
	<100 ft.	100%
80-89 ft.	>920 ft.	0%
	460-920 ft.	60%
	225-460 ft.	70%
	150-225 ft.	80%
	110-150 ft.	85%
	<110 ft.	100%
90-99 ft.	>1030 ft.	0%
	510-1030 ft.	60%
	255-510 ft.	70%
	170-255 ft.	80%
	120-170 ft.	85%
	<120 ft.	100%
100 ft. or wider  (including but not limited to Market Street and JFK Boulevard)	>1145 ft.	0%
	570-1145 ft.	60%
	285-570 ft.	70%
	190-285 ft.	80%
	125-190 ft.	85%
	<125 ft.	100%

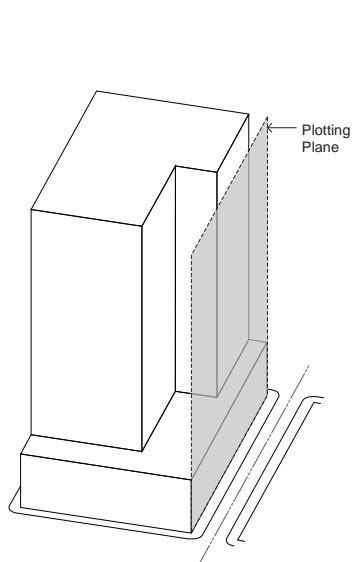


# The Sky Plane Manual

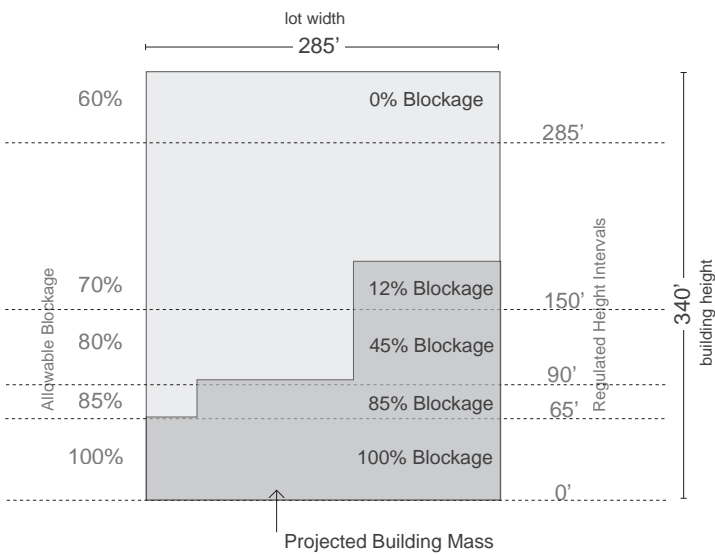
## The Sky Plane Calculation

Standard architecture industry computer modeling programs, including but not limited to SketchUp, REVIT or AutoCAD, can create a model of the building mass and all the necessary diagrams to calculate a building's sky plane blockage.

An applicant demonstrates compliance with the sky plane regulations by drafting a "plotting plane" diagram. The plotting plane diagram is a two-dimensional representation of building mass and sky plane. It is created by projecting the building mass onto a "plotting plane", a vertical plane passing through the front lot line contiguous to a street regulated by the sky plane provisions of the zoning code. (See Sample Plotting Plane Diagram below).



PLOTTING PLANE



SAMPLE PLOTTING PLANE DIAGRAM (OF A 50'-WIDE STREET EXAMPLE)

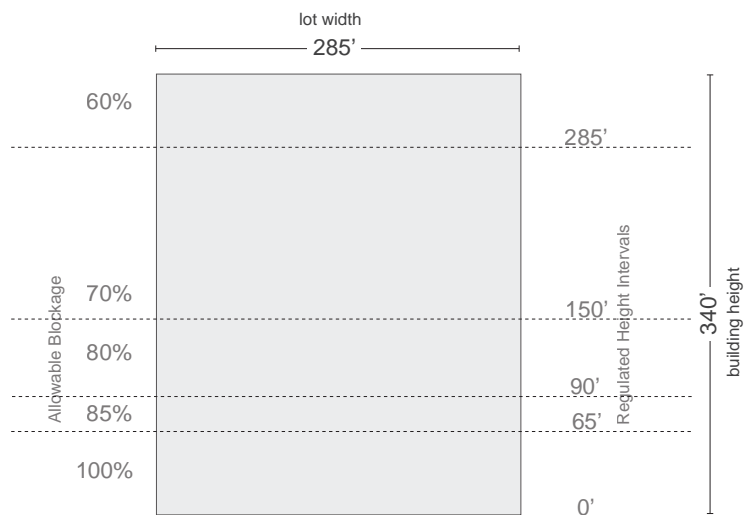


## STEP 1: Create a Scaled Plotting Chart

To create a scaled plotting chart:

1. Draw the plotting chart area with the lot width in feet along the x-axis and the proposed building height in feet along the y-axis.
2. Draw horizontal lines representing the sky plane height intervals. Label each height interval with the maximum sky plane blockage allowed by the zoning code.

The next steps describe how to plot the building mass onto the plotting chart to complete the plotting plane diagram.



PLOTTING CHART OF A 50'-WIDE STREET



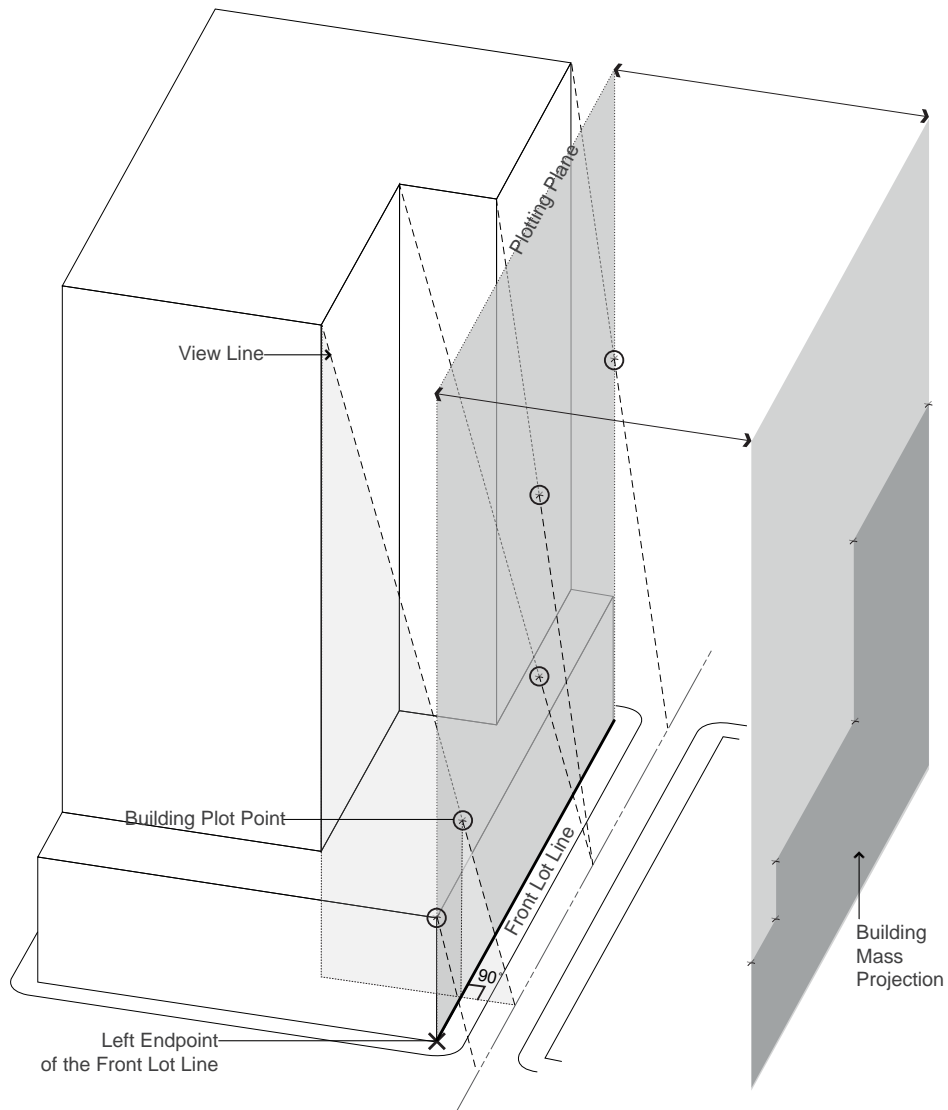
# The Sky Plane Manual

## Step 2: Project Building Mass onto Plotting Plane

This step describes how to project the building mass onto the plotting plane and how to derive the x- and y-coordinates for the corners of the building mass projection.

1. Draw “view lines”. A view line:
  - Begins at a top corner of a wall facing the regulated street; and
  - Ends at the point of intersection between the regulated street centerline and a vertical plane perpendicular to the regulated lot line which passes through the beginning corner.
  - There will be multiple view lines, one per top corner.
2. Mark each “building plot point”, the point of intersection of a view line with the plotting plane.
3. Determine the following for each building plot point:
  - The horizontal distance, in feet, between the left endpoint of the front lot line (as viewed from the street), and the point of intersection between a vertical line extending down from the building plot point to the front lot line; and
  - The height above the sidewalk in feet.





PROJECTING THE BUILDING MASS ONTO THE PLOTTING PLANE



# The Sky Plane Manual

## Step 3: Transfer Building Mass onto Plotting Chart

Transfer the building plot points onto the plotting chart to create the plotting plane diagram:

1. Chart each building plot point with its horizontal distance from the lower left-most corner of the building on the x-axis and its height along the y-axis.
2. Draw the building mass by connecting the building plot points with horizontal and vertical lines.
3. Label each building plot point with its x-coordinate, followed by its y-coordinate.

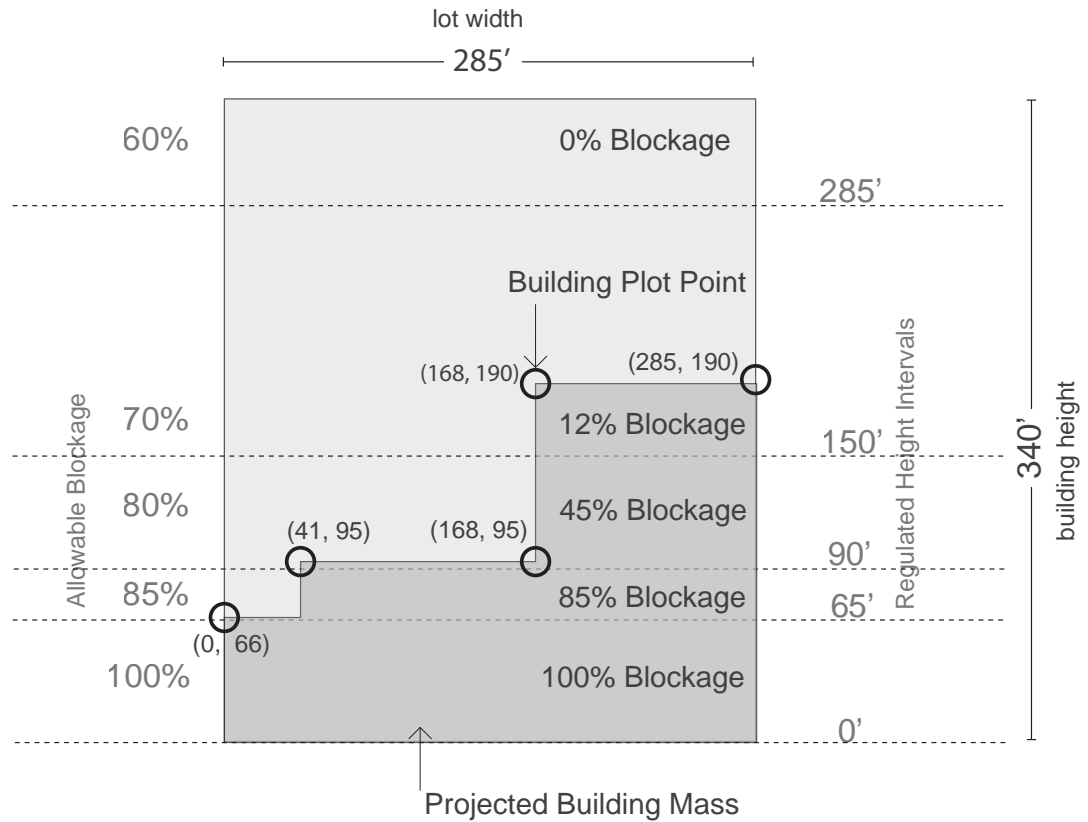
## Step 4: Complete the Plotting Plane Diagram

Complete the plotting plane diagram by determining the sky plane blockage at each height interval:

1. The sky plane blockage for each height interval is the percentage of the plotting chart area occupied by the projected building mass in that interval. Calculate the sky plane blockage for each interval by dividing the area of projected building mass by the total area of the interval.
2. Record the sky plane blockage for each height interval on the plotting plane diagram. The sky plane blockage must be equal to or less than the maximum allowed blockage to comply with the sky plane regulations.



# Zoning Toolbox



COMPLETED PLOTTING PLANE DIAGRAM



# The Sky Plane Manual

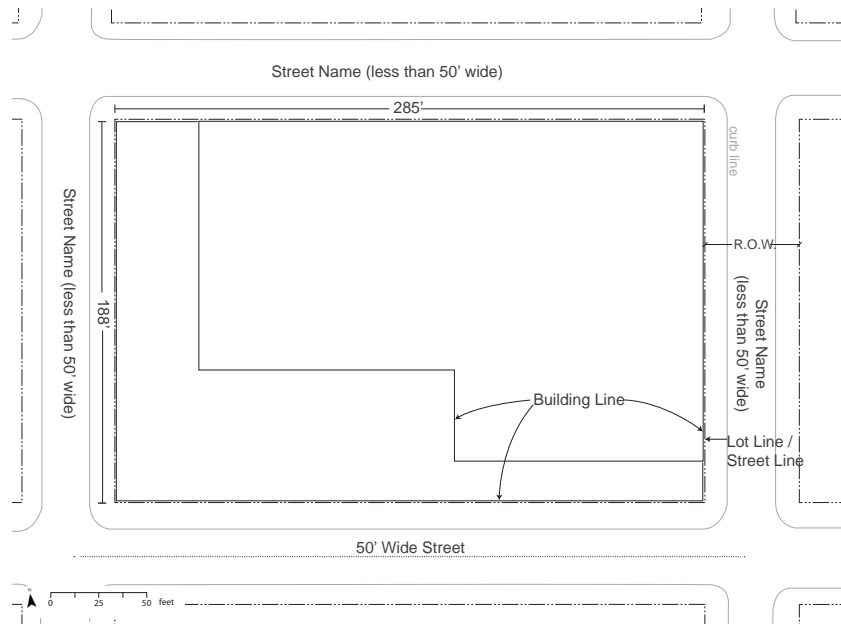
## Sky Plane Zoning Permit Application Submission Requirements

Applicants must provide all of the following materials with their zoning permit applications to demonstrate compliance with the zoning code's sky plane regulations. All materials must be certified and sealed by a PA-licensed architect.

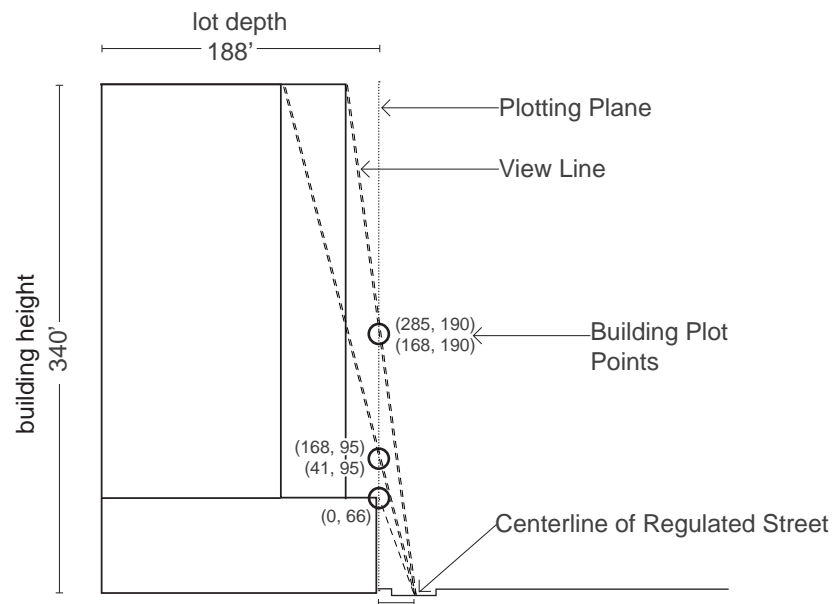
1. A **Plotting Plane Diagram** that includes:
  - A scaled plotting chart.
  - The projected building mass.
  - Building plot points, labeled with their x- and y-coordinates.
  - The calculated sky plane blockages.
2. A **Plan View Diagram** that includes:
  - North point and scale.
  - Lot lines, street lines, and building lines.
  - Lot dimensions in feet.
  - Street names.
  - An indication of the street(s) regulated by the Sky Plane provisions of the zoning code.
3. A **Profile Diagram**, for each regulated street frontage, that includes:
  - A cross-section of the building lot and regulated street, with measurements in feet for building depth, lot depth, and street width.
  - A vertical line extending from the front lot line to represent the edge of the plotting plane.
  - All view lines.
  - All building plot points, labeled with their coordinates as charted on the plotting plane diagram.
4. Depending on the complexity of the building design, the Planning Commission may request the submission of a computer-generated model of the building in an acceptable file format.



# Zoning Toolbox



SAMPLE PLAN VIEW DIAGRAM



SAMPLE PROFILE DIAGRAM



# The Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
about the difference between Local RCOs and other RCOs, refer to **Best Practices for Community Organizations: Registered Community Organizations** in Part B of the Manual.

## SPECIAL RCO NOTICE REQUIREMENTS FOR CONDITIONAL ZONING PERMITS

*The zoning code requires any applicant that receives a conditional zoning permit to notify the RCOs whose boundaries include the subject property within 15 days of receipt of the permit. The written notice must contain the address of the subject property and a copy of the conditional zoning permit. The notice must be sent via email, certified mail, or hand delivery.*

*For more information, see §14-303(6)(f) of the Zoning Code.*

## Meetings with Registered Community Organizations

The Zoning Code requires specific neighborhood-based notice for applications that trigger Civic Design Review or require Zoning Board approval for a special exception or variance. Applicants with these types of projects must:

1. Notify all Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) whose registered boundaries include the subject property, and
2. Meet with the **Local** RCOs to discuss the project.

## The RCO Meeting Process

1. L&I will identify the RCOs requiring notice. If there are no existing **Local** RCOs in the project's vicinity, the District Councilperson will take the place of the Local RCO.
2. Notify the RCOs (or District Councilperson, if applicable) via the method of contact indicated by the registry within 7 days of confirmation from L&I that Civic Design Review is required, or within 7 days of the petition of appeal filing date for special exceptions and variances. Use of a delivery confirmation method is suggested. The notice must indicate:
  - Applicant's name, address, phone number, and email address.
  - A copy of the application submitted to L&I (or the location where copies can be obtained).
  - A short description of the subject property.
  - A short description of the nature, scope, and purpose of the application.
  - The type of zoning review, i.e. Civic Design Review, special exception, or variance.
  - The time and place of the public Civic Design Review Committee meeting or Zoning Board hearing. If the public meeting/hearing has not been scheduled yet, the notice should indicate as such.
  - The name and contact information of all RCOs contacted about the application.



## CONTACT INFORMATION

### **Civic Design Review Committee**

1515 Arch Street, 13th floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.683.4615

### **Zoning Board of Adjustment**

Boards Administration Unit  
Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Blvd, 11th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1687  
215.686.2429

3. Schedule a time to meet with the Local RCOs (or District Councilperson, if applicable) to discuss your application, preferably the next regularly-scheduled meeting of the Local RCO. The Zoning Code gives the Local RCOs (or District Councilperson) the responsibility of convening, conducting, and organizing the meeting. The code requires at least one meeting with the Local RCOs (or District Councilperson) although multiple meetings may be helpful to adequately discuss the project.
4. Send a copy of the notice and a written summary of the meeting to the Civic Design Review (CDR) Committee or the Zoning Board, whichever is applicable, no later than 45 days from the zoning permit application date (for Civic Design Review) or the date of filing the petition of appeal to the Zoning Board (for special exceptions and variances). Use of a delivery confirmation method is suggested.

If a meeting with the Local RCO did not take place, the applicant must document a good faith effort to review the application at the next regularly-scheduled meeting of the Local RCO, or to establish an alternative meeting date within 30 days of the confirmation date that CDR is required or appeal filing date, as applicable.

It is recommended that a copy of the meeting summary (or documentation of a good faith effort to attend a neighborhood meeting) be sent to the District Councilperson.








# The Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings



## Public Notice

The Zoning Code requires public sign notice of a Zoning Board hearing on a special exception or variance **at least 21 days** before the scheduled hearing date. The Zoning Board provides the orange sign poster that the applicant must post on the subject property.

## Minimum Requirements

-  Do post 1 sign per each street frontage.
-  Do post signs in unobstructed plain view, at eye level and as close to the sidewalk, or street line if no sidewalk is present, as possible (within 5 feet is a good rule of thumb). Use a stake in the ground if necessary.
-  Do post signs so that they are readable by passersby without having to come onto the property.
-  Do photograph (4"x 6" images) each of posted sign notices.
-  Do NOT post signs on moveable gates, doors, windows, trees or utility poles.

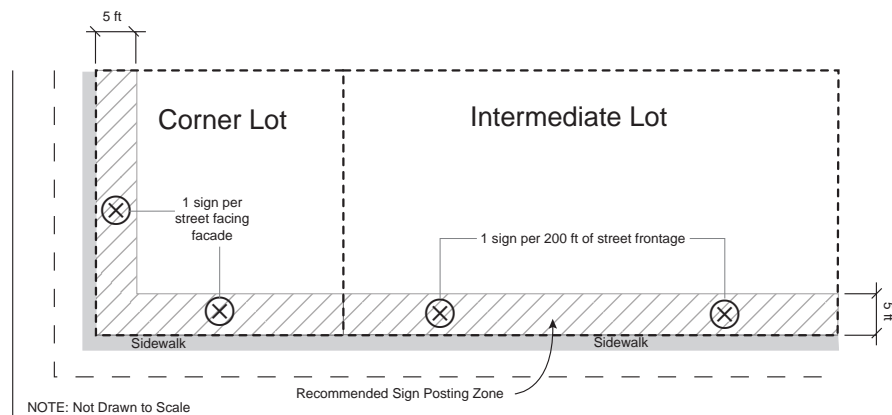
## Other Suggestions

-  On larger parcels, do post signs every 200 feet along each street frontage.
-  Do notify abutting neighbors by mail, email, or in person.



## Re-Posting for Continued Hearings

The Zoning Code requires public notice of a hearing that is continued more than 7 days from the original hearing date. Notice must be posted 21 or more days before the continued hearing date. The Zoning Board will provide the notices to be posted.



RECOMMENDED SIGN POSTING GUIDELINES



# The Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings

## Zoning Board Hearings

The Zoning Board meets twice weekly. All hearings are open to the public. The Zoning Board's hearing schedule and agendas are available online at:

<http://www.phila.gov/li/pages/AppealsCalendar.aspx>

## What to Bring to the Hearing

Applicants must bring all of the following documents to the hearing. The Zoning Board will continue the hearing to a later date if any documents are missing.

- ☐ **Proof of legal interest in the property.** Bring one of the following:
  - A deed that has been recorded and stamped by the City Recorder of Deeds; or
  - A current lease; or
  - An agreement of sale, if purchased within the last 6 months or if purchase pending;
  - A receipt from the Sheriff, if purchased at Sheriff's sale within the last year.
- ☐ **Written authorization** from all other owners whose names appear on any deeds, leases, agreements of sale, or settlement sheets. This includes husbands, wives, children or parents.
- ☐ **Photographs (4" x 6") of the property.** Record the date of the photograph, name and address of the photographer, calendar number of the case, and a brief description on each photograph. Do **not** mount photographs on a display board. Photographs must show:
  - Each sign notice poster.
  - Exterior of the entire property to include the front, side and rear of the structures, all stories of the structures on the property and along each street frontage for its entire width.
  - Interior of the property, where appropriate.
  - Adjoining properties on the block.



- ☐ **Site and floor plans.**
- ☐ **Copies of notice(s) to Issue-Based and Local Registered Community Organization(s).**
- ☐ **Documentation of a neighborhood meeting with Local Registered Community Organization(s)** that includes all of the following information:
  - Name and contact information of each Local RCO (or District Councilperson if there are no Local RCOs in the vicinity of the subject property).
  - Calendar number and date of the case.
  - Location, date, time and total attendance of the neighborhood meeting and a summary of the proceedings of the meeting, including aspects of the application receiving opposition or non-opposition from the registered community organization as well as any agreed-upon provisos.

If a meeting with the Local RCO(s) did not take place, instead bring documentation of a good faith effort to review the application at the next regularly-scheduled meeting of the Local RCO(s), or to establish an alternative meeting date within 30 days of the appeal filing date.



# The Developer's Guide to Public Notice and Zoning Board Hearings

## The Hearing

- Any corporation, including an incorporated non-profit, that is the applicant in the matter must be represented by an attorney. The General Partner and/or Managing Partner may provide written authorization for any partner to appear before the Zoning Board on behalf of the partnership. The partnership may also be represented by an attorney.
- Interpreters are welcome at all hearings. The Zoning Board offers free interpreter services. Contact the Board Administration Unit in advance of the hearing to request these services.
- Any organization or member of the public who attends a public hearing may offer testimony on a case.
- A representative of the City Council District office may be present to offer testimony on the application.
- Applicants and protestants have the opportunity to present evidence and letters from the community that support or oppose the granting of the requested special exception or variance. All parties must pre-mark exhibits with their names.

## The Decision

- The Zoning Board grants the special exception or variance. The applicant receives a “Notice of Decision” indicating the grant of the request. The applicant must present the Notice of Decision, which remains valid for one year, to L&I to obtain the zoning permit;

OR

- The Zoning Board denies the special exception or variance. The applicant receives a “Notice of Decision” indicating the refusal of the request. The applicant may file an appeal to the Court of Common Pleas within 30 days of the date of this decision.







# Best Practices for Community Organizations

## SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS FROM COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS IN PHILADELPHIA

*East Kensington Neighbors Association mission is to organize the voice, concerns, and the action of East Kensington residents. Geographically East Kensington is bounded by Norris Street to the South, Frankford and Trenton Ave to the East, Lehigh Ave to the North, and Front Street/ Kensington Ave. to the West.*

*Francisville NDC mission is to improve the quality of life in the Francisville community through Commercial and Residential Development and to implement programs designed to develop the youth, aid senior citizens, and generally invest in the people of Francisville.*

*The mission of the Logan Square Neighborhood Association (LSNA) is to promote the social, cultural, and economic welfare of the Logan Square neighborhood and larger community, to attempt to represent fairly all residents, businesses, and institutions in the neighborhood, and to work cooperatively with government at all levels to achieve these ends.*

Organized communities are better communities. Community organizations enhance neighborhood identity and cohesiveness. Members of community groups are better informed and better able to network and share information. Having a community organization allows a neighborhood to be represented more effectively with local government.

## Managing a Community Organization

Well-organized community groups have a clear mission, rules that govern the organization, and committees that divide the work among the members, topic by topic.

### The Mission Statement

One of the first tasks that a new organization should complete is to develop a written mission statement. This mission statement will unify the members of the organization around a common purpose and help the organization to recruit new members who share that goal. Mission statements may address planning, land use, and zoning issues, as well as broader quality of life issues such as public safety or social welfare. Often community organizations include in the mission statement information on their membership and how they propose to accomplish their goals. For neighborhood-based organizations, it is important to set forth the geographic area of the neighborhood's concern in the mission statement.

### The Membership

Strong organizations actively and regularly seek new membership from the organization's service area. They strive to include membership that is representative of the range of community members, including homeowners, renters, business owners, and institutions. Including this diverse membership helps the organization build partnerships and improves its access to skills and experience that will help the organization function well. A diverse membership will also help the organization understand issues from a variety of points of view and make sound decisions. The organization's publications, such as its website, newsletters, flyers, etc. should state that meetings are open and that new members are encouraged. Among the decisions that the organization will



*The Nicetown Community Development Corporation has a mission to dynamically improve the quality of life in Nicetown and surrounding communities, by establishing sustainable community economic development.*

*Queen Village Neighbors Association: To help restore and preserve the historic value of the neighborhood, and to bring together people who are willing to work to improve their properties and to make the community an attractive place in which to live and bring up their families.*

*The South of South Neighborhood Association (SOSNA) is a group of committed residents who are working to improve quality of life, safety, and infrastructure in our neighborhood.*

*Walnut Hill Community Association (WHCA) is a growing neighborhood group run by residents who are dedicated to their community revitalization. WHCA actively promotes the neighborhood and encourages residents to participate in community events and to help determine neighborhood improvement priorities.*

have to address are: membership dues; length of membership; categories of membership; and requirements and responsibilities of members. These decisions should be recorded and made a part of the organization's rules or by-laws (see below).

## Rules and By-Laws

Well-functioning organizations operate by a set of rules, commonly known as by-laws. These rules set expectations and guide the conduct of the organization's members and leaders. They help the organization make decisions, and the members to understand their responsibilities and what to expect from each other. By-laws or rules can take a number of different formats, but they typically address common issues, including:

- Membership: categories of membership; dues; renewal; responsibilities.
- Board of Directors: the size of the Board; how it is elected; and its responsibilities. Be careful not to have too small or too large a board – both create difficult situations. A good rule of thumb is to have an odd number of members, usually between 9 and 19.
- Officers: election of and responsibilities of officers such as President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer.
- Committees – who decides what committees are formed, the membership of each committee, and their responsibilities.
- Meetings: who is empowered to call a meeting; how are decisions made (majority vote? more than majority vote?); establishing a quorum (how many members need to be present to make a decision).
- Changing or amending the by-laws: one of the most important up-front decisions in rule-making is determining how to change the rules. Since this is such a basic decision, in many cases organizations require a certain number of meetings to discuss rule changes and a certain level of notice about the meetings (for example, it must be discussed at two meetings prior to a vote; or the proposed change must be distributed to members at least 30 days in advance). Organizations also frequently require a vote by more than a majority of the members (such as 2/3 of the members).



# Best Practices for Community Organizations

## ESTABLISHING A LAND USE, PLANNING, OR ZONING COMMITTEE

*Here are some specific recommendations for this type of committee:*

*Clarify the responsibilities of this committee with regard to proposed development projects within the organization's boundaries – for example, will it meet with developers? Will it speak for the organization on such matters or make a recommendation to the organization?*

*Many groups seek local professionals in related field (architects, engineers, planners, etc) to participate on this type of committee.*

*One of the most important set of decisions will relate to the role of near neighbors of the project. Will there be special outreach to them? Do their voices carry more weight?*

*Meetings on development projects are more successful if the committee is able to obtain important information about the project beforehand, such as copies of site plans; any variances or special exceptions being requested, etc.*

Organizations do not have to start out from scratch when writing by-laws. There are numerous resources available, including templates or guides available on the web, the by-laws of similar organizations, and legal service organizations, that focus on working with non-profit organizations.

## The Role of Committees

Committees play a critical role in organizations. Organizations often form unique committees to address specific concerns in their communities. Standing committees continue from year to year to handle on-going issues. Ad-hoc committees have specific assignments to help manage special short-term projects. The ideal number of members on a committee can vary, but 12 or fewer is a manageable size. Remember to list the standing committees in the organization's by-laws and include a short description of each committee's purpose and responsibilities.

Examples of typical standing committees include membership, public safety, neighborhood beautification, finance, economic development, and planning/land use/zoning. Many organizations seek local professionals with expertise in these topics to serve on committees, which is why it is important for an organization to seek a diverse organization.

## Community Meetings

Healthy community organizations hold regularly-scheduled meetings. Many organizations in Philadelphia meet once a month, except during the summer season. Regular meetings allow organizations to maintain an open channel of communication, increase awareness of issues and concerns in the community, and respond dependably to these issues. Groups should take the following steps to convene and conduct meetings:

- Notify the Board, members, and the public of upcoming meetings. A meeting calendar on the organization's website is a useful way to keep the membership updated of scheduled meetings. Other ways to distribute meeting notices include newspaper ads, email blasts, flyers, and social media. If a meeting agenda item concerns a specific property, its good practice to contact the nearest neighbors (such as within one square block of the property) and invite them to the meeting.



- Invite a Community Planner from the Planning Commission to attend the meeting.
- Draft an agenda and list of planned presenters ahead of time and share with all members. A typical agenda for a community meeting includes:

## *Sample Agenda*

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Introductions and Announcements**
3. **Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting**
4. **Committee Reports**
5. **Guest Speaker Presentations**
6. **Unfinished Business**
  - > *Unfinished business item 1*
  - > *Unfinished business item 2*
7. **New Business**
  - > *New business item 1*
  - > *New business item 2*
8. **Adjourn**

- Distribute a sign-in sheet at the meeting so that attendees can share their name, address, and contact information.
- Use the Planning Commission's District Plan and neighborhood plans, if available, as guidance during the meeting.
- Strive for orderly and respectful discussion among meeting attendees.
- Record and distribute minutes of each meeting.



# Best Practices for Community Organizations

## PLANNING COMMISSION REGULATIONS REGARDING REGISTERED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

*The Planning Commission's official requirements for RCOs are stated in its Rules and Regulations. These regulations provide more specific detail on qualifying criteria for organizations, registration and renewal procedures, and procedures regarding meetings with zoning permit applicants.*

*Visit [www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org) for more information.*

## Registered Community Organizations

The Planning Commission encourages civic associations, neighborhood associations, community development corporations and other neighborhood-based groups with a similar mission to join the Commission's registry of community organizations. Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) receive formal notice from zoning permit applicants of projects located within their boundaries that require Civic Design Review or Zoning Board approval.

Local RCOs meet with zoning applicants and document the results of the meeting before any public Civic Design Review meetings or Zoning Board hearings. Local RCOs are also eligible to participate on the Civic Design Review Committee for projects located within their boundaries.

### How to Register

The Planning Commission will accept new registrations during June and December each year. RCOs must renew annually in June of each year. The Planning Commission's application form is posted on its website, [www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org).

### Types of Registered Groups

Each RCO must register as either an **Issue-Based** or **Local RCO**:

- **Local RCO** - The geographic area of concern is at least five city blocks but no more than 7 square miles.
- **Issue-Based RCO** - The geographic area of concern is greater than 7 square miles.



## *Qualifying Criteria*

Any organization seeking Local RCO status must:

- Be at least five city blocks but no more than 7 square miles.
- Have a mission involving land use, which may include aspects of zoning or development.
- Hold meetings that are open to the public and scheduled on a regular periodic basis (such as monthly).
- Announce its meetings publicly through flyers, newsletters, newspaper notice, electronic or social media, or another form accepted by the Planning Commission.
- Have an executive committee, board, officials, or other leadership chosen through elections.
- Have written rules establishing the mission, operation, regulation, and geographic boundary of the organization.
- Have the majority of its members consist of residents, property owners, business owners or operators, or tenants from the organization's registered geographic area of concern.

Any organization seeking Issue-Based RCO status must:

- Be larger than 7 square miles.
- Have a mission involving land use, which may include aspects of zoning or development.
- Be incorporated as a non-profit in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.



# Best Practices for Community Organizations

## Responsibilities of a Local RCO

### Participation on the Civic Design Review Committee

For Civic Design Review projects located within the boundaries of a Local RCO, a representative of the Local RCO participates as a member of the Civic Design Review Committee at the public meeting for that project. In cases of multiple Local RCOs for a single project, the organizations must nominate a single representative at least 7 days before the scheduled CDR meeting or the Executive Director of the Planning Commission will select a representative from among the nominees to serve on the Committee.

### Meetings with Zoning Permit Applicants

Local RCOs are responsible for convening and conducting a meeting with applicants requiring Zoning Board approval or an advisory recommendation from the Civic Design Review Committee for a project located within the Local RCO's boundaries. If there is more than one Local RCO, those organizations must coordinate to convene a single meeting. Local RCOs must:

- Advertise the meeting (See “Managing a Community Organization” above).
- Document the outcome of the meeting within 45 days from the zoning permit application date (for Civic Design Review) or the date the applicant filed the petition of appeal to the Zoning Board (for special exceptions and variances). The documentation should include a brief summary of the major discussion points from the meeting and a written statement of the RCO's opposition, support, or lack of agreement on the project.
- If a meeting with the zoning applicant did not take place, instead document a good faith effort to review the application at the RCO's next regularly-scheduled meeting, or to establish an alternative meeting date within 30 days of the permit application or appeal filing date, as applicable.
- Send copies of the documentation to the zoning applicant, the Planning Commission, District Councilperson, and the Civic Design Review Committee or Zoning Board, as applicable.



## Sample Meeting Documentation

### General Information

[Community Organization Name]  
[Community Organization Address]  
[Community Organization Phone]  
[Community Organization email ]

Date

[Name of Chairperson of the Zoning Board]  
Zoning Board of Adjustment  
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard  
Municipal Services Building – 11th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102-1687

**Re: [Calendar No. of Zoning Board Case]  
[Zoning Application No.]  
[Hearing Date and Hearing Time]**

Dear Mr./Ms. [Name of Chairperson of the Zoning Board]

On [date], the applicant of the above-referenced case met with members of our organization.

### Outcome of Meeting

Based on the outcome of that meeting, our organization [supports / opposes] the application for the following reasons:

- > [Reason 1]
- > [Reason 2]
- > [Reason 3]

OR

Our organization did not reach agreement on the application because [state main reason for disagreement]. Positive aspects of the application include [list positive aspects]. Negative aspects of the application include [list negative aspects].

### Closing

Sincerely,  
[Name of preparer on behalf of the organization]

cc: Community Planner of the Planning Commission  
Office of the District Council Member



# Contacts and Additional Resources

## Important Contacts



### LICENSES & INSPECTIONS

Permit Services  
Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Blvd - Concourse  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.686.2576  
[www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li)

### ZONING BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT

Boards Administration Unit  
Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Blvd - 11th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.686.2429  
215.686.2565 (fax)

### CITY PLANNING

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street - 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

### STREETS DEPARTMENT

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Blvd - Room 830  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.686.5578  
[www.philadelphiastreet.com](http://www.philadelphiastreet.com)

### WATER DEPARTMENT

Aramark Tower  
1101 Market Street - 2nd Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215.685.6387  
[www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org)

### ART COMMISSION

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street - 13th Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102  
215.683.2095  
[www.phila.gov/visitors/arts.html](http://www.phila.gov/visitors/arts.html)

### HISTORICAL COMMISSION

City Hall - Room 576  
Philadelphia, PA 19107  
215.686.7660  
[www.phila.gov/historical](http://www.phila.gov/historical)



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## Online Tools

### The Philadelphia Code

<http://www.amlegal.com/library/pa/philadelphia.shtml>

The American Legal Publishing Corporation publishes the Official Philadelphia Code. This website provides access to all titles of the Philadelphia Code, including the Zoning Code, and the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter.

### Zoning Map and RCO Map

<http://www.phila.gov/map>

Enables users to see base zoning districts and relevant zoning overlay districts. Searchable by address.

### Zoning Archive

<http://www.phila.gov/zoningarchive>

This service by the Department of Licenses and Inspections offers electronic scans of over 200,000 zoning applications, approved usages, and site drawings dating to the 1930s. Searchable by address.

### Zoning Appeals Calendar

<http://www.phila.gov/li/pages/AppealsCalendar.aspx>

Provides access to the appeals schedule and agendas for all of L&I's boards, including the Zoning Board of Adjustment.

### Business Services Portal

<http://business.phila.gov>

Provides all the information you need from the City to start or grow your business. Incorporates interactive features that allow business owners to apply for licenses, pay taxes and conduct other business with the City.



# Contacts and Additional Resources

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## Other Codes

**The Building Construction and Occupancy Code** (Title 4 of The Philadelphia Code) contains the Administrative Code, which governs fees and penalties for administrative permits. Title 4 also contains the Building Code, Electrical Code, Fire Code, Mechanical Code, Plumbing Code and Property Maintenance Code, among others.

**The Streets Code** (Title 11 of The Philadelphia Code) contains laws governing public rights-of-way, including rules on projections and encroachments into the sidewalk such as sidewalk cafes, awnings, canopies, signs and bay windows.



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## The Comprehensive Plan

The City Planning Commission is responsible for the preparation and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan for the city, which shows its present and planned physical development. The Zoning Code is a tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan's long-range vision for the city and its neighborhoods. Visit [www.phila2035.org](http://www.phila2035.org)



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## Citizens Planning Institute

The Citizens Planning Institute's mission is to empower citizens to take a more effective and active role in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and of Philadelphia, through a greater understanding of city planning and the steps involved in development projects. Visit [www.citizensplanninginstitute.org](http://www.citizensplanninginstitute.org)







