

# Registered Community Organizations

## Frequently Asked Questions



### 1. What is a Registered Community Organization?

Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) are community organizations that have registered with the city. They receive formal notice from developers whose proposed projects are within the RCO's boundaries and require Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) approval or Civic Design Review (CDR).

### 2. How does the Zoning Code differentiate between Local RCOs and Issue-Based RCOs?

Local RCOs hold public meetings where members of the community and zoning applicants discuss the proposed project.

Issue-Based RCOs (whose boundaries must be larger than 7 square miles) receive the same notice from applicants, but do not hold meetings with applicants.

### 3. If I do not belong to an RCO, my organization is not an RCO, or I belong to an Issue-Based RCO, can I testify at ZBA hearings?

Absolutely, all ZBA hearings are open, public meetings.

### 4. Should my group apply to become a Local RCO?

Yes, if your group is interested in neighborhood development and willing to organize open, public meetings with ZBA and CDR applicants and the community.

### 5. Does my organization need to be a 501c3?

Yes, if you are applying as an Issue-Based RCO. Local RCOs do not.

### 6. When can my organization apply?

Since this process is new, applications will be accepted on a rolling basis through December 2012. After that, the next application period will be in June 2013.

Groups that do not meet the application criteria can re-apply.

### 7. Another RCO's boundary overlaps with that of my group. What do we do about the meetings?

The applicant is not required to attend multiple meetings. If more than one local RCO is involved, the RCOs must collaborate to schedule a single meeting with the applicant. If they fail to do this, the applicant can provide the ZBA with written documentation demonstrating that s/he made a good faith effort to meet with the RCOs. RCOs whose boundaries overlap may want to discuss how they will collaborate in advance of any need to schedule a meeting.

### 8. What if overlapping RCOs disagree on a project after meeting with an applicant?

There is no requirement for the parties to come to an agreement. Each RCO and the developer are required to document the results of the meeting.

### 9. In cases of multiple Local RCOs, who sits on the Civic Design Review Committee?

There is a seat reserved on the CDR Committee for a representative of the local RCO. 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 to serve on the Committee.

### 10. How do I find out about ZBA hearings?

Applicants are required to notify RCOs within 7 days after filing an appeal to the ZBA or being notified by Licenses & Inspections (L&I) that an application will require CDR.

ZBA cases can be found here:

<http://www.phila.gov/li/Pages/Appeals.aspx>

### 11. Where can I find a list of RCOs and their boundaries?

List: <http://www.phila.gov/cityplanning>

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

### What is the Zoning Board of Adjustment?

The ZBA makes discretionary decisions on zoning applications known as special exceptions and variances and hears appeals of L&I zoning decisions. The Zoning Board uses criteria that are outlined in the Zoning Code.

### What is Civic Design Review?

CDR is an opportunity for major development projects to be reviewed in a public forum and evaluated against consistent standards, regardless of the need for special zoning approval. CDR will evaluate a proposed development's impact on the public realm. An advisory recommendation will be made by the CDR Committee to the zoning applicant and to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission.