

DESIGN
ADVOCACY
GROUP

of Philadelphia

January 11, 2005

Mary Tracey, Executive Director
Society Created to Reduce Urban Blight
1314 Chestnut Street Suite 750
Philadelphia, PA 19107

RE: Pennsylvania House Bill 1954

Dear Mary,

The Design Advocacy Group would like to express our support for the Coalition of Community Groups headed by the Society Created to Reduce Urban Blight in challenging the passage of HB 1954. We believe that this bill disenfranchises individual citizens and organized groups of Philadelphians who may be adversely affected by zoning decisions.

Taking away the rights of citizens to express their views through the legal process is wrong. While we acknowledge that potentially positive development projects sometimes have to endure a complicated gauntlet of dissatisfied citizens or citizen groups, we don't believe that this bill offers a reasonable solution.

We are specifically opposed to the portion of HB 1954 that appears to suggest a measured radius or some other irrelevant test be applied to determine which citizens have legal standing in these matters. We believe that it is contrary to both the spirit and the letter of the Home Rule Charter, as well as the right to petition the government as granted by the First Amendment of the Constitution.

Given the informal character of the Design Advocacy Group, we do not feel it would be appropriate for us to join the coalition. We would be pleased, however, to provide you with expert services, should that be helpful to you as this matter proceeds.

Sincerely,

William P. Becker, Chair
Design Advocacy Group of Philadelphia

*William P. Becker, Principal
Becker & Frondorf
1500 Walnut Street, Suite 1910
Philadelphia, PA 19102*