



FISHTOWN NEIGHBORS ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 29292
Philadelphia, PA 19125
zoning@fishtown.org

November 9th, 2012

Honorable Darrell L. Clarke
Council President, District 5
City Hall, Room 494
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290

Honorable Mark Squilla
Councilman, District 1
City Hall, Room 332
Philadelphia, PA 19107-3290

Dear Council President Clarke and Councilman Squilla:

We are writing in regards to the consideration and advancement of Philadelphia City Council Bill #120656 last week. The bill would make significant changes to the zoning code for zones RM-1 and CMX-2, which are especially prevalent in the City's denser neighborhoods like Fishtown. The Fishtown Neighbors Association **opposes this bill** and believes that **this bill should be rejected** when it is next considered.

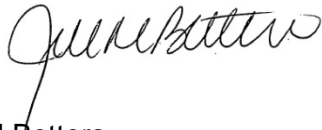
One of the primary goals of the new code is to streamline the development process in the City by reducing the number of zoning variances required across the board. The impact of excessive variances for small, low-impact projects was especially present in neighborhoods like Fishtown, where the century-old urban fabric was not properly reflected in the code. The main corridors of Fishtown, Frankford and Girard Avenues, consist primarily of three-story commercial and multi-family residential properties: CMX-2 and RM-1 in the new code. The new code removed the need for many zoning variances by updating these zones to better reflect the actual nature of the neighborhoods: small lots and units, no off-street parking, and higher densities than many of the city's outlying neighborhoods.

The proposed changes in Bill #120656 would reinstitute the parking minimums and larger unit sizes that triggered many zoning variances across neighborhoods made up primarily of CMX-2 and RM-1 properties. This Bill would require property owners to comply with zoning requirements that are simply unachievable given the layout of their structures and the surrounding existing neighborhood. Council should support the goal of reducing the frequency of zoning variances by supporting the legalization of our existing neighborhoods under the new zoning code.

Furthermore, the proposed changes in this bill, increasing minimum unit sizes and introducing mandatory parking minimums, work directly against the goal of developing dense and walkable places. Our zoning code, when delineating the requirements for our dense urban zones like RM-1 and CMX-2, should aim to reflect the strong urban fabric of our existing neighborhoods and work to leverage their positive characteristics. Bill #120656 would roll back the major advancements towards strong, sensible, and sustainable development made in the new code.

The new Zoning Code represents one of the largest collaborative efforts in recent memory aimed at improving the development process and encouraging strong and sustainable development in the City of Philadelphia. While the new code may not be perfect, it is far too young for us to adequately judge its success or failure. City Council should work to support the priorities of the new zoning code – streamlining development and encouraging walkable urban development in the City. We urge you to reject Bill #120656 and give the new zoning code a fair chance to achieve its goals.

Sincerely,



Jill Betters
President
Fishtown Neighbors Association



Matt Karp
Chair, Zoning Committee
Fishtown Neighbors Association

CC:

Mayor Michael Nutter
Councilman Kenyatta Johnson
Councilwoman Jannie Blackwell
Councilman Curtis Jones, Jr.
Councilman Bobby Henon
Councilwoman Maria Quinones-Sanchez
Councilwoman Cindy Bass
Councilwoman Marian Tasco
Councilman Brian O'Neill
Councilman Wilson Goode, Jr.
Councilman William Greenlee
Councilman Bill Green
Councilman Dennis O'Brien
Councilman James Kenney
Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown
Councilman David Oh
Philadelphia City Planning Commission
East Kensington Neighbors Association
Olde Richmond Civic Association