



July 21, 2008

Anthony Rabutino, Chair
Board of Licenses and Inspections Review
Municipal Services Building, 11th Floor
1401 John F. Kennedy Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19102

RE: Appeal #5515 – Appeal of Philadelphia Art Commission – Appeal of Philadelphia Art Commission Decision #35-08/1601 Chestnut Street

Dear Mr. Rabutino:

We are delighted that Unisys – with deep historical roots in Philadelphia – has chosen to locate its world headquarters in Center City and we welcome this important corporate citizen to our community.

DAG' s mission is to advocate for quality design in Philadelphia. As such, we have reviewed the signage that Unisys has proposed for Two Liberty Place. We have met with representatives of Unisys and representatives of those who are opposed to the signs and we have also studied the proposed signs, examined others signs in Philadelphia, and reviewed the regulation of signs in other cities. We have reached the following conclusions regarding the design of the proposed signage:

We believe that large signage must be both very well designed and quite rare. We judge that successful signage is usually designed as an integral part of the building and is best located at the top or bottom. The proposed Unisys signage would be located halfway up the building and is not well integrated with the overall design. We also believe that the approval of mid-building signage for a fractional tenant would encourage undesirable proliferation of such markers. We, therefore, recommend against the approval of the proposed signage.

In reviewing the existing signage on the Philadelphia skyline, we observe that many of the signs do not comply with the zoning code and are presumably the result of zoning variances. There have been several top-of-the building signs of mediocre quality approved by this process which has, in our opinion, been far too permissive. In keeping with Mayor Nutter's commitment to give the Planning Commission the power to shape the appearance of our city – and recognizing the time it will take before an updated zoning code is available – we believe it would be in the City's best interest for the Planning Commission to prepare an interim evaluation policy that could enable more precise distinctions to be drawn, resulting in fewer ad hoc decisions and a more comprehensive design direction that will enhance the quality of Philadelphia's skyline.

Thank you for your consideration.

Very truly yours,

Joanne Aitken, AIA
Chair, Design Advocacy Group
c/o KieranTimberlake Associates LLP
420 N. 20th Street

Philadelphia, PA 19130

cc: Mayor Michael Nutter
William Burke, Executive Director, Philadelphia Art Commission
Andrew Altman, Deputy Mayor and Chair, City Planning Commission

The Design Advocacy Group of Philadelphia is a volunteer organization whose nearly 1000 members come from a broad spectrum of disciplines and share an interest in design, development, and planning. DAG's mission is to encourage public discussion about design and to advocate for design excellence.