Civic Design Review (CDR) for Master Plans

What is CDR?

Civic Design Review (CDR) is a forum for public discussion of large development projects. A committee of design professionals and up to two community representatives make advisory recommendations regarding how these projects interact with the public realm. The public realm is the part of a development that people can see and access, and includes adjacent public spaces such as streets, sidewalks, and parks. Conditions in the public realm have a powerful effect on the well-being of people and communities.

CDR meetings are open to the public. Anyone can attend and comment on the projects being considered.

What is CDR for Master Plans?

There are two types of CDR: CDR for large buildings and a second, less common type, CDR for Master Plans. While there can be overlap between the two types, CDR for Master Plans typically concerns the general size, shape, and impact of a project on its site and on the surrounding area. Topics discussed at CDR for Master Plans include movement of pedestrians, traffic, and public transportation in and around the site; public access; open spaces; and the overall sizes and shapes of buildings. CDR for Buildings evaluates specific elements of the architectural and site design, including building materials, the sizes and locations of doors and windows, ground floor layouts, and landscaping.
When a project does go through CDR for Master Plans, it takes place very early in the development process. Many projects that go through CDR for Master Plans will also go through CDR for Buildings at a later time.

What happens after CDR?

CDR is advisory. Developers are not required to adopt CDR Committee recommendations but are strongly encouraged to do so. Many developers do improve their projects in response to CDR comments. The CDR Committee can require developers to attend a second CDR meeting and show what changes they have made.

Recordings of CDR meetings and letters summarizing the CDR recommendations are also available on a public web page. To see current Civic Design Review agendas and CDR recommendations from completed reviews, please see the Philadelphia City Planning Commission Public Meetings webpage.

Questions?

Please send all questions to CDR@phila.gov