



**December 8, 2025**

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

**Re: Civic Design Review for 53-67 Laurel St  
(Application # ZP-2025-006080)**

Dear Chanwoo,

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 commercial mixed-use parking garage at 53-67 Laurel 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 application is for a 7-story parking garage totaling 176,986 square feet including 29,877 square feet of commercial space (13,791 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor and 16,086 square feet of commercial space on the 7th floor) with 372 car parking spaces on floors two through six. The proposal includes a public plaza along Allen Street and a pedestrian connection through the site linking Laurel Street to the proposed plaza. The parcel is zoned CMX-3 Commercial Mixed-Use making this a by-right project.

At its meeting of December 2, 2025, the Civic Design Review Committee completed the CDR process and offered the following comments:

**RCO Comments: (Fishtown Neighbors Association; Fishtown Kensington Area Business Improvement District)**

Representatives from both the Fishtown Neighbors Association (the coordinating RCO) and the Fishtown Kensington Area Business Improvement District (an affected RCO) attended the meeting and submitted written comments in advance of the meeting.

The representative from the Fishtown Neighbors Association, which held two previous RCO meetings with the project team, commented during the CDR meeting that the RCO appreciated the design team incorporating their suggestions, and noted that neighbors are in favor of the project.

The representative from the Fishtown Kensington Area Business Improvement District also expressed support for the project, including: the facade materials; the LED lighting; the promenade; the green spaces, including the plaza and green roof; and the two entry lanes on Laurel Street that fit the high demand for parking in the district. The RCO representative added they would support additional EV and bike parking.

**Civic Design Review Committee**  
*Established 2012*

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### **CDR Committee Comments**

The CDR Committee appreciated the inclusion of commercial spaces within the parking structure and suggested that the commercial spaces be further divided to create room for multiple tenants. One Committee member suggested the team consider moving the commercial space promenade to the east side of the building, further away from I-95 and closer to where the existing pedestrian traffic is located, while moving the parking entrance to the west side of the building.

The Committee encouraged the project team to: look at neighboring buildings and surrounding industrial context for inspiration; consider opportunities to engage with artists; consider improvements to the upper east facade that will be visible from the corner of Laurel and Canal Streets; and consider how the building can enhance the gateway experience from the west.

The Committee encouraged sustainability enhancements, including providing more EV parking and considering rooftop solar.

Finally, the Committee asked to include staff comments, copied below:

### **Site Design**

- For pedestrian promenade, consider eliminating gate on Laurel Street and making it fully public.
- Consider variety of formal and informal seating and additional bike rack to ensure that the Allen Street Plaza becomes a successful gathering space.
- Consider on-street loading zone along Laurel Street for pick-up/drop-off and to relieve need for some loading off Allen Street.
- Consider additional street trees along Laurel Street.
- Consider reducing 36-foot curb cut on Laurel Street by eliminating one entry lane.
- Ensure coordination with Streets, Water, and PennDOT, on any future improvements to Laurel Street as part of I-95 Girard Avenue Interchange project.

### **Building Design**

- Consider higher quality materials and more design elements that reference arts and entertainment district including opportunities to enhance gateway conditions into district.
- Parking garage facade design will require separate Planning Commission approval before building permit can be issued.

### **Parking Design**

- Consider interior bike parking room.
- Consider additional EV and ADA spaces.
- Consider inclusion of car-sharing alternatives.

### **Sustainable Design**

Consider coordinating with Indego to add a bike share station.

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.

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Sincerely,

Octavia Howell  
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**December 8, 2025**

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Department of Licenses and Inspections  
Municipal Services Building, Concourse  
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard  
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**Re: Civic Design Review for 1341 and 1341R S Christopher Columbus Blvd  
(Application # ZP-2025-000685C)**

Dear Shakir,

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 residential and commercial mixed-use buildings at 1341 and 1341R South Christopher Columbus Boulevard.

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 application is for one mixed-use residential building and one commercial building totaling 600,000 gross square feet. The proposal includes 620 dwelling units, 30,800 square feet of commercial space, and 187 car parking spaces. The parcel is zoned CMX-3 and is making use of the special approval provisions of zoning code section 14-507(12) Optional Special Standards, Review, and Exemptions within the Central Delaware Overlay/(CDO). The provisions of section 14-507(12) include Planning Commission approval authority for both zoning and building permits. The findings of the Civic Design Review committee will be used to inform these binding reviews.

The proposal is the first phase of a planned development with multiple phases. The proposal was presented in its context with estimates for future phases. Under zoning code section 14-507(12), each phase will go through the CDR process and require Planning Commission approval for both zoning and building permits.

At its meeting of December 2, 2025, the Civic Design Review Committee completed the CDR process and offered the following comments:

**RCO Comments: (Pennsport Civic Association)**

- RCO is supportive of the project.
- It is an open and inviting activation of otherwise dead spaces on the waterfront.
- The RCO appreciates the substantial amount of public space.
- The design is a model for future development on the waterfront.
- The RCO hopes that the piers will be included as public open space in the future.

**CDR Committee Comments**

The Committee noted that this project will set a precedent for future development on the waterfront and is the first project to utilize the incentives and approval process of zoning code section 14-507(12). As such, there is no minimum parking requirement or height

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limit, and the project must meet the requirements of the Mixed Income Housing, Public Space, and Trails bonuses.

Members of the committee expressed support for the extensive public space and trail improvements planned for the site but expressed disappointment towards the applicant's plan to meet the requirements of the Mixed Income Housing bonus by paying into the housing trust fund. They asked the applicant team to more seriously explore the integration of the affordable units into the building.

The committee spoke about how the project should be designed to draw people to the water and asked the applicant team to consider the visual connections looking back from the waterfront towards the neighborhoods to the west of I-95, to reconsider the design and function of Earp Street as a service corridor, and to do more to place active uses on the waterfront and not on the internal street network. In addition, the committee spoke to how the current design does not do enough to engage with Christopher Columbus Boulevard due to the limited easement connecting the parcels to the boulevard. The committee noted that the design of the entry along the Wharton Street alignment is not welcoming and should have an arrival experience consistent with a project of this size and scope.

The committee's extended design discussion focused on several concerns including the design and placement of retail and commercial uses, site circulation, building design, public spaces and trails, parking design, and sustainability. Requests for additional information (needed for Planning Commission approval) and specific design recommendations are listed below.

## 1. Retail and Commercial Uses

### Request for Information:

The committee requested more information to better understand the character and design of the proposed retail corridor. For Planning Commission review and approval, the applicants are asked to provide additional perspectives, building elevations, and building sections. They are also asked to consider the possibility that retail may not be successful in this location, and to consider what other uses can help activate the ground floor and ensure a successful public realm.

### Design Recommendations:

- a. Reconsider location and/or orientation of the proposed retail corridor. As designed it ends at the service drive and does not provide views of the river. Consider orienting the retail to face the waterfront (be parallel to it) and/or orient retail corridors to be perpendicular to the waterfront.
- b. Work with the local community to understand what kinds of retail can succeed.

## 2. Site Circulation

### Request for Information:

The committee struggled to understand the circulation flows in the current scheme. For Planning Commission review and approval, the applicants are asked to provide more detail to clarify the flow of pedestrians and vehicles. In addition, the applicant

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team is asked to provide pedestrian connections from and/or through ground floors to activate the retail corridor and public open spaces.

**Design Recommendations:**

- a. Sidewalks should be built on both sides of “streets” or private drives. Sidewalk widths should be consistent with or exceed Complete Streets standards throughout the site.
- b. Consider additional pedestrian and bicycle entries into the urban plaza north of Phase I.
- c. Extend pedestrian access to Reed Street south of the site (this portion of Reed Street is not on the City Plan, but drainage and utility easements remain).
- d. Seek Streets Department and PennDOT guidance for the sizing of Earp Street to ensure that it can handle the volumes of parking and loading expected for all phases of construction.
- e. Consider explicit and well-marked pedestrian connections from parking levels to public spaces.

### 3. Building Design

**Request for Information:**

There are multiple Planning Commission reviews for each phase of the project including Planning Commission staff level facade approval. The committee stated that the building is beautifully shown in the renderings but requested more details to understand how it can be realized.

**Design Recommendations:**

- a. There should be more articulation of transparent and translucent materials to avoid monotony of facade.
- b. Use bird-safe glazing.
- c. Amenity decks should be oriented to the waterfront not to help activate and re-engage the natural amenities and resources of the site.

### 4. Public Spaces and Trails

**Request for Information:**

The Public Space bonus requirement will be fulfilled with space surrounding the trail. The design of the space must be approved by the Planning Commission staff before a building permit can be issued. Staff and the CDR Committee encourage the applicant team to start conceptualizing the design now as there are standards and requirements in the zoning code that must be met.

**Design Recommendations:**

- a. Pull the trail into the orbit of activity of the Urban Plaza.
- b. Consider wrapping the plaza around to the eastern, waterfront facing facades of the building.
- c. The proposed urban plaza should be more than a traffic roundabout – it should include programs, amenities, and activities to make it a welcoming destination. Seating, lighting, site furniture, and other amenities should be provided.

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## 5. Parking Design

Clarify where loading and/or drop-offs are intended to occur as well as separation between vehicles and pedestrians and/or traffic calming strategies. Garage facades will be subject to Planning Commission staff level review at the time of building permits.

## 6. Sustainability

There are opportunities for energy conservation considering the size and scope of the project. Consider adhering to third party ratings systems, such as Passive House.

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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