



May 14, 2025

Roland Ngaba
Department of Licenses and Inspections
Municipal Services Building, Concourse
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19102

**Re: Civic Design Review for 6635-6639 Chester Avenue
(Application # ZP-2024-005921)**

Dear Roland,

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 proposed multi-family residential buildings at 6635-6639 Chester Avenue.

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 two new multi-family residential buildings totaling 98,090 square feet plus 40,019 sf in a renovated structure. In total, 160 dwelling units (125 in the new structures) are proposed. The parcel is zoned RM-1 Residential Multi-Family, making this a by right proposal with no parking and two density bonuses. The Mixed-Income Housing Bonus (Low Income) allows for 48 additional units and the Green Roof Bonus allows for 24 additional units. The Mixed-Income Housing Bonus also allows for an additional 7 feet of building height.

This project first came to Civic Design Review on March 4, 2025. The applicants were asked to make revisions and return for a second review.

Despite the applicant making no design changes after the March meeting, the Civic Design Review Committee completed the CDR process at its meeting on May 6, 2025, and offered the following comments:

RCO Comments: (Ward 40 Republican)

The 40th Republican Ward RCO acted as the coordinating RCO for this project. A representative of the 40th Republican Ward was present at both reviews. Despite being pleased that 16 affordable units will be built as part of this proposal, the RCO expressed frustration with the quality of the proposal, its presentation and the lack of coordination with the community. Additional concerns include the abundance of below grade living spaces, the lack of a plan for loading and unloading, the lack of a detailed landscaping plan, and proposed building materials that do not fit with the context of the surrounding building form or neighborhood.

Civic Design Review Committee
Established 2012

Octavia Howell
Executive Director
Philadelphia City Planning Commission

Ximena Valle, AIA, LEED AP
Civic Design Review Chair

Daniel K. Garofalo, AIA, LEED AP
Civic Design Review Vice Chair

Sarah Astheimer, ASLA, PLA
Clarissa Redding, RA
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CDR Committee Comments

Committee members echoed the RCO's concerns with the poor quality of the presentation and submission package. The committee was also disappointed that no design professional was present at either of the meetings and that no design changes were made for the second presentation. The committee was concerned with the overall lack of design development on the project and expressed that the materials submitted were not detailed enough for them to properly evaluate the project's design.

The committee commented that the following issues remain unresolved:

- easement and access issues,
- emergency access,
- trash pick-up, parking, and loading, and
- site circulation for pedestrians.

The committee expressed more specific design concerns, as follows.

- As designed, the bulk and massing of the new buildings are concerning—particularly at the back of the site adjacent to other residences.
- Buildings lack character and clearly defined front doors.
- The building materials proposed are not appropriate for the neighborhood and do not complement the adjacent church.

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,

Octavia Howell
Executive Director
Philadelphia City Planning Commission

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Department of Planning and Development

Civic Design Review

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