



September 17, 2012

Mr. Gary J. Jastrzab, Executive Director  
Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
One Parkway, 13<sup>th</sup> Floor  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

**Re: 205 Race Street**  
**Meeting Date: 18 September, 2012**

Dear Executive Director Jastrzab and Commission Members,

Based on the detail of the Refusal issued on August 6, 2012 - under pre-August 22, 2012 zoning code standards - by the Department of Licenses & Inspections, and a presentation made by the 205 Race Street development team to the OCCA Developments Committee on August 28, 2012, the Committee wishes to share the following points that contributed to its voted position to OPPOSE this application in its current form:

**Height:** At 197'-6", the proposed high-rise structure is over three times (300+%) the height allowed under the applicable zoning code. The concerning issue of the excessive height is compounded by the fact that the proposed structure is entirely within the Old City Historic District boundary, and as such, a 197'-6" structure is insensitive to the character and scale of all other inhabitable structures in the immediate area of the proposed development. Most structures occupying the north and south sides of the 200 block of Race Street are three to five stories in height.

**Gross Floor Area:** At an F.A.R. of 695% of lot area, the proposed structure is over 150% the gross floor area allowed (450%) under the applicable zoning code. The developer's decision to exceed the allowable gross floor area at the parcel is a clear demonstration of willful disregard for the City's established development standards. The excessive F.A.R. planned, directly contributes to the excessive height proposed, and both issues – excessive height and excessive F.A.R. - could be remedied by the developer re-designing with the applicable standards of the zoning code in mind.

**Minimum Number Of Off-Street Parking Spaces:** Old City is already a very densely populated area experiencing a great deal of pressure on available parking spaces. The pressure on available parking spaces is compounded by the popularity of Old City as a tourist, shopping and dining destination; residents and business customers are competing for the same, limited on-street parking spaces. The developer has proposed to build only 34 of the 90 parking spaces required under the applicable zoning code. Noncompliance with the parking requirement could be remedied by reducing the density of the proposed development, reducing both the proposed gross floor area and height, and bringing multiple aspects of the proposed development toward code compliance.

**Maximum Building Width:** Within the district, the applicable zoning code limits building widths to 70', for the purpose of assuring that new structures are sympathetic to the scale of the existing architectural fabric of the Historic District. The developer proposes a 186'-long façade along the Race Street edge of the parcel. The Committee appreciates the developer's intention to articulate the 186'-long low-rise Race Street façade in a manner suggesting a compacted collection of multiple structures. However, the intended effect is not yet fully developed and requires more careful study by the development team in order to realize that 186'-long façade as sympathetic with the character of the area.

**Minimum Percentage Of Open Lot Area:** Given that the parcel is sided by city streets on three sides, it is inconceivable that the developer could not meet the 20% open area required under the applicable zoning code. The 8.43% open lot area proposed represents a further substantial overbuild of the parcel and willful disregard for the applicable regulations.

**Massing Scheme:** The Committee appreciates the developer's intention to manage the massing of the proposed structure to introduce modulation, variation, and architectural points of interest. However, it is the opinion of the Committee that the high-rise portion of the massing composition, however low or high it may ultimately rise, be shifted to the west edge of parcel, rather than at the east edge, as is currently described in the plan. Further, accommodating our suggested shift of the high-rise portion of the development, and then establishing the required 20% open area at the southeast corner of the parcel, thus, better preserving street-level views of the iconic Benjamin Franklin Bridge and its Paul Cret-designed anchorage.

We bring to the Commission's attention that the OCCA Developments Committee is welcoming of the contemporary design and intended high-quality of the proposed development. However, our objections and issues with the proposed development scheme rest with the applicable standards of the zoning code, and the developer's willful non-compliance with those standards: six (6) variances are required to legalize this development proposal.

The OCCA Developments Committee respectfully submits to this Commission that the 205 Race Street development proposal is a conspicuous over-build of the parcel and illustrates a disregard for the applicable development standards - previous or new zoning codes - established by the City of Philadelphia, and as such, is undeserving of the benefit of the Commission's support, at this time.

We appreciate the Commission's consideration in this matter.

On behalf of the OCCA Developments Committee,



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