



June 14, 2023

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Re: St Joseph's Masterplan Amendment, 5600, 5800, and 6050 City Avenue

Dear Anne Fadullon,

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 masterplan amendment for Saint Joseph's University at its Hawk Hill campus.

This letter is a summary of the Civic Design Review Committee's advisory recommendations. It is not an expression of the City Planning Commission's recommendation or opinion regarding zoning variances, special exceptions, or other discretionary approvals associated with this proposal.

The masterplan amendment proposes 498,330 sf of new building construction, and about 7 acres of site revisions on its Hawk Hill campus, which is zoned SP-INS. The area of change includes portions of the campus along both the East and West sides Cardinal Avenue, between City Avenue and the intersection of Overbrook, Wynnefield, and Cardinal Avenues.

At its meeting of June 6, 2023, the Civic Design Review Committee reviewed the project and voted to complete the CDR process. After the meeting the chairperson asked to rescind his vote, as he had to step away during the presentation and deliberation. Planning Commission staff notes that the remaining votes were unanimously in support of concluding the process and thus the CDR process is completed. The Committee offered the following comments:

Registered Community Organization (RCO) Comments (Wynnefield Residents Association and Wynnefield Community Neighborhood Association)

The RCOs expressed some concerns from near neighbors regarding parking and how safety will be managed with the new buildings. They noted that many of their questions were addressed by the proposed masterplan amendment. They were also in agreement with bringing student housing towards City Avenue, away from the residents of their community.

CDR Committee Comments:

The CDR committee's recommendations include comments adopted from Planning Commission staff.

The committee appreciates and supports many of the masterplan changes, including the creation of a new campus quadrangle. They note that the plan creates vast improvements over the current layout, including the elimination of dead ends, and the expansion of green

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spaces. They also had comments regarding transit, loading bicycle infrastructure, ground floor uses, and more.

Regarding the new quadrangle, the Committee encouraged the development team to spend more time on the environmental and programmatic features, remembering to balance circulation routes with the creation of unbroken spaces. The Committee encouraged open spaces that are part of the learning environment and flexible enough to be used in a variety of ways, including events. The applicant is also encouraged to consider loggias and/or arcades which can activate edges of the quad, rather than lawn areas between pathways and buildings – these are spaces which are rarely used and can become a maintenance burden. The university should focus on uses for all building construction – ground floors should be student centered and publicly oriented with as much transparency as possible.

The development of the quad should include tree species which can create shade canopies and support overall sustainability goals. The committee also notes that heritage tree preservation and replacement should be closely considered when developing the new student housing on the west side of Cardinal Avenue.

For Cardinal Avenue, the applicant should consider Student Center entrances which face the Avenue and other massing and design developments which help to create facades suitable for a public street. The applicant should follow-through on screening the proposed loading area, and in general should closely consider the servicing of buildings and their impacts on open spaces. This includes the use and servicing of temporary structures used for events. For transit, the Committee urges discussions with SEPTA to provide bus shelters at the Cardinal and City Avenues stops, and to consider branding the shelters as a component of the University's campus.

Regarding multi-modal infrastructure, the Committee urged the creation of two or more bike share stations, and to provide more parking for bicycles and scooters on campus. The Committee urged other improvements to increase bicycle usage, including the creation and/or extension of two-way bike lanes on Wynnefield and Cardinal Avenues, and the provision of shower facilities for student and staff use. The Committee also encouraged the development of a routing and parking scheme plan for passenger vehicles, which could relieve burdens on the adjacent community.

In closing, the Committee encouraged the University to continue to nurture relationships with the surrounding community beyond this masterplan. This could include collaborative planning of active and passive open spaces on campus.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Sharpe
Executive Director



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Re: Civic Design Review for 2523-49 E York Street (Application # ZP-2022-013156)

Dear Matthew Wojcik,

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 at 2523-49 E York Street.

This letter is a summary of the Civic Design Review Committee's advisory recommendations. It is not an expression of the City Planning Commission's recommendation or opinion regarding zoning variances, special exceptions, or other discretionary approvals associated with this proposal.

This project proposes a mixed-use building totaling 82,541 square feet, including 7,782 square feet of commercial space, and 74,759 square feet of residential space for 87 dwelling units. The site has three street frontages: York Street, Almond Street, and Boston Street. The proposed commercial space covers the entire street frontage on York Street. The proposal also includes 38 car parking spaces, 35 bicycle parking spaces, and 2 loading spaces, all of which are proposed to be located on the ground floor. The proposal utilizes two zoning bonuses: the Green Roof Bonus, which adds 14 dwelling units (25% unit increase); and the Moderate Income Housing Bonus, which adds 14 dwelling units (25% unit increase), including 9 units at 80% AMI, and 7 feet of height. The site is zoned CMX-2, and no variances are required.

At its meeting of June 6, 2023, the Civic Design Review Committee completed the CDR process and offered the following comments:

RCO Comments:

Neither the coordinating RCO, Olde Richmond Civic Association, nor the affected RCO, New Kensington Community Development Corporation, provided comments in advance of or during the CDR meeting but the required RCO meeting occurred.

CDR Committee Comments:

The CDR committee recommendations include comments adopted from Planning Commission staff.

The committee chair noted that many of the public comments were expressing the same concerns. It was suggested that if the development team had taken more consideration of these concerns, the same public comments wouldn't have been repeated so much.

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Committee members questioned the number of street trees proposed, including why only five street trees are proposed for York Street. One committee member noted that if the issue is underground utilities, and they are in planters, it appears that more trees in planters could be included, perhaps twice as many on York and Almond Streets. Another committee member noted that the number of trees on Boston Street appears to be reduced from four to two and urged the development team to explore efforts to retain trees or maintain the current number.

Regarding building design, one committee member commented that the building does not relate to the surrounding context; higher quality building materials were encouraged, to better echo the character of the surrounding structures. It was noted that these materials do not need to be traditional brick but could be modern.

The committee noted that the angled parking on York Street should be back-end, rather than front-end, to ensure that exiting parked cars are not backing up through a bike lane and into incoming traffic.

Committee members shared several ideas to alleviate concerns from the community about the locations of the parking and loading entrances:

- Considering community concerns regarding the parking entrance off Boston Street and increased circulation due to cars entering the lot only to immediately exit when they don't find any spaces, it would be helpful to clarify with the community the process for how the on-site parking will work. The development team responded that spaces will be numbered. Additional communication was encouraged.
- One committee member suggested exploring ways to get more amenities on Boston Street, such as additional dwelling units, by reconfiguring or reducing the parking closest to Boston Street.
- Regarding concerns about loading on Almond Street, it was suggested that there may be a way to locate loading on Boston Street, by depressing parking several feet, in lieu of buried parking.

One committee member suggested improving trash servicing by reconfiguring the floor plans to include more multi-bedroom units. Directly above the trash room are 1-bedroom units; on each floor, converting two of these into a 2-bedroom unit, to create space for a trash chute, would improve trash servicing while simultaneously allowing for more 2-bedroom units.

The inclusion of a canopy including solar voltaic panels for generating electricity for the project was also noted and appreciated.

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,

Eleanor Sharpe
Executive Director

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Re: Civic Design Review for 1826 Chestnut Street (Application # ZP-2021-03557)

Dear Matthew Wojcik,

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 multifamily development at 1826 Chestnut Street.

This letter is a summary of the Civic Design Review Committee's advisory recommendations. It is not an expression of the City Planning Commission's recommendation or opinion regarding zoning variances, special exceptions, or other discretionary approvals associated with this proposal.

The project is preserving the existing building façade and proposes a total of 293,667 square feet of gross floor area in 46 stories. It includes 27,461 square feet of commercial space, 213 residential units, 64 below-grade vehicular parking spaces, two enclosed loading spaces, and 74 bike parking spaces. The parcel is zoned CMX-5, it is by-right, and is utilizing Green Building and Below-grade Parking bonuses as well as Mixed Income Housing bonus via payment in lieu.

At its meeting of June 6, 2023, the Civic Design Review Committee completed the CDR process and offered the following comments:

RCO Comments: (Center City Residents Association)

The RCO representative was not present but sent a letter before the meeting confirming that the development team had held two public meetings on March 30, 2023, and May 2, 2023.

CDR Committee Comments

One committee member commended the proposal for minimizing the loading space with the use of a turn table, automated parking garage access, and retaining the ground floor commercial use. The committee member encouraged the inclusion of 3-bedroom units for larger families and appreciated the pursuit of the LEED Gold certification and affordable housing. The committee chair appreciated the high-quality materials and proposal's respect for the existing building, including the new construction's interaction with the preserved facade.

There was some discussion about the treatment of the existing building façade, including suggestions on reducing the two curb cuts and parking entrances on 19th Street to one for better public realm conditions for pedestrians. The committee appreciated the preservation of the existing building façade and suggested that the residential entrance be reconsidered to have more visual presence on the sidewalk.

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There were some concerns about the plants inside the courtyard as well. The committee believed that there was not enough natural light for the vitality of the plants and asked that the plants be selected accordingly or other features such as water or lighting be considered as an alternative.

One committee member encouraged the team to increase the mix of uses in the proposal to increase the vitality of the project throughout the day. The committee member also suggested that the ground floor bathrooms and the commercial space be publicly accessible given the site's proximity to Rittenhouse Square.

Lastly, the CDR Committee adopted the Planning Commission staff comments:

Site Context

- The property is outside Rittenhouse-Fitler Residential Historic District and is not individually registered. There is a façade easement agreement between the Preservation Alliance and the developer.
- Philadelphia Historical Commission does not have purview over any alterations and new construction at this location.
- Per Philadelphia code section 14-502(8)(a), building façade is subject to PCPC review at Building Permit stage.

Site Design

- Staff notes some inconsistencies between site plans and renderings.
- Staff notes that sidewalk dimensions are existing and Complete Streets dimensions cannot be met in all locations. Sidewalk bike parking should be shown on the plans.
- Staff appreciates the addition of more street trees on the sidewalk.
- More information is needed about the entrance lobby and the court garden.
- Staff suggests opening up the front of the entrance and showing the restored second-floor windows to further define the residential entrance.
- Consider the addition of more transparent façade elements and entry points on the ground floor to activate the sidewalk. The inclusion of one large commercial space minimizes the sidewalk activation opportunities and staff encourages the team to explore ways to add more transparency and access points on the ground floor.
- More information is needed about the use of outdoor space and setback for the commercial space on the third floor.

Building Design

- Staff appreciates setting the upper floors back to respect the existing building and appreciates the preservation of the facade.

Parking Design

- Staff appreciates the inclusion of an underground parking garage.
- Staff is concerned about the curb cuts on 19th Street and is concerned about the composition of the parking and loading openings compared to the existing building's architecture.



Sustainable Design

- Staff notes and appreciates that the project is pursuing LEED Gold 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,

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Re: Civic Design Review for 4601 Market Street (Application # ZP-2022-007951)

Dear Cheli Dahal,

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 residential and retail buildings at 4601 Market Street.

This letter is a summary of the Civic Design Review Committee's advisory recommendations. It is not an expression of the City Planning Commission's recommendation or opinion regarding zoning variances, special exceptions, or other discretionary approvals associated with this proposal.

The project proposes 839,510 square feet within four different buildings that consist of six separate residential structures built above surface lots and structured parking podiums which also include retail spaces. The site is a portion of a superblock, or a block which is the same size of four typical blocks in the area. The site consists of 13 acres and is bounded by Market Street to the south, 48th Street to the west, Haverford Avenue to the north, and 46th Street to the east. The superblock also contains parcels and uses separate from this development, including the Juvenile Justice Services Center and City of Philadelphia parking lots on the northwest portion of the block, private rowhomes on the Northwest portion of the block and the historic Provident Building on the southeast portion of the block. Of note, the development site includes the Provident Building within its lot lines and that portion of the block that abuts the Market Frankford El train station, which includes a transfer point for bus lines. The site is zoned CMX-3 and no refusals have been identified by Licenses and Inspections for this proposal.

The proposal was reviewed at the April 4, 2023 Civic Design Review and asked to return. At its meeting of June 6, 2023, the Civic Design Review Committee completed the CDR process and offered the following comments:

General Comments

As a body, the Civic Design Review committee expressed numerous and serious frustrations with the development team's community engagement process. These included the unwillingness of the development team to schedule more public meetings and the lack of consideration for questions and concerns expressed by community members. The Committee also made it clear that their comments from the April 4, 2023 review still apply and they raised several concerns with the lack of changes made by the applicant in response to their recommendations.

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**Councilperson Gauthier, 3rd Council District**

The councilperson expressed deep concerns with the lack of collaboration with the community on such an important site – the developer’s latest attempt was a closed-door meeting that excluded the more than 150+ residents who attended the previous meeting and pleaded for another opportunity to let their voices be heard. This development process has shown no regard for the people of a working-class black and brown neighborhood.

Additionally, the design is exclusionary, insulting, and tone deaf. The councilperson noted that the community concerns were reasonable: to provide affordable housing, building massing appropriate to the neighborhood, usable public space, and community serving uses.

Specific project design comments include:

- The proposal is for a housing project, but the original planning intention was for a health care campus
- The development causes more congestion on Haverford Avenue, a street that already has congestion. A traffic impact study is needed.
- The site design walls off the block from the rest of the neighborhood and the through block connection does not create connections for the community, only for project residents
- The site plan maximizes density at the expense of open spaces
- The site plan lacks the elements of Transit Oriented Development, including bike share stations, bus shelters, appropriate lighting, and more
- There should be more family sized units
- The design lacks an architectural identity and sense of place – it is not an appropriate response to the context.
- The project does not acknowledge or draw upon previous local planning work done by the community and the Enterprise Center, whose priorities included:
 - o Well lit, well maintained, and accessible outdoor spaces
 - o Gathering spaces on public corridors
 - o Locally informed art installations that celebrate community history

Registered Community Organization (RCO) Comments**West Powelton Saunders Park RCO:**

The RCO expressed extreme disappointment in how the developer has engaged the community and has a concern that the Planning Commission has no teeth to enforce changes. They hope that community organizations and city agencies can band together to make changes. They noted that all along Market Street you can see uninspiring cheaply made boxy buildings and that the community needs to speak loudly against this travesty.

Specific project design comments include:

- The site is being overbuilt, in stark contrast to the surrounding neighborhood
- Building materials should be more reflective of the Provident Building and surrounding neighborhoods
- The size of the development warrants an Environmental Impact Study and Traffic Impact Study



West Philly United RCO:

The RCO expressed support for all the comments made by the 3rd District councilmember and had concerns that not a single question from the community has been answered by the development team. This is very different than other public processes and meetings that they have attended. They need a real community meeting because this is a project that needed input from the community.

CDR Committee Comments:

The CDR committee' recommendations include comments adopted from Planning Commission staff.

Community Engagement

The committee echoes the comments from the 3rd District Councilmember and considers the community engagement process to have been a travesty. They are baffled that more conversations have not already taken place and note that good communications between development teams and communities can yield a city that is terrific for all of us. They also observe that the project has the potential to do something very good and memorable in a positive manner -- it is a missed opportunity for collaboration.

Only the bare minimum of project planning and design requirements are being met, but they could still possibly do better. The Committee urges the development team to meet with the community as a whole and to seriously consider their comments. The Committee wishes that they could compel better community engagement and good planning for this major project in Philadelphia.

General Project Design Comments:

The scheme will create an entire block that will be unsafe and blank. It is a dark, desolate, insulting, and insensitive design – you can go one block to the east to see the impacts of a large retaining wall on Market Street and how unsafe that area is. The development team should consider starting over with the project's concept and design. The applicant should have more conversations with the community for guidance on design changes.

Site Design

They note that the project proposal is disconnected from the surrounding community and transit. There are only four points of pedestrian entry for a 13 acre site, three of which do not have direct sightlines to an interior destination or use – the interior of the multi-acre site remains hidden from the public. Such projects, which turn their back on the street, can set the tone for future development in the area, and contribute to neighborhood deterioration. The Committee further notes that this is the wrong site for an insular community as it is close to a large transit hub and dense walkable neighborhoods.

The development team should make better use of the Provident Building grounds to foster connections through the site between public streets and to the surrounding neighborhoods. For example, there should be a better pedestrian link between Haverford Avenue and the proposed buildings – it is currently an indirect, narrow pathway bound by vehicular traffic. The entry court design should also make more of an effort to reduce the impact and size of vehicular traffic and access drives – pedestrian movements and experiences should be prioritized.



Building Design

Market Street would be significantly worse off than the current situation. The project will create a blank 12 foot high retaining wall at an important gateway, making the street feel less safe. Painting murals on the retaining wall is not an answer and can be an insulting and disrespectful response to the concerns of the surrounding community. The Committee is particularly frustrated that these issues were raised at the April 4, 2023 meeting and the applicant did not make any changes to the design or presentation.

The development team should consider active ground floor uses on Market Street, and the committee notes that the proposed tall retaining wall runs along most of the project's length – there is ample opportunity to provide retail, service, or commercial uses, as well as another point of entry or exit to the residential buildings above. The applicant can refer to recent development of projects along the Market Frankford El in Fishtown as a good local example of the successful restoration of commercial activity under an elevated transit line. If the applicant still intends to construct the long and tall retaining wall and allow for future retail uses within it, the detailing and construction of the wall should allow for such adaptations. 48th Street is another frontage whose design could be improved, means to explore include more ground floor businesses, residences with setbacks, gardens on streets and more.

The development team should also consider the setbacks created by the Provident building and explore a similar approach to Market Street. Explore setting the building back from Market Street at the ground floor and/or in the floors above. The project should also have more family sized units and units designed for seniors.

Sustainable Design

The development team should provide rooftop solar generation, follow-through on sound reduction detailing and construction for units facing the transit line, and obtain third party sustainable design certification.

Sincerely,

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