



April 22, 2013

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

RE: Civic Design Review for 3601 Market Street, University City Science Center Residential Tower, Application No. 458528

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 the proposed University City Science Center (UCSC) Residential Tower, located at 3601 Market Street.

The UCSC Residential Tower will be the first of its kind in the Science Center, located along Market Street in West Philadelphia. It will provide housing for graduate students, Science Center employees, and even commuters that may commute to their jobs in New York City. The parcel, currently a surface parking lot, is zoned CMX-4

At its meeting of April 2, 2013, the Civic Design Review Committee made the following comments, and then made a unanimous motion concerning the project that will be reported to the full City Planning Commission at a future meeting. The Civic Design Review Committee offered the following comments:

1. Single-story retail at the intersection of Market and 36th Street is not compatible with the scale of other buildings in the Science Center. The architect and the developer later clarified that the retail portion of the building was nearly 30'-0" in height and could include a mezzanine, should the tenant require it. This explanation underscored the fact that the retail function could hold its own against the scale and height of other Science Center structures.
2. Because the large block to the north of the project site across Filbert Street is the location of two Philadelphia public schools that are now vacant and may be sold, the Committee asked that the functions and character of the north elevation of the building be respectful to any potential development project on that block that will inevitably occur.

Gary J. Jastrzab
Executive Director

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3. The above-grade parking garage that the developer proposed was characterized as “troubling.” The Committee posited that this garage might create a “dead-zone” in the building and would be an unwelcome addition to the Market Street corridor. The garage itself will need a “special exception” approval in this zoning district. The Committee suggested that the parking garage be limited to one floor underground.
4. The Committee further noted that far more cars were being parked in the garage than zoning requires. One hundred-eight spaces are required by code, and nearly 200 spaces are being provided in the garage. The committee suggested that the parking count in the garage be trimmed. However, a representative from the University City Science Center held that 220 spaces are currently available in the surface parking lot on-site, and they had hoped to replace most of these spaces in the proposed garage.
5. The building does not offer an obvious area close to building entrances that allow for pedestrian comfort and shelter. The architects held that along Market Street, the building has been modestly pulled away from the property line to allow for such amenity, and that the major entrance to the building includes a very large marquee that would provide shelter for those walking in and out of the building. There might be some area below the marquis for seating and landscaping – though this has not been indicated in the plan.
6. The RCO representative spoke to the need for minority and local business participation in both the construction and operation of the proposed building and its accompanying retail space.

After the discussion, the Committee moved that the staff summary findings be adopted. In brief, those findings are:

- The parking garage access from Filbert Street is desirable, and the removal of a curb-cut for the surface parking at 36th Street enhances pedestrian circulation. The building façade masks the garage from both Market and 36th Streets.
- Street trees should be planted along 36th St., and the tree species should be chosen to be compatible with the poles that support catenaries for trolleys moving along 36th Street. An adequate sidewalk width in accordance with the City Planning Commission’s *Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan* can be maintained by providing street trees with walkable grates. No planters should be placed along 36th Street.
- A two-car lay-by in front of the building’s Market Street entrance is acceptable because it does not compromise the pedestrian clear zone of the sidewalk and there is no parking along the north curb line of Market Street.
- The applicant must reduce the requested square footage of signs on the ground floor commercial elevations that appear to be duplicative. Too much additional square footage for signs is being requested by variance.

PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

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In addition to the PCPC staff's findings, the motion to approve this structure as it was presented included depressing the parking garage a full level into the site, to create some below-grade parking.

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
Daniel K. Garofalo, Vice-Chair, Civic Design Review Committee
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