



June 3, 2015

Mr. Carlton Williams  
Commissioner of Licenses and Inspections  
Municipal Services Building, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

**RE: Civic Design Review for 838-52 North American Street, (Application No. 598933)**

Gary J. Jastrzab  
*Executive Director*

Alan Greenberger, FAIA  
*Chair*

Joseph Syrnick  
*Vice-Chair*

Nancy Rogo Trainer, FAIA, AICP  
*Civic Design Review Chair*

Rob Dubow  
Patrick Eiding  
Bernard Lee, Esq.  
Elizabeth K. Miller  
Richard Negrin  
Niida Iris Ruiz, MBA

Dear Mr. Williams:

Pursuant to Section 14-304(5) of the Philadelphia Zoning Code, the Civic Design Review (CDR) Committee of the City Planning Commission completed the required review of a proposed mixed-use building project at 838-52 North American Street.

The block on which the project is proposed includes a large parcel bounded by Poplar, North 3rd, and North American Streets, and an existing property line to the south. The 0.93 acre site is zoned CMX-3 and currently is a vacant lot. Within the middle of this parcel, fronting on North 3rd Street, is an existing structure that will remain. The development team has proposed a project that builds around this existing structure.

The proposal is for a mixed-use development totaling approximately 125,000 square feet that includes multiple 4-story residential buildings with roof decks. The proposal includes 39 total units, with 36 off-street garage parking spaces. The development project is divided into several sets of row home-type structures, which include 2 stacked units per building and one corner mixed-use building including a single commercial space consisting of 1,469 square feet. Additionally, the site proposes an interior courtyard providing access to each resident's parking garage and a small private green space.

At its meeting of May 26, 2015, the Civic Design Review Committee offered these comments and voted to complete the CDR process. This project does not have any zoning variances, but a summary of this project will be presented at the City Planning Commission meeting scheduled for Tuesday, June 9, 2015. The CDR Committee offered these comments:

**1. Address the complexity of North American Street vehicular drive aisle**

The CDR Committee asked the development team to address several issues regarding the vehicular drive aisle into the site from North American Street. The Committee recommended continuing conversations with the Streets Department, local neighbors, and the development team in regard to access, location of the drive aisle, and overall

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch St.  
13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

215-683-4615 Telephone  
215-683-4630 Facsimile

[www.phila.gov/cityplanning](http://www.phila.gov/cityplanning)

circulation concerns regarding North American, Poplar, and 3rd Streets. The Committee recommended re-evaluation of the vehicular entrance along North American Street and making several modifications to the design of the townhomes to make the public realm at the project more generous.

The Committee emphasized the importance of maintaining the “street walls” of the development, but suggested that a larger setback on North American Street, or moving the drive aisle to North 3rd Street, would be an improvement. Additionally, it was recommended that the applicant meet with the Zoning Committee of the Northern Liberties Neighbors Association to further address vehicular circulation concerns, specifically the potential for an increased setback along North American Street to improve both pedestrian and vehicular circulation.

**2. Street Tree Feasibility**

The Committee noted that some proposed street tree locations were not feasible due to potential overhead wire conflicts, narrow sidewalks, and stoop encroachments, which would affect the pedestrian right-of-way and the overall size of the tree planting pits. The design team was encouraged to replace any trees that cannot be planted along the street frontages to be planted within the interior of the courtyard to help soften the hardscape.

**3. Drive Aisle Material**

The Committee noted that the sidewalk at the driveway aisle entering into the courtyard from North American Street should be the same material as all other sidewalks to emphasize the pedestrian walking zone. The development team confirmed that this was a rendering issue and the sidewalk at the drive aisle will indeed match all other sidewalk material.

**4. Improving an On-Site Pedestrian Walkway**

The Committee requested that the development team re-evaluate the pedestrian walkway and the entrances to the three homes on the south side of the property, specifically for units 19A and 20B. The addition of planting areas as well as lighting was seen as a positive contribution, but the Committee thought that more could be done for the overall experience of the pedestrian walkway. Increased setback of the buildings was mentioned as an option to provide more space and light to this walkway area.

**5. Materials of Interior Courtyard**

The Committee requested that the materials of the courtyard be enhanced, specifically using a different material in addition to asphalt. Some fields of unit pavers were suggested. Material options for the service area just outside the garages should be assessed to distinguish pedestrian walking zones from areas for trash cans and recycling buckets.

**6. Removing a Single Building**

The Committee noted that several public realm issues, including lack of street tree planting areas along sidewalks, setback issues, sun and light exposure, and tight pedestrian walkways could all be addressed if the development team removed Building 19A/20B. Removing this building would provide more green space for potential

planting, add needed access along tight corridors and would provide additional space for residents to use as open space.

**7. Mixed-use Functions**

The Committee observed that the development team proposed this project with a mixed-use approach and encouraged commercial square footage even though it was not required. The Committee appreciated that the project adds a commercial dimension to the neighborhood, integrating it nicely into the uses that already exist in the Northern Liberties neighborhood.

**8. Development Team Initiative**

The Committee applauded the development team for addressing all zoning refusals prior to the CDR meeting. The development team added a loading space, provided both commercial and residential bike racks, and addressed a deficient drive aisle width. These changes all positively addressed the zoning variance requirements and created a stronger project.

In conclusion, the Civic Design Review process has been completed for this project. Please contact me if you have any questions about the Committee's action.

Sincerely,



Gary J. Jastrzab  
Executive Director

cc: Nancy Rogo Trainer, Chair, Civic Design Review Committee, nrt23@drexel.edu  
Dan Garofalo, Vice Chair, Civic Design Review Committee, danielg@upenn.edu  
Council President Darrell Clarke, darrell.clarke@phila.gov  
Jeffery Young, jeffery.young@phila.gov  
Jose Hernandez, JKR Partners, johern@jkrpartners.com  
Marissa McMurtrie, JKR Partners, mmcmurtrie@jkrpartners.com  
Hercules Grigos, Esq, Obermayer, LLP, hercules.grigos@obermayer.com  
Larry Freedman, Northern Liberties Neighbors Association,  
larryfreedman@comcast.net  
Melissa Magnus, Northern Liberties Neighbors Association,  
melissamagnus@gmail.com  
Jennifer Rogers, 5th Republican Ward, 5thwardrco@gmail.com  
Cheli Dahal, Plans Examiner, L&I, cheli.r.dahal@phila.gov  
Marty Gregorski, PCPC, marty.gregorski@phila.gov  
David Schaaf, PCPC, david.schaaf@phila.gov