

September 13, 2012

Alan Greenberger
Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development
City of Philadelphia
One Parkway, 13th Floor
1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

VIA Email: alan.greenberger@phila.gov
CC: City Council President Darrell Clarke

RE: The Role of Registered Community Organizations (“RCOs”)

Dear Mr. Greenberger:

We write on behalf of the undersigned civic associations regarding the regulations implementing the new Zoning Code. With the release of the “RCO Map” in late August, it has become clear to many civic association leaders that the new regulations have created, perhaps unintentionally, confusing and overlapping jurisdictions among so-called “Local Registered Community Organizations” (LRCOs).

We believe that the implementation of these new regulations will cause an immense logistical challenge, in addition to creating confusion for developers and community members – the opposite of what we believe to be the intention behind the reformed Zoning Code. This letter is a respectful plea for the rationalization of the LRCO map to more accurately reflect traditional and well-functioning neighborhood association boundaries across the city.

Each of the undersigned civic associations has a long history of impartially reviewing development applications. Each has a Zoning Committee that holds regular, advertised meetings and provides developers and neighbors with an open, impartial venue. Each has open meetings and each can justifiably claim to represent a substantial constituency of residents within their geographic boundaries. Until August 22, most were the sole duly recognized community associations within these neighborhoods, with partial exception where BID boundaries overlapped with civic association boundaries, for example South Street Headhouse District with QVNA, BVTW, SHCA, and WSWCA.

Now, with the enactment of the new zoning code, in many instances there are 3, 4, 5 or even more recognized “local” RCOs for all or some portion of each neighborhood. Center City District, for example, has suddenly and inexplicably enlarged its boundaries to include virtually all of so-called “Greater Center City,” from Tasker to Girard and river to river.

If the notion of a “local” RCO is to have any meaning, it seems to us that it inheres in the neighborhood-specific knowledge and experience accrued by residents and the leaders of the civic associations. It seems to us that the Planning Commission intended precisely to harness this knowledge and experience in deciding on the physical future of our City, not pitting one group against another for the right to participate in the process.

Thus we respectfully urge the PCPC to consider rationalizing the map and use more strict criteria to determine what groups garner status as local RCOs. We urge the PCPC to include criteria such as boundaries specified in organizational by-laws, traditional practices, openness of the organization to community participation, and so forth.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request. We are available for further dialogue if need be.

Sincerely,

Greg Pastore
Bella Vista Town Watch

Jim Moylan
Pennsport Civic Assn

Sarah McEneaney
Callowhill Neighborhood Assn

Claudia S Sherrod
Point Breeze Community Development
Coalition

Jeff Wiesner
Dickinson Narrows Civic Assn

Michael Jones
Powelton Village Civic Association

Ray Nasser
Hawthorne Empowerment Coalition

Jeff Hornstein
Queen Village Neighbors Assn

David Searles
Logan Square Neighborhood Assn

Steve Weixler
Society Hill Civic Assn

Matt Ruben
Northern Liberties Neighbors Assn

Peter Zutter
South Broad Street Neighborhood Assn

Ryan Berley
Old City Civic Assn

Sonia Dasgupta
Washington Square West Civic Assn

Pam Zenzola
Passyunk Square Civic Assn