

DESIGN ADVOCACY GROUP

of Philadelphia

December 19, 2005

Mr. Thomas A. Chapman, Esq.
Acting Executive Director
Philadelphia City Planning Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Dear Mr. Chapman,

We understand that the Planning Commission is mobilizing a formal effort to rewrite the City Zoning Code. The Design Advocacy Group is an enthusiastic supporter of zoning reform and, by this letter, wishes to express its support for an organized process, coordinated and led by the Planning Commission. We believe that Philadelphia's physical fabric, unique among American cities, merits an innovative and precedent setting code, and, moreover, we think that as in Chicago, with the right process, the work is best done quickly before the natural resistance to change can manifest itself.

At this time, we specifically do not take a position on the outcome of such an endeavor, but do wish to articulate several goals for a new code that we think are critical:

- It should have an innovative PROCESS. Devise an inclusive process that examines zoning reform in other cities and engages both outside and local expertise of the highest quality in the formulation of a plan. A quick process will also need to be intense.
- It should STREAMLINE existing mechanisms. Update and simplify the code and its interpretation and enforcement so that it is more understandable to citizens and minimizes the need for future zoning overlays as well as variances through appeals.
- It should be KNOWLEDGE BASED. Identify and articulate a series of overarching principles upon which zoning reform is based. Recognize the importance of modern zoning theory including, among others, 'form-based' zoning and other zoning methods that incorporate state of the art approaches to urban design.
- It should be PHILADELPHIA SPECIFIC. Establish credible approaches to problems of special significance to Philadelphia. Some of these elements might address: greater incentives for innovative parking solutions, incentives that address the construction of high rise residential buildings in all zoning districts, an articulation of the roles to be played by area plans, historic districts, and conservation districts. It might also include solutions to problems that are repeated many times in Philadelphia due to the nature of its streets and buildings.

The Design Advocacy Group, through a limited number of its members, intends to be an active participant in the zoning reform process and looks forward to this critical initiative.

Sincerely,

Alan Greenberger AIA
Vice Chair, Design Advocacy Group