



September 2, 2015

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

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
Nilda Iris Ruiz, MBA

RE: Civic Design Review for 400 Reed Street, (Application No. 617614)

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 residential building project at 400 Reed Street.

The project is proposed on a site bounded by Reed Street to the north, 4th Street to the east, Dickinson Street to the south, and 5th Street to the west. The site is zoned RMX-2 (Master Plan District) and currently is occupied by multiple vacant hospital buildings.

The site is about 3 acres and the proposal is for 95 residential units, in 14 structures with 134 garage parking spaces. The proposal includes private driveways and 4 landscaped courtyards that function as rain gardens.

At its meeting of August 4, 2015, the Civic Design Review Committee made a series of findings and voted to extend the review process, requiring the project to come back for a second and final review. At its meeting of September 1, 2015, the Civic Design Review Committee offered further comments:

1. Improve Pedestrian Walkways

The CDR Committee recognized that the addition of the pedestrian walkways from both Reed and Dickinson Streets improves the site plan, but their narrow width prevents them from being inviting features. The Committee had concerns about safety and suggested that the landscape buffer be eliminated and windows added to the side elevations of adjacent buildings. These improvements would allow the walkways to be wider and to feel more comfortable.

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2. Improve Rear Elevations and Rear Drives

The CDR Committee requested at the August review that the quality of materials of the rear elevations of the houses be improved. No changes were submitted for the September review. Much of the public realm within the site design suffers from the lack of design of the rear elevations and rear drives. For example, the vistas created by the courtyards are terminated by inadequately designed rear elevations. Pedestrian and bicycle conflicts are possible because of the unarticulated driveway space and the dominance of parking garage doors.

3. Locate Automobile Access on Reed Street

The CDR Committee repeated their recommendation from the August review to locate the automobile entrance on Reed Street because this street should act as the major circulation route into and out of the site.

4. Locate Street Trees Strategically

The CDR Committee expressed concerns with the placement of street trees. Walking zone pinch points between tree pits and stoops should be avoided and overhead wires should either be avoided or placed underground.

5. Eliminate Planting Strip Parallel to the Southernmost Sidewalk

The CDR Committee recommended removing the grass planting strip because successfully maintaining plants in such a confined space is difficult.

6. Verify Sustainable Features through a Certification Process

The CDR Committee recommended that proposed sustainable features employ a standard rating system so that their impact can be more accurately assessed.

7. Effectiveness of CDR Process on Approved Master Plan Districts

This project prompted the CDR Committee to voice concerns about the effectiveness of the CDR process if a Master Plan has been approved prior to design review. Design discussions in a public forum have the largest impact on a project when considered at the beginning of the development process. The Committee recommended amending the sequence of the process of Master Plan approvals so that the City Planning Commission can be informed by the CDR Committee's comments before considering approval a Master Plan district.

CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW

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 Jastrzab
Executive Director

cc: Nancy Rogo Trainer, Chair, Civic Design Review Committee, nrt23@drexel.edu
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Re: Civic Design Review for 1300 Fairmount Avenue, (Application No. 609996)

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 project at 1300 Fairmount Avenue.

The blocks on which the project is located include a collection of vacant lots bounded by Fairmount Avenue to the north, 13th Street and North Park Avenue to the east, Ridge Avenue to the west, and Melon Street to the south. These parcels are zoned CMX-4. At the northwest corner of these blocks lies the parcel for the former Divine Lorraine Hotel, which is not included in this project.

The site is 113,297 square feet or 2.6 acres. The proposal is for a mixed-use structure that houses 486 residential units, an attached 580 car parking garage, and 83,450 square feet of commercial space for a total of 679,560 gross square feet.

At its meeting of September 1, 2015, the Civic Design Review Committee offered these comments and voted to complete the CDR process. This project requires a special exception approval for the above-ground accessory parking structure in a CMX-4 zone.

1. Elevations and Layout of Public Open Space

- a. Portions of the raised public plaza are too narrow and result in walkways that are too constricted for public use. The design team should explore measures to create more generous walkways.
- b. The design team should explore other means of resolving grade challenges, either internally or externally, so that at least a portion of the plaza can be lowered to create a seamless relationship with the adjacent sidewalk along Ridge Avenue.

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2. Garage Enclosure

- a. The design team should review, and potentially reconsider the architectural quality of the parking garage façade, especially for the screening of cars and interior garage lighting. The final review and approval of elevations of parking garages in this zoning district is the responsibility of the City Planning Commission.
- b. The garage facade would become a very visible element in the midst of the adjacent residential communities. The design team is encouraged to explore more creative and innovative solutions for the garage facade, to enhance the architectural character of the entire project and to elevate its ability to complement other architecturally rich sites in the area (such as the Divine Lorraine).
- c. The design team is encouraged to employ exterior and interior lighting so that the garage façades do not become a field of dark patches or “black holes.” During evening hours, the garage should not cause lighting conditions that will impact adjacent neighborhoods.

3. Parking Garage Entry and Parking Count

- a. The CDR Committee expressed concerns with the sightlines for drivers entering and leaving the parking structure, especially in relation to existing automobile traffic coming from the intersections of Broad Street and Ridge Avenue, as well as Ridge Avenue and Wallace Street.
- b. The CDR Committee supports the garage design, in that there are more parking spaces than required in order to serve the proposed commercial use and so that the adjacent neighborhood is not burdened.
- c. The large volume of cars coming from the parking garage could lead to conflicts with pedestrians and cyclists. The design team is encouraged to continue to follow-through on conversations with the Streets Department and other applicable agencies to create a traffic modeling study that considers the creation of a signalized traffic stop.

4. Phasing

- a. The CDR Committee expressed concerns that Phase I would not be quickly followed by Phase II, leaving the community faced with unsightly and unwelcoming edges of the existing parking structure. The applicant responded that Phase I of the project will be engineered to support Phase II, and that as soon as economic conditions are favorable, subsequent construction would follow.

5. Safety Concerns on Fairmount Avenue

- a. The CDR Committee welcomed the use of translucent and backlit doors facing Fairmount Avenue to increase the safety of the street at the loading docks on Fairmount Avenue.
- b. The CDR Committee expressed concerns with delivery trucks making use of smaller local streets, especially at night.
- c. The CDR Committee encourages the use of actively monitored security cameras both around the perimeter of the building and within the parking structure.

6. Ground Floor Entry Lobby

- a. The CDR Committee expressed concern that the entry lobby on Fairmount Avenue was undersized for the size of population that would be living in the residential towers. The design team is encouraged to explore reducing the size of the retail footprint to create a larger residential lobby.

7. Divine Lorraine Coordination

- a. The CDR Committee encouraged the design team to confirm that adequate setbacks from the former Divine Lorraine Annex would allow enough light and air to support its future use for residential dwelling units.
- b. The design team is encouraged to continue to work closely with the Divine Lorraine developers to coordinate the public spaces that both projects intend to create, and possibly share.

8. Sustainability and LEED Certification

- a. The CDR Committee encourages the design team to follow-through on their stated commitment to apply for LEED certification.

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 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

PHILADELPHIA CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

CIVIC DESIGN REVIEW

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