

# The Zoning Administrative Manual

## [DRAFT MANUSCRIPT | November 8, 2010]

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# The Zoning Administrative Manual

## [DRAFT MANUSCRIPT | November 8, 2010]

### Foreword

In 2007, nearly 80% of voters said “yes” to a referendum that created the Zoning Code Commission (ZCC) and charged it with the task of rewriting the City’s zoning code. After three years of hard work and collaboration among City administrators, developers, architects, planners, attorneys, business representatives and residents, the ZCC produced our current zoning code, which is designed to:

- Be easy to understand and consistent,
- Yield predictable development results,
- Encourage high quality, positive development,
- Protect the character of existing neighborhoods, and
- Involve the public in development decisions.

During its work, the ZCC discovered the need for yet another document – a “how-to” companion piece to the Zoning Code that would navigate citizens and investors through Philadelphia’s zoning process. The ZCC published this Zoning Administrative Manual (ZAM) to serve as your step-by-step guide to the Zoning Code, Title 14 of the Philadelphia Code.

The ZAM is an approachable collection of the most up-to-date information on procedures, forms and best practices. It is a resource for novice and experienced development and design professionals who need to find out how to take their project through the zoning approval process. It is also a guide for neighborhood stewards - local community groups and engaged citizens who wish to promote positive development outcomes in their neighborhoods.

**DISCLAIMER:** The Zoning Administrative Manual (ZAM) is intended as a general guide to users of Title 14 of the Philadelphia Code. It is NOT a substitute for any of the City of Philadelphia’s adopted ordinances or codes. If this ZAM conflicts with Title 14, the provisions of Title 14 supersede the contents of this Manual.

### How to Use this Manual

**Chapter I** is an introductory overview of zoning administration in Philadelphia. In this chapter, you will learn about the reviewing and decision-making agencies, what kind of development activities require zoning approval and how long you can expect the zoning process to take.

**Chapters 2-10** are organized by type of zoning process, ranging from “by-right” development to projects that require a variance or City Council action. In each chapter, you will find a step-by-step description of the process, important contact information and a process checklist.

**Chapter 11** describes some useful best practices for investors, community groups, and zoning administrators.

**Appendix A** contains a “Development Standards Applicability Checklist” to help you determine which standards in Chapter 14-600 (Development Standards) of the Zoning Code apply to your project.

**Appendix B** contains the Sky Plane Submission Guidelines that describe the method of demonstrating compliance with the Sky Plane Bulk Control regulations of the Center City (/CTR) Overlay, §14-402 of the Zoning Code.

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**Appendix C** is a directory of additional resources, such as the Zoning Archive and the City's Comprehensive Plan.

**Appendix D** contains up-to-date forms for your zoning application.

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## Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

### When am I required to get a Zoning Approval?

Zoning is usually the first step in the development approval process. Each land use activity must demonstrate that it conforms with Philadelphia's zoning laws - whether it's simply a change in land use or a brand new construction project or a rehabilitation project. Zoning regulations ensure that every parcel in the City of Philadelphia has a land use, site layout and building form that are compatible with its surrounding context.

Generally, your project will need a zoning approval if it involves:

- Change in land use
- New construction, additions, demolition, and/or alterations that change the gross floor area
- Combining or subdividing lots
- Signs
- A zoning text or map change

#### **What's the difference between a zoning permit and a building permit?**

A zoning permit is the first step in the development approval process. The zoning permit says that the City approves of the proposed use and building massing on your property. A zoning permit is required before you can obtain for a building permit, which says that your building design is safe for occupancy and that you may begin construction.

### Who can apply for a Zoning Approval?

Property owners or agents of the property owner authorized in writing (such as tenants, family members, attorneys, licensed architects, licensed engineers, licensed contractors or licensed expeditors) may file a zoning application. See §14-203(2).

### Who makes the decision on my Zoning Application?

**Decision-Maker #1: The Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I)** makes administrative decisions on zoning applications. L&I applies prescriptive standards to determine whether your project complies with the code. For example, your parcel is zoned RSA-1 where the height limit is 35 feet. L&I will verify that your proposed building height is 35 feet or less.

**Decision-Maker #2: The Zoning Board of Adjustment (Zoning Board)** is a board that is charged with making discretionary decisions on zoning applications. The Zoning Board does not use prescriptive standards to make decisions, but rather uses other judgment criteria that are outlined in the zoning code. For example, if your project proposes commercial use in a zoning district that only

## Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

permits residential uses, the Zoning Board will ask (among other questions) whether there are unique physical conditions at your property that prevent you from using the property as a residence.

**Decision-Maker #3: City Council** is the legislative body that adopts zoning amendments. If you want to change the zoning classification for your parcel (called a zoning map amendment) or seek a zoning text amendment, City Council must adopt an ordinance implementing the requested change.

**Decision-Maker #4: City Planning Commission (the Commission)** approves subdivisions. If you are proposing to subdivide a parcel into 2 or more lots, the Commission will decide if you satisfy the requirements of §14-610 of the Zoning Code. The Commission also approves minor amendments to special districts known as Master Plan Districts. These districts (RMX-1, RMX-2, SP-IDD, SP-ENT and SP-STA) are mapped according to a “Master Plan”. The Commission has the authority to approve small changes to the Master Plan that still conform to the permitted uses and dimensional standards for that district; otherwise, the amendment is considered a major change that requires a legislative amendment by City Council.

In addition to its decision-making role on subdivisions and Plans of Development, the Commission makes **recommendations** for approval or disapproval on all zoning applications decided on by City Council and the Zoning Board. The Civic Design Review Committee, a subcommittee of the Commission, makes advisory recommendations on large projects that meet the thresholds for Civic Design Review (see Chapter 9).

**Summary Table of Recommenders and Decision-Makers**

Legend R = Recommendation D = Decision  Type of Application	Recommendation and Decision-Making Authority				
	L&I	Zoning Board of Adjustment	Civic Design Review Committee	City Planning Commission	City Council
<b>Zoning Amendment</b>					
Map Amendment				R	D
Text Amendment				R	D
<b>Master Plan Amendments</b>					
Minor Amendments				D	
Major Amendments				R	D
<b>Special Exception Approval</b>		D		R	
<b>Civic Design Review</b>			R		
<b>Subdivision Plat</b>				D	
<b>Zoning Variance</b>		D		R	
<b>Zoning Permits</b>	D				

## Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

In support of these decision-making entities, there are several **“reviewers”** that examine zoning plans and make technical recommendations to the decision-maker. The City Charter and Code give reviewers the authority to evaluate and comment on certain aspects of your zoning application. For example, the Streets Department will review your parking lot design to ensure it doesn't negatively impact traffic flow, or the Art Commission will review your sign if it projects more than 12" beyond your property line. All applicable reviewers must approve your plans before the decision-making entity can issue a final decision on your application; this process is known as **“pre-requisite plan review”**.

### Placeholder

Large-Format Graphic of Reviewers, Recommenders and Decision-Makers that describes their roles and responsibilities

# Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

## Which zoning provisions apply to my project?

You need to first understand the standards for your **BASE** zoning district that will specify allowed uses and dimensional standards. In addition, other development standards may apply such as: connectivity, form and design, open space, landscaping, trees, outdoor lighting, historic preservation, parking and signage requirements. Also check for any **OVERLAY** zoning district requirements that apply to your parcel; overlay districts are superimposed upon base districts and supersede, modify or supplement the base zoning regulations.

### *A Primer on Using the Zoning Code.....*

- 1| The City maintains an online tool called the “Zoning Overlay” where you can look up the base and overlay districts that apply to your property. Visit <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>
- 2| Determine if your use is permitted in your base district by reviewing the Use Tables in §14-502 of the Zoning Code. This section of the code contains instructions on how to read the tables. The table will point you to any applicable use-specific standards for your proposed use (for example, a required permanent fence around the perimeter of a market farm) in §14-503. If your property is within an overlay district, check for additional use restrictions (the Zoning Overlay tool will point you to the relevant code section).
- 3| Review the Dimensional Tables in §14-601 of the Zoning Code to see the limits on permissible lot area, lot width, open area, building height, setbacks, and/or gross floor area related to your district. Again, if your property is within an overlay district, check for additional dimensional restrictions.
- 4| Check to see if Form & Design Standards (§14-603), Connectivity Standards (§14-604), Transit-Oriented Development Standards (§14-605), Open Space and Natural Resources Standards (§14-606), Landscaping and Tree Standards (§14-607), Fencing and Wall Standards (§14-608) and/or Outdoor Lighting Standards (§14-609) apply to your proposed project. Not all of these regulations will apply to your project. Applicability will depend on your base district, your proposed use, your lot size and your building size. Appendix A contains a “Development Standards Applicability Checklist” to help you to determine which development regulations will apply.
- 5| Review Chapter 14-700 to determine the vehicle and bicycle parking, and off-street loading requirements related to your base district. Check for any additional parking or loading restrictions if the property is in an overlay district.
- 6| Other chapters of interest may be:
  - Subdividing or combining lots? See §14-610
  - Installing or altering a sign? See Chapter 14-800
  - In a historic district or interested in a historic property? See Chapter 14-900

# Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

## How do I get a Zoning Approval?

The zoning approval process varies depending on your project’s characteristics. Are you proposing a project that complies with the zoning regulations, or are you asking the City for approval to deviate from the zoning standards? Or are you in a special district, such as a Master Plan District or a historic district? The answers to these and other questions boil down to eight distinct procedures.

🕒 The clock “starts” on your zoning application when you submit a complete application to L&I. Although you may submit your application to L&I before you complete your pre-requisite plan reviews, L&I will not consider your application to be complete until the required pre-requisite reviews have been fulfilled.

### 1| As-of-Right (a.k.a “By-Right”)

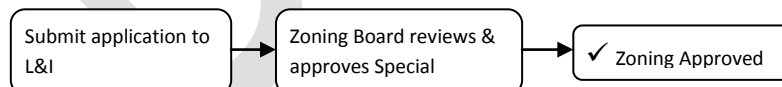
When your project proposal complies with all the zoning provisions that apply to your property, it means you can build your project “as-of-right” without any action by the Zoning Board, Commission or City Council.



*[Sample process flow-chart]*

### 2| Special Exception Uses

Special exception uses are not permitted by right, but may be considered compatible with the surrounding neighborhood only under certain conditions. L&I will review your application, then issue a “referral” so that you can file for a hearing to be held at the Zoning Board. The Zoning Board will hold a public hearing and evaluate your application using the criteria specified in §14-204(4). These criteria essentially determine that your proposal will not adversely impact the surrounding neighborhood.



*[Sample process flow-chart]*

### 3| Regulated Uses

Regulated uses are uses that must maintain a buffer distance from each other, residential districts, schools, churches, parks, libraries and other public gathering places. The approval process will mirror the by-right procedure (if permitted by-right in the base and overlay districts) or the special-



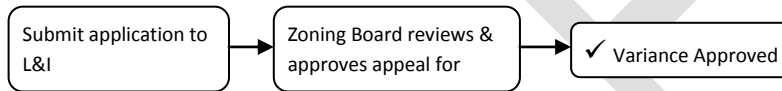
# Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

exception procedure (if permitted by special exception in the base and overlay district), except that L&I will only issue a permit if your regulated use maintains the prescribed buffer distances in §14-503(10).

**List of regulated uses:** Adult-oriented merchandise, adult-oriented service, check-cashing, drug paraphernalia, pawnshops, payday lenders, detention and correctional facilities, and gun shops.

## 4| Variances

Sometimes site constraints prevent projects from conforming to the zoning code regulations. In these instances, applicants must obtain variance approval from the Zoning Board in order to deviate from the zoning standards. L&I will review your application, then issue a “refusal” since the project proposal does not comply with the zoning code. You may then choose to alter your project to make it conform to the zoning code, or may then appeal the refusal to the Zoning Board to get approval of your variance. The Zoning Board will hold a public hearing and evaluate your application using the criteria specified in §14-204(8).

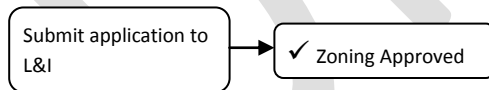


*[Sample process flow-chart]*

## 5| Master Plan Districts

Master Plan Districts (RMX-1, RMX-2, SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STA) are mapped according to a “Master Plan”.

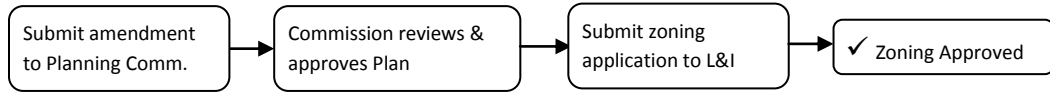
- If you are proposing to build in accordance with the plan of development, then the process is the same as a by-right project.



*[Sample process flow-chart]*

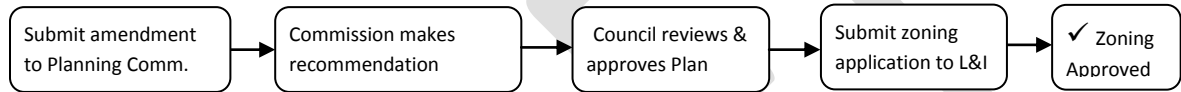
## Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

- If you are proposing a minor amendment to the Master Plan (such as a change in land use that is permitted in the district or minor deviation from the building, parking, landscaping or open area dimensions indicated on the adopted Master Plan), the Commission may approve your amendment to the Master Plan if you satisfy the criteria established in §14-204(3). After the Commission approves the Master Plan amendment, future zoning applications must comply with the amended Plan.



**[Sample process flow-chart]**

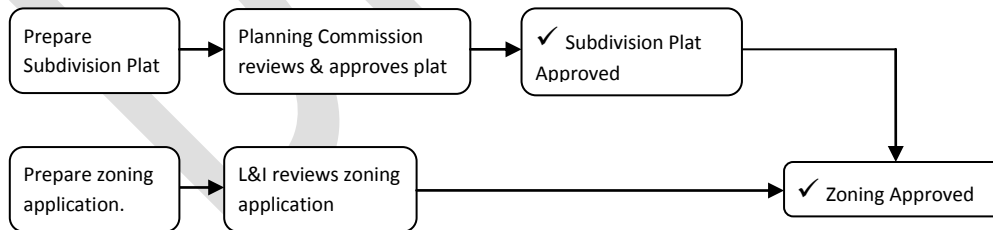
- If you are proposing a major amendment to an existing Master Plan or proposing a new Master Plan district, City Council must legislatively approve the changes to your plan. See §14-204(3) for City Council’s approval process.



**[Sample process flow-chart]**

### 6| Subdivisions

If you want to subdivide or combine parcels, the Commission must approve your subdivision plan. If you want to obtain zoning approval for site development at the same time as the subdivision approval, L&I can conduct its zoning review concurrently, but it cannot issue a final zoning approval until you have registered your deeds with the Department of Records and until the Board of Revision of Taxes has established tax accounts for each parcel. See §14-204(7) for detailed procedures.



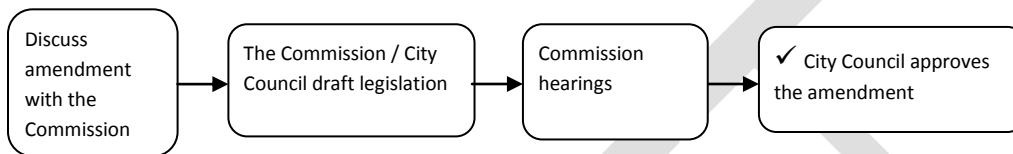
**[Sample process flow-chart]**

# Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

## 7| Zoning Text or Map Amendment

Amendments to the zoning text or official zoning map require legislative action by City Council and the Mayor’s approval. Creation of new Master Plan Districts falls within this category. See §14-204(2) for more details on zoning text or map amendments procedures.

The Commission advises City Council on proposed zoning amendments. To streamline the process and improve outcomes, the ZAM recommends a preliminary visit with the Commission to discuss your proposed amendment. The Commission and City Council staff will translate your proposal into draft legislation and the Commission will hold hearings before City Council’s final decision to adopt the amendment.



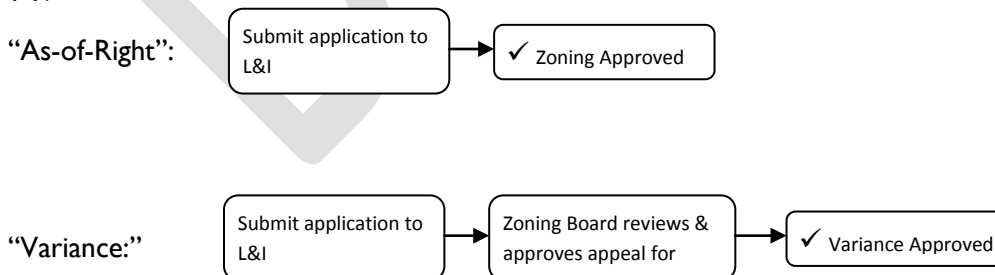
**[Sample process flow-chart]**

Once the zoning amendments are in place, you can pursue the zoning approval for your project as described above under “As-of-Right”.

## 8| Signage

If you are building a new store or have purchased a business and are moving into an existing retail space and want to put up a sign, you must comply with the provisions of Chapter 14-800 of the Zoning Code. L&I recommends obtaining zoning approval for your sign at the same time as your use or building. However, if you are not ready with your sign proposal at the same time as the rest of your zoning proposal, L&I will issue a stand-alone zoning permit just for your sign at a later date.

The zoning approval process for a sign is largely the same as the “As-of-Right” process (if your sign complies with the standards of the zoning code), or the “Variance” process (if your sign does not comply).



**[Sample process flow-chart]**

# Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

## How does the Zoning Process Intersect with Civic Design Review and Historical Commission Procedures?

### 1| Civic Design Review

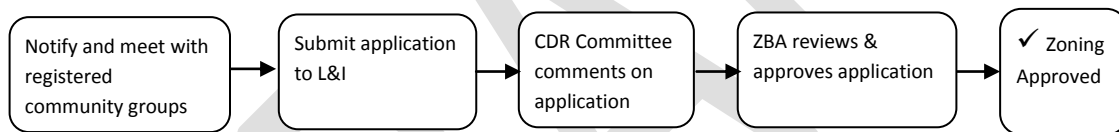
Civic Design Review is carried out by a subcommittee of the Commission (the “Civic Design Review Committee”), which evaluates the impacts of major projects on the public realm. This review is based on the design guidelines listed in the Commission’s regulations. A primary purpose of civic design review is to enable the public to meet with the developer to discuss how major projects will impact their neighborhoods and to collaborate on potential design improvements. The zoning applicant has the responsibility of notifying registered community organizations (on a list maintained by the Commission) prior to submitting the zoning application to L&I.

For projects that also require Zoning Board approval (i.e. variances or special exceptions), civic design review will occur prior to the Zoning Board hearing (see §14-204(6)).

“As-of-Right”:



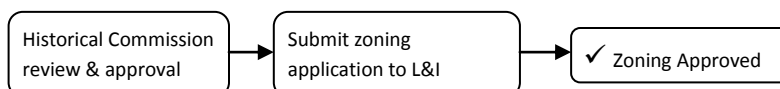
Zoning Board Approval:



*[Sample process flow-chart]*

### 2| Historic Property Construction, Alteration or Demolition

The Historical Commission must approve all construction, alteration and demolition activities that are proposed for historically-designated properties in historic districts before L&I can issue a **building** permit (see §14-903). Even though Historical Commission approval is not required before your zoning permit, early Historical Commission approval is recommended so that any historic preservation issues are identified early in the concept and design stage of your project.



*[Sample process flow-chart]*

### 3| Historic District Designations

## Chapter 1: The Basics of Zoning in Philadelphia

A property owner may seek to have his neighborhood area designated as a historic district to promote historic preservation. The Commission must review and comment on the proposed creation of a historic district. The Historical Commission will take the Commission's recommendations into account when it decides whether to approve or disapprove the designation. (See §14-902(2) for criteria for designation).

Historic district designation requires all future alterations and demolitions to buildings within the district to get Historical Commission approval, as described above.

### **How long does zoning approval take?**

The total start-to-finish time for the zoning process depends on your project. At the low end of the spectrum, a by-right project will be reviewed and approved within 30 calendar days (although many permits for simple projects, such as decks, can be approved in as little as one day). At the upper end of the spectrum, the total zoning process can take 120 days to complete, on average, if your project requires Zoning Board approval.

**Placeholder**

Large-Format Graphical Timeline of the Zoning Approval Process

## Chapter 2: My Project is As-of-Right

### The Step-by-Step Process

Step 1. Apply for a **zoning permit** at the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I). Make sure that you bring all of the application submittals on the checklist below.

#### ***What if I am not doing any construction and only changing my land use?***

Apply for a **use registration permit**. The application form is available online at <http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf> and the fee is \$125 per use. If L&I confirms that the zoning code permits the proposed use as-of-right in the base and overlay zoning districts, L&I will issue the use registration permit, which will be **valid for 6 months**. If the code does not permit the use as-of-right, L&I will issue a refusal to your application. You can appeal to the Zoning Board for a use variance. See Chapter 5 (Variances) for more details on this process.

Step 2. L&I will confirm whether your project needs **Civic Design Review**. If the project needs Civic Design Review, L&I cannot deem your application as “complete” until you follow the process outlined in **Chapter 9**. Complete Chapter 9 before you continue on to Step 3.

Step 3. L&I will confirm that you have satisfied all of the zoning provisions of the base district and any applicable overlay districts in which your project lies.

#### **✓ You comply**

L&I has determined that your application complies with the zoning code. L&I will approve and issue your permit, which will be **valid for 3 years**. Within this timeframe, you need to obtain your building permit from L&I and start construction or your zoning permit will expire. You can ask for 1 one-year extension if you need more than 3 years to begin your construction project.

#### **✗ You don't comply**

If L&I determines that your proposal does not satisfy the zoning code, it will issue a **refusal** to your application. You have two options:

Option 1: Revise your application to bring it into compliance.

Option 2: Appeal L&I's decision before the Zoning Board and request a variance. If you choose Option 2, jump to Chapter 5 (Variances).

## Chapter 2: My Project is As-of-Right

### Process Checklist

#### Permit or No Permit?

To start, let's see if you even need a permit. Answer YES to any one of these conditions and the answer is YES.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	New construction and additions
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Alterations that result in a change in gross floor area
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Carports, detached private garages, greenhouses and rear yard sheds for homes that are larger than 120 square feet or higher than 8 feet
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Installation of a fence that exceeds the height limits established by the Zoning Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Construction of a deck higher than 12" above ground
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Creation of off-street parking or reconfiguration of existing parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Change of a use of a property

#### What application submittals?

You will need the following in order to complete your application.

#### *General Requirements*

<input type="checkbox"/> Application Form (1 copy)	Available online at <a href="http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf">http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Plot Plan (6 copies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional seal not required</li> <li>• Scale 1"=10', 20', 40', 50', 60' or 100'</li> <li>• Minimum Sheet Size = 11" x 17"   Maximum Sheet Size = 24" x 36"</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Elevation Drawings (6 copies)	<input type="checkbox"/> New construction, additions and alterations
<input type="checkbox"/> Sky Plane Compliance Materials (see Appendix B for guidelines)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lots located in the "Sky Plane Control Area" of the Center City (/CTR) Overlay District

#### *Additional pre-requisite plan reviews depending on your proposal:*

<input type="checkbox"/> Philadelphia Water Department Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Conceptual plan review for earth disturbances > 5,000 square feet <input type="checkbox"/> Conceptual plan review for projects in the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District <input type="checkbox"/> Required stream buffers for projects immediately adjacent to Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, the Poquessing Creek, the Byberry Creek, Walton Run, the Pennypack Creek, Wooden Bridge Run, the Tacony-Frankford Creek, the Wissahickon Creek, the Darby Creek, Cobbs Creek and Indian Creek.
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## Chapter 2: My Project is As-of-Right

<input type="checkbox"/> Commission Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering controls for projects on steep slopes <input type="checkbox"/> Impervious coverage limits for projects in the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District <input type="checkbox"/> Flood management controls for projects located within a 100-year floodplain <input type="checkbox"/> Projects located in a Master Plan District: SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STa, RMX-1, RMX-2 <input type="checkbox"/> Wireless telecommunication towers <input type="checkbox"/> Parking garages in the RMX-3, CMX-4 and CMX-5 Districts <input type="checkbox"/> Subdivisions
<input type="checkbox"/> Streets Dept Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Review of revisions to streets on the official City Plan, including additions and removals of streets <input type="checkbox"/> Reviews of driveways, loading docks, curb cuts, parking lots and garages, sidewalks, curb bump-outs, lay-by-lanes, street signals, street lighting and paving. <input type="checkbox"/> Reviews of encroachments, projections and architectural embellishments (such as projecting signs, awnings, bay windows) over the public right-of-way.
<input type="checkbox"/> Art Commission Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Structures or fixtures that extend over any highway, stream, lake, square, park or other public place in the City
<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction, alteration and demolition of historically-designated properties in historic districts  <b>(OPTIONAL at the zoning permit stage, but RECOMMENDED if your property is in an historic district)</b>
<h3>What fees?</h3>	
<b>Zoning Fee:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00	Single- or two-family residences
<input type="checkbox"/> \$125.00	Parcels 30,000 square feet or less
<input type="checkbox"/> \$250.00	Parcels more than 30,000 square feet
<b>Use Registration Fee:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____.00    ____ registered uses X \$125.00 per registered use	
<h3>Notify and Meet With Registered Community Organizations?</h3>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
<h3>Public Notice: How and When?</h3>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
<h3>Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?</h3>	
Zoning Board of Adjustment	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Planning Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Art Commission	If deemed necessary by Art Commission staff, or cannot be approved administratively



## Chapter 2: My Project is As-of-Right

### **Important Contacts**

#### **Licenses & Inspections (L&I)**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard.  
Concourse Level  
215.686.2576  
[www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li)

#### **Planning Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Flr  
215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

#### **Philadelphia Water Department**

ARAMark Tower  
1101 Market Street, 2nd Flr  
215.685.6387  
[www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org)

#### **Streets Department**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard, Rm 830  
215.686.5578  
[www.phila.gov/streets](http://www.phila.gov/streets)

#### **Art Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Flr  
215.683.2095

### **How do I find out about....**

#### **The Zoning for My Property**

Look up the base zoning and any applicable overlay district for your parcel using the Zoning Overlay webtool at <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>.

#### **PWD Conceptual Plan Review**

PWD must approve your stormwater management controls. You can find PWD's online Conceptual Plan Review application at [www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org). This site also contains PWD's *Stormwater Management Guidance Manual*, which defines earth disturbance.

#### **Wissahickon Watershed Overlay**

Section 14-408(4) of the Zoning Code describes the impervious coverage limits within the overlay. You can see if your parcel is in this overlay by using the Zoning Overlay webtool at <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>.

#### **Steep Slopes and Stream Buffers**

Sections 14-606(3) and 14-606(6) describes the development restrictions on steep slopes and along stream buffers. You can see if there are steep slopes on your parcel using the Zoning Overlay webtool at <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>.

#### **100-year floodplain**

The Flood Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) publishes floodplain maps. You can reference the FEMA maps on file at the Commission and at the public library.

## Chapter 3: My Project Needs a Special Exception Approval

### The Step-by-Step Process

Step 1. Confirm that your project use requires a special exception by referring to the use tables in §14-502 of the Zoning Code and check to see if it meets the criteria for a special exception in § 14-204(4).

#### **Special Exception Criteria: My project....**

- Is consistent with the comprehensive plan for the city, any adopted area redevelopment plan, and any other adopted plans for the area where the property is located; AND
- Complies with all applicable Use-Specific Standards in Section 14-503; AND
- Will not substantially increase congestion in the public streets or transportation systems; AND
- Will not overcrowd the land or create an undue concentration of population; AND
- Will not impair an adequate supply of light and air to adjacent property; AND
- Will not unduly burden water, sewer, school, park, or other public facilities; AND
- Will not impair or permanently injure the use of adjacent conforming properties; AND
- Will not increase the danger of fire or otherwise endanger the public health or safety.

Step 2. Apply for a **zoning permit** at the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I). Make sure that you bring all of the application submittals on the checklist below.

Step 3. L&I will confirm whether your project needs **Civic Design Review**. If you need Civic Design Review, L&I cannot deem your application as “complete” until you follow the process outlined in **Chapter 9**. Complete Chapter 9 before you continue on to Step 4.

Step 4. L&I will confirm that you have satisfied all of the zoning provisions of the base district and any applicable overlay districts in which your project lies.

#### **✓ You comply**

L&I has determined that your application complies with the zoning code and that your proposed use requires a special exception. L&I will issue you a **referral** to the Zoning Board.

#### **✗ You don't comply**

If L&I determines that your proposal does not satisfy the zoning code, it will issue a **refusal** to your application. You have two options:

Option 1: Revise your application to bring it into compliance.

Option 2: Appeal L&I's decision before the Zoning Board and request a variance. If you choose Option 2, jump to Chapter 5 (Variances).

## Chapter 3: My Project Needs a Special Exception Approval

- Step 5. Send early notice to the Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) in your project area about your special exception application. The Commission maintains the registry and can provide you contact information for any group whose boundaries include your project. Schedule a time to meet with the RCOs to discuss your application **no later than 21 days from date of notification, but before the Zoning Board hearing**. Check out Chapter 11 for recommended RCO notification procedures.
- Step 6. Submit a “Petition to Appeal” to the Zoning Board **within 30 days of L&I’s referral**. Visit the Zoning Board’s Board Administration Unit to obtain the Petition to Appeal form. Remember to submit an original signed copy of L&I’s referral and the Zoning Board filing fee with your Petition to Appeal.
- Step 7. Satisfy the public notice requirements by posting a sign **at least 21 days before your Zoning Board appeal hearing**. See Chapter 11 for recommended sign posting procedures.
- Step 8. Document the findings of your meeting(s) with the RCOs and send them to the Zoning Board **at least 1 week before** your scheduled hearing.
- Step 9. Attend the scheduled Zoning Board hearing for your application. If you meet the criteria for special exception, the Zoning Board will approve your special exception in a **Notice of Decision**. The Zoning Board may attach conditions on your application to make sure that you comply with the code and satisfy the special exception criteria.
- Step 10. Fulfill the Zoning Board conditions, if any, and return to L&I **within 1 year of the Notice of Decision** to receive your permit. Your permit will be **valid for 3 years**. Within this timeframe, you need to obtain your building permit from L&I and start construction or your zoning permit will expire. You can ask for 1 one-year extension if you need more than 3 years to begin your construction project.

# Chapter 3: My Project Needs a Special Exception Approval

## Process Checklist

### Permit or No Permit?

To start, let's see if you even need a permit. Answer YES to any one of these conditions and the answer is YES.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	New construction and additions
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Alterations that result in a change in gross floor area
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Carports, detached private garages, greenhouses and rear yard sheds for homes that are larger than 120 square feet or higher than 8 feet
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Installation of a fence that exceeds the height limits established by the Zoning Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Construction of a deck higher than 12" above ground
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Creation of off-street parking or reconfiguration of existing parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Change of a use of a property

### What application submittals?

You will need the following in order to complete your application.

#### General Requirements

<input type="checkbox"/> Application Form (1 copy)	Available online at <a href="http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf">http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf</a>
<input type="checkbox"/> Plot Plan ( <b>NOT REQUIRED</b> if only a change of a use) (6 copies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional seal not required</li> <li>• Scale 1"=10', 20', 40', 50', 60' or 100'</li> <li>• Minimum Sheet Size = 11" x 17"   Maximum Sheet Size = 24" x 36"</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Elevation Drawings (6 copies)	<input type="checkbox"/> New construction, additions and alterations
<input type="checkbox"/> Sky Plane Compliance Materials (see Appendix B for guidelines)	<input type="checkbox"/> Lots located in the "Sky Plane Control Area" of the Center City (/CTR) Overlay District

#### Additional pre-requisite plan reviews depending on your proposal:

<input type="checkbox"/> Philadelphia Water Department Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Conceptual plan review for earth disturbances > 5,000 square feet <input type="checkbox"/> Conceptual plan review for projects in the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District <input type="checkbox"/> Required stream buffers for projects immediately adjacent to Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, the Poquessing Creek, the Byberry Creek, Walton Run, the Pennypack Creek, Wooden Bridge Run, the Tacony-Frankford Creek, the Wissahickon Creek, the Darby Creek, Cobbs Creek and Indian Creek.
<input type="checkbox"/> Commission Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering controls for projects on steep slopes <input type="checkbox"/> Impervious coverage limits for projects in the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District <input type="checkbox"/> Flood management controls for projects located within a 100-year floodplain <input type="checkbox"/> Projects located in a Master Plan District: SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STA, RMX-1, RMX-2 <input type="checkbox"/> Wireless telecommunication towers <input type="checkbox"/> Parking garages in the RMX-3, CMX-4 and CMX-5 Districts <input type="checkbox"/> Subdivisions

## Chapter 3: My Project Needs a Special Exception Approval

Streets Dept Approval

Review of revisions to streets on the official City Plan, including additions and removals of streets

Reviews of driveways, loading docks, curb cuts, parking lots and garages, sidewalks, curb bump-outs, lay-by-lanes, street signals, street lighting and paving.

Reviews of encroachments, projections and architectural embellishments (such as projecting signs, awnings, bay windows) over the public right-of-way.

Art Commission Approval

Structures or fixtures that extend over any highway, stream, lake, square, park or other public place in the City

Historical Commission

Construction, alteration and demolition of historically-designated properties in historic districts

**(OPTIONAL at the zoning permit stage, but RECOMMENDED if your property is in an historic district)**

### What fees?

#### Zoning Fee:

\$30.00 Single- or two-family residences

\$125.00 Parcels 30,000 square feet or less

\$250.00 Parcels more than 30,000 square feet

#### Use Registration Fee:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_.00 \_\_\_\_ registered uses X \$125.00 per registered use

#### Zoning Board Appeal Filing Fee:

\$125.00 Single- or two-family residences

\$250.00 All other properties

\$625.00 Accelerated hearing, in addition to fee specified above

### Notify and Meet With Registered Community Organizations?

Yes\*  No

\* Send notification prior to submitting "Petition to Appeal" to the Zoning Board. Meet within 21 days of notice.

### Public Notice: How and When?

Yes\*  No

\*Sign posting required at least 21 calendar days prior to the date of the Zoning Board hearing

### Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?

Zoning Board of Adjustment  Yes  No

Planning Commission If deemed necessary by the Commission staff

Art Commission If deemed necessary by Art Commission staff, or cannot be approved administratively

## Chapter 3: My Project Needs a Special Exception Approval

### **Important Contacts**

#### **Licenses & Inspections (L&I)**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard.  
Concourse Level  
215.686.2576  
[www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li)

#### **Planning Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Flr  
215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

#### **Philadelphia Water Department**

ARAMark Tower  
1101 Market Street, 2nd Flr  
215.685.6387  
[www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org)

#### **Streets Department**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard, Rm 830  
215.686.5578  
[www.phila.gov/streets](http://www.phila.gov/streets)

#### **Art Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Flr  
215.683.2095

### **How do I find out about....**

#### **The Zoning for My Property**

Look up the base zoning and any applicable overlay district for your parcel using the Zoning Overlay webtool at <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>.

#### **PWD Conceptual Plan Review**

PWD must approve your stormwater management controls. You can find PWD's online Conceptual Plan Review application at [www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org). This site also contains PWD's *Stormwater Management Guidance Manual*, which defines earth disturbance.

#### **Wissahickon Watershed Overlay**

Section 14-408(4) of the Zoning Code describes the impervious coverage limits within the overlay.

#### **Steep Slopes and Stream Buffers**

Sections 14-606(3) and 14-606(6) describes the development restrictions on steep slopes and along stream buffers.

#### **100-year floodplain**

The Flood Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) publishes floodplain maps. You can reference the FEMA maps on file at the City Planning Commission and at the public library.

#### **More information on the ZBA appeal process**

See the Zoning Board's info sheet at <http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/Instructions%20on%20how%20to%20appeal.pdf>

## Chapter 4: My Project Needs a Regulated Use Approval

### The Step-by-Step Process

Step 1. Confirm that your use is regulated by checking §14-503(10). You must satisfy the spacing requirements of this section.

**Regulated use list:** Adult-oriented merchandise, adult-oriented service, check-cashing, drug paraphernalia, pawnshops, payday lenders, detention and correctional facilities, and gun shops.

**My regulated use is NOT WITHIN.....**

- 1,000 feet of another regulated use
- 500 feet of any residentially-zoned district
- 1,000 feet of any SP-ENT (Entertainment Special Purpose) District
- 500 feet of a “**protected use**”:
  - Churches, monasteries, chapels, synagogues, convents, rectories, etc.
  - Religious article and religious apparel stores
  - Residential homes
  - Hotels and convention/civic centers
  - Schools, up to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, and their recreation areas
  - Public playgrounds, swimming pools, parks and libraries

Step 2. Determine if your regulated use is permitted as-of-right, permitted by special exception or prohibited in your zoning district.

- If permitted as-of-right, jump to Chapter 2.
- If permitted by special exception, jump to Chapter 3.
- If prohibited, you must seek a variance from the Zoning Board. Jump to Chapter 5.

## Chapter 5: My Project Needs a Variance

### The Step-by-Step Process

- Step 1. Apply for a **zoning permit** at the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I). Make sure that you bring all of the application submittals on the checklist below.
- Step 2. L&I will confirm whether your project needs **Civic Design Review**. If you need Civic Design Review, L&I cannot deem your application as “complete” until you follow the process outlined in **Chapter 9**. Complete Chapter 9 before you continue on to Step 3.
- Step 3. L&I evaluates your application against all of the zoning provisions of the base district and any applicable overlay districts in which your project lies. L&I determines that your proposal does not satisfy the zoning code and issues a **refusal** to your application.
- Option 1: Revise your application to bring it into compliance. If you choose this option, jump to **Chapter 2, Step 3**.
- Option 2: Appeal L&I’s decision before the Zoning Board of Adjustment and request a variance. If you choose Option 2, continue to Step 4.
- Step 4. Send early notice to the Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) in your project’s area about your appeal of the refusal. The Commission maintains the registry and can provide contact information. Schedule a time to meet with the RCOs to discuss your application **no later than 21 days from date of notification, but before the Zoning Board hearing**. Check out Chapter 11 for recommended RCO notification procedures.
- Step 5. Submit a “Petition to Appeal” to the Zoning Board **within 30 days of L&I’s refusal**. Visit the Zoning Board’s Board Administration Unit to obtain the Petition to Appeal form. Remember to submit an original signed copy of L&I’s refusal and the Zoning Board filing fee with your Petition to Appeal.
- Step 6. Satisfy the public notice requirements by posting a sign **at least 21 days before your Zoning Board appeal hearing**. See Chapter 11 for recommended sign posting procedures.
- Step 7. Document the findings of your meeting(s) with the RCOs and send them to the Zoning Board **at least 1 week before** the first hearing scheduled for your project (either the Commission or the Zoning Board).
- Step 8. Attend public hearings that have been scheduled for your project:

***In SOME cases.....***The Commission will review your application at a public meeting if deemed necessary by the Commission’s staff. The Commission will forward its recommendations to the



## Chapter 5: My Project Needs a Variance

Zoning Board for consideration.

**In ALL cases.....**Attend the Zoning Board hearing for your application. If you meet the criteria for variances (see §14-204(8)), the Zoning Board will approve your variance in a **Notice of Decision**. Note that dimensional variances are limited to 25% of the zoning district dimensional standards. The Zoning Board may attach conditions on your application to make sure you satisfy the variance criteria.

### **Zoning Board Fast Track process**

If your proposal is a relatively minor variance from the code, your appeal may be eligible for the Fast Track variance process, meaning that your case can be scheduled for the beginning of the hearing and the Zoning Board will likely approve your request as long as (1) the Commission has no objection, (2) there is no public opposition, and (3) there is no opposition from the District Councilperson. For more information, go to [http://www.phila.gov/li/upddocs/ZBA\\_FastTrack.pdf](http://www.phila.gov/li/upddocs/ZBA_FastTrack.pdf)

Step 9. Fulfill the Zoning Board conditions, if any, and return to L&I **within 1 year of the Notice of Decision** to receive your permit. Your permit will be **valid for 3 years**. Within this timeframe, you need to get your building permit from L&I and start construction your zoning compliance permit will expire. You can ask for 1 one-year extension if you need more than 3 years to begin your construction project.

## Chapter 5: My Project Needs a Variance

### Process Checklist

#### Permit or No Permit?

To start, let's see if you even need a permit. Answer YES to any one of these conditions and the answer is YES.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	New construction and additions
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Alterations that result in a change in gross floor area
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Carports, detached private garages, greenhouses and rear yard sheds for homes that are larger than 120 square feet or higher than 8 feet
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Installation of a fence that exceeds the height limits established by the Zoning Code
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Construction of a deck higher than 12" above ground
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Creation of off-street parking or reconfiguration of existing parking
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Change of a use of a property

#### What application submittals?

You will need the following in order to complete your application.

##### General Requirements

- Application Form (1 copy) Available online at <http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf>
- Plot Plan (6 copies)
  - Professional seal not required
  - Scale 1"=10', 20', 40', 50', 60' or 100'
  - Minimum Sheet Size = 11" x 17" | Maximum Sheet Size = 24" x 36"
- Elevation Drawings (6 copies)
  - New construction, additions and alterations
- Sky Plane Compliance Materials (see Appendix B for guidelines)
  - Lots located in the "Sky Plane Control Area" of the Center City (/CTR) Overlay District

##### Additional pre-requisite plan reviews depending on your proposal:

- Philadelphia Water Department Approval
  - Conceptual plan review for earth disturbances > 5,000 square feet
  - Conceptual plan review for projects in the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District
  - Required stream buffers for projects immediately adjacent to Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers, the Poquessing Creek, the Byberry Creek, Walton Run, the Pennypack Creek, Wooden Bridge Run, the Tacony-Frankford Creek, the Wissahickon Creek, the Darby Creek, Cobbs Creek and Indian Creek.
- Commission Approval
  - Engineering controls for projects on steep slopes
  - Impervious coverage limits for projects in the Wissahickon Watershed Overlay District
  - Flood management controls for projects located within a 100-year floodplain
  - Projects located in a Master Plan District: SP-INS, SP-ENT, SP-STa, RMX-1, RMX-2
  - Wireless telecommunication towers
  - Parking garages in the RMX-3, CMX-4 and CMX-5 Districts
  - Subdivisions

## Chapter 5: My Project Needs a Variance

<input type="checkbox"/> Streets Dept Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Review of revisions to streets on the official City Plan, including additions and removals of streets <input type="checkbox"/> Reviews of driveways, loading docks, curb cuts, parking lots and garages, sidewalks, curb bump-outs, lay-by-lanes, street signals, street lighting and paving. <input type="checkbox"/> Reviews of encroachments, projections and architectural embellishments (such as projecting signs, awnings, bay windows) over the public right-of-way.
<input type="checkbox"/> Art Commission Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Structures or fixtures that extend over any highway, stream, lake, square, park or other public place in the City
<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Commission	<input type="checkbox"/> Construction, alteration and demolition of historically-designated properties in historic districts

**(OPTIONAL at the zoning permit stage, but RECOMMENDED if your property is in an historic district)**

### What fees?

#### Zoning Fee:

- |                                   |                                      |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30.00  | Single- or two-family residences     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125.00 | Parcels 30,000 square feet or less   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250.00 | Parcels more than 30,000 square feet |

#### Use Registration Fee:

- \$ \_\_\_\_\_.00      \_\_\_\_ registered uses X \$125.00 per registered use

#### Zoning Board Appeal Filing Fee:

- |                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$125.00 | Single- or two-family residences                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250.00 | All other properties                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$625.00 | Accelerated hearing, in addition to fee specified above |

### Notify and Meet With Registered Community Organizations?

- Yes\*       No  
 \* Send notification prior to submitting "Petition to Appeal" to the Zoning Board. Meet within 21 days of notice.

### Public Notice: How and When?

- Yes\*       No  
 \*Sign posting required at least 21 calendar days prior to the date of the Zoning Board hearing

### Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?

- |                            |   |                             |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| Zoning Board of Adjustment | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes   | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Planning Commission        | If deemed necessary by the Commission staff   |                             |
| Art Commission             | If deemed necessary by Art Commission staff, or cannot be approved administratively |                             |

## Chapter 5: My Project Needs a Variance

### **Important Contacts**

#### **Licenses & Inspections (L&I)**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard.  
Concourse Level  
215.686.2576  
[www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li)

#### **Planning Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Flr  
215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

#### **Philadelphia Water Department**

ARAMark Tower  
1101 Market Street, 2nd Flr  
215.685.6387  
[www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org)

#### **Streets Department**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard, Rm 830  
215.686.5578  
[www.phila.gov/streets](http://www.phila.gov/streets)

#### **Art Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Flr  
215.683.2095

### **How do I find out about....**

#### **The Zoning for My Property**

Look up the base zoning for your parcel and any applicable overlay district using the Zoning Overlay webtool at <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>.

#### **PWD Conceptual Plan Review**

PWD must approve your stormwater management controls. You can find PWD's online Conceptual Plan Review application at [www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org). This site also contains PWD's *Stormwater Management Guidance Manual*, which defines earth disturbance.

#### **Wissahickon Watershed Overlay**

Section 14-408(4) of the Zoning Code describes the impervious coverage limits within the overlay.

#### **Steep Slopes and Stream Buffers**

Sections 14-606(3) and 14-606(6) describes the development restrictions on steep slopes and along stream buffers.

#### **100-year floodplain**

The Flood Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) publishes floodplain maps. You can reference the FEMA maps on file at the City Planning Commission and at the public library.

#### **More information on the ZBA appeal process**

See the Zoning Board's info sheet at <http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/Instructions%20on%20how%20to%20appeal.pdf>

## Chapter 6: My Project is in a Master Plan District

### The Step-by-Step Process

If you are proposing to build in accordance with an adopted Master Plan, then the process is the same as a by-right project. **Go to Chapter 2.**

If you are proposing a major amendment to an adopted Master Plan or proposing to map a new Master Plan District, then the process is the same as a zoning text/map amendment. **Go to Chapter 8.** See §14-204(3) for activities that constitute a “major amendment”, such as proposing a land use that is not allowed in the district or proposing to deviate significantly from the building, parking, landscaping or open area dimensions of the adopted Master Plan.

If you are proposing a minor amendment to an existing Master Plan:

Step 1. Submit your draft amendments to the Plan of Development to the Commission.

Step 2. The Commission will schedule a public meeting. At least 15 days prior to the meeting, the Commission will post a newspaper notice.

Step 3. Attend the scheduled public meeting to present your plans. The Commission will determine if you meet the criteria for a minor amendment to Master Plans (see §14-204(3)):

**✓ Yes, minor amendment**

The Commission will approve the amendment and may attach conditions to ensure that it complies with the zoning district standards and approved Master Plan.

**✗ Not a minor amendment**

The Commission will refer the proposed amendment, with its recommendations, to City Council. Your amendment will not be effective unless approved by City Council by ordinance and the Mayor.

### Process Checklist

What submittals?
<input type="checkbox"/> Written description of your amendment proposal
What fees?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None
Notify and Meet With Registered Community Orgs?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Public Notice: How and When?
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes* <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?
Planning Commission <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

### **Important Contacts**

**Planning Commission**  
One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Flr  
215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

## Chapter 7: My Project Needs a Subdivision Plat Approval

### The Step-by-Step Process<sup>1</sup>

#### When do I need a Subdivision Plat Approval?

The subdivision standards in §14-610 apply to the division, reconfiguration, or combination of lots. Generally, only subdivisions involving three or more parcels will require the Plat Approval process described in this chapter. The Commission may determine that a subdivision is minor and may be approved by Commission staff.

Step 1. Prepare required plans:

- **Property Data Map** that shows all existing and planned conditions affecting the property to be subdivided. The Streets Department Survey District will verify the accuracy of the Property Data Map.
- **Preliminary Plat** that identifies proposed street and lot layouts, sewerage, drainage and water supply in sketch form on the Property Data Map.

Step 2. Submit your completed Property Data Map and Preliminary Plat to the Commission for review and approval. The Commission will distribute copies of the Preliminary Plat to the Water Department to approve the proposed method of stormwater run-off.

Step 3. Attend the scheduled public Commission meeting to present your subdivision plans. The meeting must be held **within 30 days** from the date of filing your plans with the Commission. If your proposed lots meet the requirements of the base and any applicable overlay districts, the Commission will approve your Preliminary Plat and forward a copy of the approved Preliminary Plat to the Department of Streets. **The Preliminary Plat approval is not the final subdivision approval. It is an approval of the general layout of the lots and a guide for the preparation of the Final Plat.**

Step 4. Prepare the **Final Plat** and get approvals from the following agencies:

- **Water Department** will verify that the proposed sewerage, drainage, including the method for the control of on-site stormwater runoff, and water supply satisfy Water Department Regulations.
- **Streets Department** will verify that the proposed street design satisfies the Streets Code and Street Department Regulations. If your subdivision plans propose a new right-of-way, alterations to a right-of-way, or vacating a right-of-way, the Survey Bureau will require you to apply for a City Plan Action to modify the official City Plan through City Council Ordinance.
- **Department of Parks and Recreation** will verify that you meet the street tree planting requirements (see §14-607(3)).

---

<sup>1</sup> The Commission, the Department of Streets and the Department of Records are preparing changes to the administrative procedures for subdivisions. This chapter is subject to future revision.

## Chapter 7: My Project Needs a Subdivision Plat Approval

- **Board of Revision of Taxes** will assign **temporary** addresses and tax accounts from the Board of Revision of Taxes. This is required for L&I to process zoning permit applications (if you are pursuing zoning approval for your lots concurrently with subdivision approval. Note that L&I cannot issue a final zoning approval until the Commission has approved your Final Subdivision Plat).

Step 5. Submit your **Final Plat** to the Commission for review and approval **within 15 months** after approval of the Preliminary Plat. You may file for an extension if you need more time to prepare the Final Plat and obtain the approvals outlined in Step 4. The Commission will verify administratively (no public meeting required) that your subdivision satisfies the standards in §14-610. If the Commission does not make a decision on your Final Plat within 45 days, your subdivision is deemed approved.

### **Subdivision approved ✓**

An approved Final Plat is **valid for 3 years**. Go to Step 6.

### **Subdivision disapproved ✗**

In the event of disapproval, the Commission must notify you within 7 days of its decision and provide the reason(s) for disapproval.

Step 6. In the 3-year period in which your Final Plat is valid, complete a final as-built survey of your subdivided lots. Submit the final as-built survey to the Commission and Streets Department. Within the 3-year time period, **you must also go to the Records Department** to record your Final Plat and conveyance and confirmatory deed document in the public records or your Final Plat will be null and void.

# Chapter 7: My Project Needs a Subdivision Plat Approval

## Process Checklist

### Does my Subdivision Require Plat Review?

To start, let's see if you even need a plat review. Answer YES to any of these conditions and the answer is YES.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	The subdivision of land into 2 or more lots for sale, conveyance, lease, development or redevelopment.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	The combination of previously platted lots into fewer or differently configured lots for sale, lease, development or redevelopment.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	The sale, conveyance or lease of land 3 acres or less for the purposes of land subdivision or improvement.

### What application submittals?

You will need the following in order to complete your application.

#### At the Preliminary Plat Stage:

<input type="checkbox"/> Property Data Map (2 copies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name and seal of PA-licensed engineer, architect, or surveyor who prepared the map</li> <li>• Scale 1"=100' or less, North Arrow and Date</li> <li>• Names of subdivider and registered owner</li> <li>• Tract boundaries with bearings and distances</li> <li>• Topography with elevations based on City Datum at 5' contour interval</li> <li>• Approximate location of water courses, tree masses, rock outcrops, existing buildings</li> <li>• Actual location of sewers, inlets, water mains, easements, fire hydrants, railroads, existing or confirmed streets and their established grades</li> <li>• Adjacent streets</li> </ul>
<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Plat (25 copies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scale 1"=100' or less, North Arrow and Date</li> <li>• In sketch form, may be on the Property Data Map</li> <li>• Proposed street layout, street names, lot-lines, and lot identification numbers. Lots shall show approximate dimensions and areas when required by the Commission; streets shall indicate proposed cartway and right-of-way widths, approximate radii of curvature and approximate grades</li> <li>• Sites dedicated or reserved for non-residential purposes</li> <li>• Proposed sewerage, drainage, including the method for the control of on-site stormwater runoff, and water supply</li> <li>• Subsoil conditions, only if requested by the Commission</li> </ul>

#### At the Final Plat Stage:

<input type="checkbox"/> Final Plat (1 stable reproducible copy and 10 additional print copies)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Printed on reproducible material, such as mylar.</li> <li>• Name and seal of PA-licensed engineer, architect, or surveyor who prepared the map</li> <li>• Scale 1"=100' or less, North Arrow and Date</li> <li>• Names of subdivider and registered owner</li> <li>• Primary control points, approved by the Department of Streets, or ties to such control points to which all pertinent engineering data shall be referred;</li> <li>• Boundaries, with distances, bearings, and location of monuments. Such dimensions shall be in feet and hundredths of a foot;</li> <li>• Street lines, street names, lot names, and lot identification numbers, easements, and other land divisions and their purpose;</li> </ul>
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## Chapter 7: My Project Needs a Subdivision Plat Approval

- Radii, lengths of curves, and tangent bearings for all streets;
- Right-of-way and cartway widths for all streets;
- When required by the Department of Streets, street profiles, details of culverts or other necessary data;
- Building lines or street set-back lines;
- Calculated area of all lots where area approximation is within 5% of the minimum area requirements;
- Location and boundaries of all non-dedicated ways or easements, and of drainage ways;
- Location and outline place of all existing structures to remain;
- Location of all watercourses;
- When required by the Commission the location, depth, and size of sewers, storm-water drains, waterlines, location of wells and cesspools or septic tanks;
- A certification showing that applicant is owner of the land;
- Statement dedicating streets, rights-of-way or other areas for public use as may be required by the City;
- Such other certificates, affidavits, or endorsements as the Commission may require for the enforcement of this Chapter.

### What fees?

Yes       No

### Notify and Meet With Registered Community Groups?

Yes       No

### Public Notice: How and When?

Yes       No

### Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?

Planning Commission, Preliminary Plat       Yes       No

## Chapter 7: My Project Needs a Subdivision Plat Approval

### **Important Contacts**

#### **Planning Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Flr  
215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

#### **Licenses & Inspections (L&I)**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard.  
Concourse Level  
215.686.2576  
[www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li)

#### **Philadelphia Water Department**

ARAMark Tower  
1101 Market Street, 2nd Flr  
215.685.6387  
[www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org)

#### **Streets Department**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard, Rm 830  
215.686.5578  
[www.phila.gov/streets](http://www.phila.gov/streets)

#### **Department of Parks and Recreation**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 10th Flr  
215.683.3600  
[www.phila.gov/recreation](http://www.phila.gov/recreation)

### **How do I find out about....**

#### **City Plan Action**

Read the Streets Department's information sheet about the City Plan amendment process, including applicability, fees and application requirements.

[http://www.phila.gov/streets/pdfs/City\\_Plan\\_Applicatio.pdf](http://www.phila.gov/streets/pdfs/City_Plan_Applicatio.pdf)

#### **PWD Stormwater Management**

PWD's Stormwater Management Guidance Manual describes acceptable methods for controlling stormwater. Visit [www.phillyriverinfo.org](http://www.phillyriverinfo.org) to download the manual.

#### **Street Tree Requirements**

Section 14-607(3) of the zoning code describes the minimum street tree requirements and explains the procedure for establishing a tree escrow with the Department of Parks and Recreation. You will also need to refer to the Department's Recommended Street Tree List at

<http://www.fairmountpark.org/RecommendedTreeList.aspx>.

## Chapter 8: My Project Needs a Zoning Text or Zoning Map Amendment

### The Step-by-Step Process

- Step 1. Submit your draft amendments to the Commission for preliminary review and discussion.
- Step 2. The Commission will translate your proposal into draft legislation.
- Step 3. Attend the scheduled Commission public meeting to present your proposal. The Commission will recommend to City Council that the ordinance be approved if it meets the criteria listed in §14-204(2).
- Step 4. Attend the scheduled City Council hearing to present your proposal. The City must post a newspaper notice at least 15 days before the City Council hearing. City Council has 45 days to approve, approve with changes or disapprove the amendment. If City Council does not make a decision within 45 days, your amendment is deemed approved

### Process Checklist

What submittals?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Written description of your amendment proposal	
What fees?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> None	
Notify and Meet With Registered Community Groups?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Public Notice: How and When?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (Not required by applicant. City will post newspaper notice)	
Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?	
Planning Commission	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
City Council	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

*Important Contacts*

**Planning Commission**  
 One Parkway Building  
 1515 Arch Street, 13th Flr  
 215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

## Chapter 9: My Project Needs Civic Design Review

### The Step-by-Step Process

NOTE: Your project may require pre-requisite plan review (see definition in Chapter 1) by another department or commission. Civic Design Review must occur after these other pre-requisite reviews so that the Civic Design Review Committee can take into account the content of those reviews. If necessary, the Committee will extend the timelines for review so that it may receive the recommendations from the other departments or commissions.<sup>2</sup>

Step 1. Confirm your project exceeds the Civic Design Review thresholds (see 1. Civic Design Review or No Civic Design Review? below in Process Checklist).

Step 2. Send early notice to the Registered Community Organizations (RCOs) in your project's area about your Civic Design Review project. The Commission maintains the registry and can provide contact information. Schedule a time to meet with the RCOs to discuss your application **no later than 21 days from date of notification, but before the Civic Design Review (CDR) meeting**. Check out Chapter 11 for recommended RCO notification procedures.

Step 3. Document the findings of your meeting(s) with the RCOs and send them to the Commission **at least 1 week before** the CDR meeting.

Step 4. Attend the scheduled CDR meeting to present your project. The CDR meeting must take place **within 30 days** from the date of your zoning permit application. The primary purpose of this informational meeting is to hear the public's and the CDR Committee's feedback about your project's impacts on the public realm. The CDR Committee will make recommendations and may decide to schedule a second CDR meeting **within the next 30 days**.

Step 5. If you have incorporated the CDR's recommendations into your project design, amend your zoning permit application, if necessary, to alert L&I to these changes.

#### **Important Contacts**

**Planning Commission**  
One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13th Flr  
215.683.4615  
[www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)

<sup>2</sup> Moved to the ZAM from §14-204(6)(a)(.2) of the Consolidated Draft Code.

## Chapter 9: My Project Needs Civic Design Review

### Process Checklist

#### Civic Design Review or No Civic Design Review?

To start, let's see if you even need Civic Design Review. Answer YES to any of these conditions and the answer is YES.

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	The project parcel is located in any zoning district  <b>AND</b> affects* any zoning districts,  <b>AND</b> is not for an industrial building in an industrial district,  <b>AND</b> has more than 100,000 sq ft of new construction or more than 100 new dwelling units.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	The project parcel is located in a C, I or SP zoning district,  <b>AND</b> affects* one or more RM or RMX zoning district,  <b>AND</b> has more than 50,000 sq ft of new construction or more than 50 new dwelling units or includes buildings that are more than 20 ft. taller than the tallest building on an RM or RMX lot within 400 ft. of the property.
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	The project parcel is located in a C, I, SP, RM or RMX zoning district,  <b>AND</b> affects* one or more RSD or RSD zoning districts,  <b>AND</b> has more than 25,000 sq ft of new construction or more than 25 new dwelling units or includes buildings that are more than 20 ft. taller than the tallest building on an RM or RMX lot within 400 ft. of the property.

*\*Note: A property "affects" your property if*  
 (a) it shares all or part of a side or rear property line, or  
 (b) is separated from your property by only an alley, driveway, railroad line or creek, or  
 (c) is located on the same blockface and the closest points on the two properties are less than 200 ft. apart, or  
 (d) is located on the blockface across the street from your front property line and (i) the street is less than 100 ft. wide (measured curb to curb) and (ii) the closest points on the two properties are less than 200 ft. apart.

#### What application submittals?

Concept Plans      **[Submission requirements to be determined. The requirements will be developed through Planning Commission regulation]**

#### What fees?

Yes                       None

#### Notify and Meet With Registered Community Groups?

Yes\*                       No  
 \* Send notification prior to submitting your zoning permit application to L&I. Meet within 21 days of notice.

#### Public Notice: How and When?

Yes                       None

#### Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?

Civic Design Review       Yes                       No

## Chapter 10: My Project Needs a New Accessory Sign or to Alter an Existing Accessory Sign

### The Step-by-Step Process

*NOTE: L&I strongly recommends that you apply for your sign permit concurrently with the zoning permit application for your use and/or building.*

- Step 1. Apply for a **zoning permit for your sign** at the Department of Licenses & Inspections (L&I). Make sure that you bring all of the application submittals on the checklist below.
- Step 2. L&I will confirm that you have satisfied all of the zoning provisions of the base district and any applicable overlay districts in which your project lies.

#### ✓ **You comply**

L&I has determined that your application complies with the zoning code. L&I will approve and issue your permit, which will be **valid for 3 years**. Within this timeframe, you need to get your building permit, if applicable, from L&I and build your sign or your permit will expire. You can ask for 1 one-year extension if you need more than 3 years to begin your project.

#### ✗ **You don't comply**

If L&I determines that your proposal does not satisfy the zoning code, it will issue a **refusal** to your application. You have two options:

Option 1: Revise your application to bring it into compliance.

Option 2: Appeal L&I's decision before the Zoning Board of Adjustment and request a variance. If you choose Option 2, jump to Chapter 5 (Variances).

# Chapter 10: My Project Needs a New Accessory Sign or to Alter an Existing Accessory Sign

## Process Checklist

### Permit or No Permit?

To start, let's see if you need a permit. Each of the items on the list below does not require a permit. **If you answer YES to ANY of these conditions, then you do not need a permit.**

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	For sale or for rent sign
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Display of advertising matter on vehicles, pedestrians or newsstands
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	Placement of information required by law to be placed on structures
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No	"Face Change" - Changing the content on the face of an existing sign that is accessory to a permitted or a use previously-approved by the Zoning Board

### What application submittals?

You will need the following in order to complete your application.

#### General Requirements:

- Application Form (1 copy) Available online at <http://www.phila.gov/li/UpdDocs/zoningapplication.pdf>
- Plot Plan (6 copies)
  - Professional seal not required
  - Scale 1"=10', 20', 40', 50', 60' or 100'
  - Minimum Sheet Size = 11" x 17" | Maximum Sheet Size = 24" x 36"
- Sign elevation
- Artistic rendering with dimensions on sign face
- 3 photographs of each building face that will display the accessory sign(s)

#### Additional pre-requisite plan reviews depending on your proposal:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Streets Dept Approval   | <input type="checkbox"/> Signs that project over the right-of-way <sup>3</sup>  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art Commission Approval | <input type="checkbox"/> Structures or fixtures that extend over any highway, stream, lake, square, park or other public place in the City<br><input type="checkbox"/> Signs in the Chestnut/Walnut/S. Broad St Area, Vine Street Parkway Area, Benjamin Franklin Parkway Buffer Area, Washington Square Area, and Broad Street Area of the Center City Overlay (/CTR) district (§ 14-402(7))<br><input type="checkbox"/> Signs in the Passyunk Avenue Area of the Neighborhood Commercial Areas (/NCA) Overlay district (§ 14-403(5))<br><input type="checkbox"/> Signs in the Overbrook Farms Area of the Neighborhood Commercial Areas (/NCA) Overlay district (§ 14-403(6)) |

<sup>3</sup> The ZCC's Sign Controls Working Group recommends changing the requirement for Streets Department review to signs that project over the right-of-way AND do not meet the requirements of §14-805(1)(b) (Maximum Projection over Sidewalks).

## Chapter 10: My Project Needs a New Accessory Sign or to Alter an Existing Accessory Sign

	<input type="checkbox"/> Signs in the East Falls Area of the Neighborhood Commercial Areas (/NCA) Overlay district (§14-403(6)) <sup>4</sup> <input type="checkbox"/> Signs in the Cobbs Creek Parkway Area, Roosevelt Blvd Area, and Fairmount Park Area (§14-805(7)). <input type="checkbox"/> Signs that project more than 12" beyond the property line
<input type="checkbox"/> Parks and Recreation Department	<input type="checkbox"/> Signs in the Cobbs Creek Parkway Area, Roosevelt Blvd Area, and Fairmount Park Area (§14-805(7)).
<b>What fees?</b>	
<i>Zoning Fee:</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$0.00	Repairing an existing sign
<input type="checkbox"/> \$200.0	Accessory sign
<i>Use Registration Fee:</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____.00	____ registered uses X \$125.00 per registered use
<b>Notify and Meet With Registered Community Groups?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Public Notice: How and When?</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Must I attend a public meeting or hearing?</b>	
Art Commission	If deemed necessary by Art Commission staff, or cannot be approved administratively

<sup>4</sup> The next revision of the Consolidated Draft Code will contain the existing sign provisions for East Falls in the /NCA Overlay §14-403(2).



## Chapter 10: My Project Needs a New Accessory Sign or to Alter an Existing Accessory Sign

### **Important Contacts**

#### **Licenses & Inspections (L&I)**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard, Concourse  
215.686.2576  
[www.phila.gov/li](http://www.phila.gov/li)

#### **Streets Department**

Municipal Services Building  
1401 JFK Boulevard, Rm 830  
215.686.5578  
[www.phila.gov/streets](http://www.phila.gov/streets)

#### **Art Commission**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Flr  
215.683.2095

#### **Parks and Recreation Department**

One Parkway Building  
1515 Arch Street, 10th Flr  
215.683.3600  
[www.phila.gov/recreation](http://www.phila.gov/recreation)

### **How do I find out about....**

#### **Accessory Signs**

Accessory signs direct attention to the business use on the property. Chapter 14-1000 contains definitions for various types of accessory signs.

#### **Art Commission and Parks and Recreation Department Special Review Areas**

Sections 14-402(7) and 14-805(7) show the boundaries of the areas where the Art Commission and/or the Parks and Recreation Department must review your **signs**. You can see if your parcel is in this overlay by using the Zoning Overlay webtool at <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>.

# Chapter 11: Best Practices

## Public Notice

### I| **My Zoning Application Requires Notice to Registered Community Organizations**

The Zoning Code requires you to notify the Registered Community Organizations of your project if (1) your project requires Civic Design Review or (2) you must seek approval from the Zoning Board for a special exception, regulated use or variance.

You should take the following steps to fulfill your RCO notification requirements:

- A. Contact the Commission to determine which RCOs you need to notify.
- B. Send notice to the RCOs. The Commission's registry will indicate each RCO's preferred method of contact, such as email or mail. In the notice:
  - Provide your name and contact information.
  - Provide a short description of your proposed project.
  - Indicate whether your project requires Civic Design Review or approval by the Zoning Board.
  - List all of the RCOs you are contacting so that multiple RCOs can coordinate a common neighborhood meeting date.
  - Send a copy of the notice to the Commission at: 1515 Arch Street, 13<sup>th</sup> floor, Philadelphia PA 19102, c/o Community Planning Division.
  - Sending a copy to the office of the City Councilperson in whose district the project is located is strongly recommended. To find the correct City Council District, visit <http://www.phila.gov/cityCouncil/>.
- C. Submit a copy of your notice with your zoning permit application (for projects requiring Civic Design Review) or your "Petition to Appeal" to the Zoning Board (for projects requiring Zoning Board approval). If a meeting cannot be arranged within the 21-day period, you will need to document your good faith effort to arrange the meeting.
  - If you send mailed notice, you may want to use certified mail and submit that receipt with your application.
  - If you send email notice, you may want to use your email provider's delivery confirmation option to confirm receipt of your email by the RCO(s).

## Chapter 11: Best Practices

### 2| My Zoning Application Requires Notice to the Public

The Zoning Code requires you to notify the public of your project via sign posting if you seek approval from the Zoning Board for a special exception, regulated use or variance. You have to post your sign notice **at least 21 days** before your scheduled Zoning Board hearing. The Zoning Board's Board Administration Unit will provide you Orange Posters to satisfy your sign posting requirements.

The Zoning Code (see §14-203(6)(b)) and Chapter I of the Zoning Code Regulations require you to:

- **Do** post 1 sign per each street frontage.
- **Do** post signs in unobstructed plain view, at eye level and as close to the sidewalk (or street line if no sidewalk is present) as possible. Use a stake in the ground if necessary.
- **Do** post signs so that they are readable by passersby without having to come onto the property.
- **Do NOT** post signs on moveable gates, doors, windows, trees or utility poles.
- **Do** photograph (4"x6" images) each of your posted sign notices:
  - Photographs must show all structures on your property and structures on the immediate adjoining properties
  - If your appeal involves the side or rear of your property, take pictures of the affected side(s) or rear
  - Date and record the photographer's name and address and a brief description on each photograph

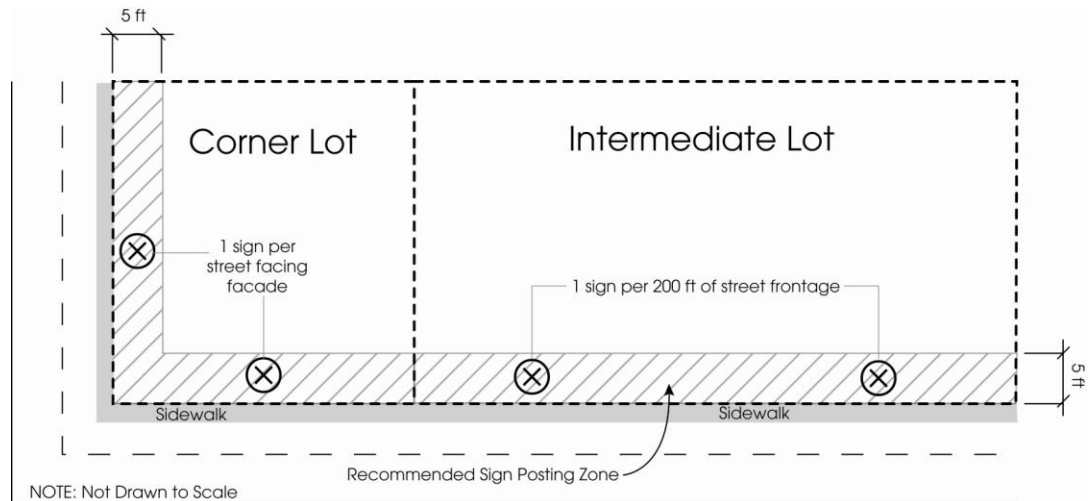
#### Placeholder

Images of DO and DO NOT examples

**The ZAM recommends** the following to ensure clear and adequate notice:

- **Do** post your sign 3-5 feet above ground level and within 5 feet of your street-fronting property line. If your existing building is built to the property line, place your sign in a front, street-level window.
- On larger parcels, **do** post signs on your property every 200 feet along each street frontage.
- **Do** notify your abutting neighbors by mail or word-of-mouth.

## Chapter 11: Best Practices



**What if the Zoning Board has continued my public hearing?** If the continuation date is 7 or more days from your original hearing date, then §14-203(6)(b) requires you to post notice of the continued hearing date. The Zoning Board will provide you with a sticker which displays the continued hearing date. You must affix this sticker onto your already-posted orange sign notice and photograph the reposted notice as described above.

### Zoning Board Hearings

The Zoning Board meets weekly and its hearing schedule is available online at <http://www.phila.gov/li/ContentPage.asp?TopNode=services&level1=142&level2=206&level3=>. You can read the list of cases that will be reviewed at each hearing.

If your proposal is a relatively minor variance from the code, your case may be eligible for the **Fast Track** hearing process, meaning that your case can be scheduled for the beginning of the hearing and the Zoning Board will likely approve your request as long as the Commission has no objection, there is no public opposition and there is no opposition from the District Councilperson. For more information, go to [http://www.phila.gov/li/upddocs/ZBA\\_FastTrack.pdf](http://www.phila.gov/li/upddocs/ZBA_FastTrack.pdf).

Refer to Chapter I of the Regulations to review the submission requirements for appellants, rules on representation, and additional guidance to the Zoning Board for making decisions.

### Best Practices for Community Organizations

#### I| Registry of Community Organizations

Community organizations are invited to register with the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. As stated in §14-203 of the Zoning Code, a Registered Community Organization

## Chapter 11: Best Practices

(RCO) will receive formal notice from zoning applicants of cases that are going to the Zoning Board of Adjustment or that require Civic Design Review. RCOs will be eligible to participate on the Civic Design Review Committee for projects located within its boundaries. In addition, zoning applicants for these types of cases will be required to attend a meeting with any RCO(s) whose boundaries include the project. If there is more than one RCO for the area, the RCOs must coordinate to convene a single meeting with the applicant. The meeting must be scheduled within 21 days of receipt of notice.

RCO status is available to community associations, civic associations, neighborhood groups, and similar community-based organizations.

### **Community-based organizations that meet all of the requirements below are encouraged to register:**

- Organizations whose mission includes involvement in physical planning and zoning issues.
- Organizations that hold regularly-scheduled meetings (open to the public).
- Organizations that seek membership from as many community residents as possible.

### **How to Register:**

- The Commission will accept new registrations during June and December each year.
- Applications for annual renewal must be submitted in June of each year.
- The Commission's application form is posted on its website, [www.philaplanning.org](http://www.philaplanning.org)<sup>5</sup>

## 2| **Managing a Registered Community Organization**

### **Forming a zoning or development committee of your organization:**

- Determine the role of this sub-committee. Craft a "mission statement" and set of operating principles or by-laws. Will this sub-committee review all proposed development projects? Will it meet with zoning applicants? Will it speak for the organization on such matters or make a recommendation to the full organization?
- Determine who (this committee or another group), will reach out to near neighbors of development projects.
- Determine in advance the method for making decisions on development projects. Is a majority vote of the committee members present adequate? Does the entire group need to achieve consensus? Do other members of the organization attend and vote? Do near neighbors of the project have a special role in the decision?
- The ideal number of members can vary but it is usually best to keep the size manageable, usually 12 or fewer.
- Most groups do not set professional requirements for committee; members however, many groups seek professionals in related fields (architects, engineers, planners, etc.) whose

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<sup>5</sup> Planning Commission is in the process of determining the application requirements and will post these materials once they are finalized.

## Chapter 11: Best Practices

expertise is related to the role of the committee.

- Most groups require that voting members, must be current in dues, and be a resident, business owner, or property owner in the area.

### Convening Meetings:

- Hold regular bi-weekly or monthly meetings
- Draft an agenda and list of planned presenters ahead of time and share with all members (to the fullest extent possible)
- If you are a Registered Community Organization, zoning applicants will notify you of projects that are going before the Civic Design Committee or the Zoning Board. Contact the applicant to schedule a meeting and if necessary, coordinate with other RCOs indicated on the applicant's project notice. You may need to convene a special meeting to meet the **timelines** set in the Zoning Code.

#### Timelines established by the Zoning Code for RCOs

Section 14-203(1) requires RCOs to meet with applicants within 21 days after receiving the project notice and to submit their recommendations to the Civic Design Review Committee or the Zoning Board, as applicable, within 30 days of notice.

- Notify your Board, members, and the public of upcoming meetings: Post a meeting calendar on your website, ask local print or electronic newspapers to advertise your meetings, send email blasts, put flyers in gathering places such as the local supermarket and/or Laundromat, and conduct home visits to the “nearest neighbors” - neighbors within one square block of projects on the agenda.

### Conducting Meetings

- A typical agenda for a community meeting includes:
  - Introductions
  - Presentation by zoning applicant
  - Committee asks questions
  - Committee takes comments from attendees
  - Discussion and recommendations from the Committee.
- Community groups should use the Commission's District Plan and neighborhood plans, if available, as guides and criteria to evaluate project proposals.
- Community groups should invite the Commission's Community Planner for their area to attend the meeting.

### Documenting Meetings

- The Committee should document its recommendation for opposition or support in a written statement and, if the organization's rules require, submit it to the Board of the community organization. The document should reflect:
  - The opinions of the Committee.
  - The opinions of the majority of attendees.

## Chapter 11: Best Practices

- The opinions of the majority of the nearest neighbors
- Any significant minority opinions.
- Send copies of the recommendation to the zoning applicant and to the Commission. If you are an RCO and the recommendation concerns a Civic Design Review or Zoning Board case, you must submit your recommendation to the Civic Design Review Committee or the Zoning Board, as applicable, within 30 days after receiving the project notice from the applicant.

DRAFT

## Appendix A: Development Standards Applicability Checklist<sup>6</sup>

### §14-601 Dimensional Standards

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**Applies to:** All development

### §14-602 Floor Area Bonuses

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**Applies to:** The provisions of this section are optional. This section awards additional floor area for the provision of a prescribed set of public amenities. See §14-602(2) for eligibility requirements.

### §14-603 Form and Design

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**Exempts:**

- 1| Detached and semi-detached homes
- 2| Structures in which the primary use is one of the following:
  - Parks and Open Space
  - Utilities and Services, Basic
  - Utilities and Services, Major
  - Wireless service facility
  - Parking, non-accessory
  - Urban agriculture

**Applies to:** **§14-603(3) – Rowhouse Design Standards**  
Five<sup>7</sup> or more rowhouses developed as part of a single development

**§14-603(4) – Multi-Dwelling Building Design Standards**  
Buildings containing 10 or more dwelling units

**§14-603(5) – Commercial, Mixed Use and Institutional Design Standards**

Developments that meet both of the following criteria:

- 1| Lot Area ≥ 10,000 sq ft **OR** Total GFA ≥ 10,000 sq ft
- 2| Developments with ≥ 51% total gross floor area (GFA) in one or more of the following use categories:
  - Public, civic or institutional
  - Office
  - Retail Sales
  - Commercial Services

**§14-603(6) – Additional Standards for Large Retail Buildings**

Single-story retail in which total GFA ≥ 65,000 sq ft and one owner/tenant occupies more than 75% of GFA

**§14-603(8) – Industrial Design Standards**

Each building with a total GFA ≥ 100,000 sq ft in developments located in an IRMX,

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<sup>6</sup> Checklist does not include §14-606(2) (Open Space Requirement) since this section has been deleted since the September draft of the Consolidated Code.

<sup>7</sup> Reduced from 10 since the Draft Consolidated Code.



# Appendix A: Development Standards Applicability Checklist

ICMX or I-I District

## §14-604 Connectivity Standards

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- Exempts:**
- 1| Detached homes, twins, duplexes and rowhouses
  - 2| Developments whose primary use is one of the following:
    - Wholesale, Distribution Storage
    - Industrial

**Applies to:** All other development

## §14-605 Transit-Oriented Development Standards

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**Applies to:** Transit nodes indicated on the map in §14-605.

## §14-606(3) Steep Slope Protection

## §14-606(5) Flood Protection

## §14-606(6) Stream Buffers

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**§14-606(3)** Undeveloped land containing natural slopes of 15% or greater that are adjacent to waterways listed below (as shown on the map in §14-606(3))

**§14-606(5)** All development within the 100-year flood plain along any of the waterways listed below

**§14-606(6)** All development immediately adjacent to the waterways listed below

- Waterways:**
- Delaware River
  - Schuylkill River
  - Poquessing Creek
  - Byberry Creek
  - Wissahickon Creek
  - Cobbs Creek
  - Walton Run
  - Pennypack Creek
  - Wooden Bridge Run
  - Tacony-Frankford Creek
  - Darby Creek
  - Indian Creek

## Appendix A: Development Standards Applicability Checklist

### §14-606(4) Stormwater Management

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**Applies to:** All developments that satisfy the criteria of §600.2 of the Philadelphia Water Department Regulations, which are available at:  
<http://www.phillyriverinfo.org/WICLibrary/StormwaterRegulations.pdf>

### §14-607(2) General Landscaping Standards, §14-607(8) Tree Replacement Requirements, and §14-607(9) Installation and Maintenance for Landscaping and Trees

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**Exempts:** Single-family and two-family dwellings

**Applies to:**

- 1| Developments that provide off-street parking surface lots with  $\geq 10$  spaces
- 2| Developments that meet both of the following criteria (a) and (b):
  - (a) Lot Area  $\geq 5,000$  sq ft
  - (b) New primary structure, relocation of an existing primary structure, or expansion of GFA by more than 25% in an existing primary structure in which the use is one or more of the following:
    - Multi-dwelling
    - Public, Civic, Institutional
    - Office
    - Retail Sales
    - Commercial Services
    - Vehicle/Vehicular Equipment Sales & Service
    - Wholesale, Distribution, Storage
    - Industrial

### §14-607(3) Street Trees

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**Exempts:** Single-family and two-family dwellings (unless part of a subdivision of 5 or more lots)

**Applies to:**

- 1| Subdivision of 5 or more lots
- 2| Developments that meet both of the following criteria (a) and (b):
  - (a) Lot Area  $\geq 5,000$  sq ft
  - (b) New primary structure, relocation of an existing primary structure, or expansion of GFA by more than 25% in an existing primary structure in which the use is one or more of the following:
    - Multi-dwelling
    - Public, Civic, Institutional
    - Office
    - Retail Sales
    - Commercial Services
    - Vehicle/Vehicular Equipment Sales & Service
    - Wholesale, Distribution, Storage
    - Industrial

### §14-607(4) Parking Lot Landscaping

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**Exempts:** Single-family and two-family dwellings

**Applies to:** Developments that provide off-street parking surface lots with  $\geq 10$  spaces

## Appendix A: Development Standards Applicability Checklist

### §14-607(5) Landscape Buffering Between Different Land Uses

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**Exempts:** Single-family and two-family dwellings

**Applies to:** Developments that meet both of the following criteria:

- 1| Lot Area  $\geq$  5,000 sq ft
- 2| New primary structure, relocation of an existing primary structure, or expansion of GFA by more than 25% in an existing primary structure in which the use is one or more of the following:
  - Multi-dwelling
  - Public, Civic, Institutional
  - Office
  - Retail Sales
  - Commercial Services
  - Vehicle/Vehicular Equipment Sales & Service
  - Wholesale, Distribution, Storage
  - Industrial

### §14-607(7) Tree Preservation

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**Exempts:** Single-family and two-family dwellings

**Applies to:** All other development

### §14-608 Fencing and Walls

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**Applies to:** All development

### §14-609 Outdoor Lighting

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**Exempts:**

- 1| Single-family and two-family dwellings
- 2| Outdoor lighting for public recreational activities, stadiums, ball fields, concerts, plays or other outdoor events that are open to the public
- 3| Outdoor lighting for emergency equipment and work conducted in the interest of law enforcement or for public health, safety or welfare
- 4| Outdoor lighting for a temporary event lasting less than 14 days
- 5| Seasonal outdoor lighting used less than 60 days per calendar year
- 6| Lighting plans for which the Zoning Board has approved a variance

**Applies to:** Exterior site and parking lot lighting for all other development

### §14-610 Subdivision Standards

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**Applies to:** The division or redivision of lands into lots for sale, lease, development, or redevelopment, as well as the combination of previously platted lots into fewer or differently configured lots for sale, lease, development or redevelopment.

## Appendix B: Sky Plane Submission Guidelines

The ZCC is currently refining the Sky Plane Bulk Controls of §14-402 (Center City Overlay) and will complete this appendix once the Sky Plane provisions have been finalized. The completed appendix will explain the methodology for calculating sky plane by providing:

- Drawings that illustrate the term “sky plane”.
- Samples of the computer-generated images necessary to calculate the amount of sky plane that is blocked by the proposed building.
- A sample chart that demonstrates the proposed building’s compliance with the allowed blockage of sky plane. This chart must be signed and sealed by an architect licensed in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and submitted with the zoning permit application.
- List of any additional materials that may be required by L&I to demonstrate compliance.

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## Appendix C: Directory of Additional Resources

### 1| Online Tools:

- The Web-Based Zoning Code<sup>8</sup>  
Offers several user-friendly features that promote understandability of the Zoning Code by the general public. It contains explanatory illustrations and graphics, unofficial instructive commentary, and links between zoning text and defined terms for instantaneous cross-referencing.
- CityMaps Portal <http://citymaps.phila.gov/portal/>  
Provides access to public records on Philadelphia properties from the Board of Revision of Taxes, the Department of Records, and the Department of Licenses and Inspections, as well as basic information on parcels. Searchable by address.
- Zoning Overlay <http://citymaps.phila.gov/zoningoverlay/>  
Enables users to see base zoning districts and relevant zoning overlay districts. Searchable by address.
- Zoning Archive <http://www.phila.gov/zoningarchive/>  
This service by the Department of Licenses and Inspections offers electronic scans of over 200,000 zoning applications, approved usages, and site drawings dating to the 1930s. Searchable by address.
- Business Services Portal <http://business.phila.gov>  
Provides all the information you need from the City to start or grow your business. Incorporates interactive features that allow business owners to apply for licenses, pay taxes and conduct other business with the City.

### 2| Other Codes:

- Building Construction and Occupancy Code (Title 4, the Philadelphia Code)  
Contains the Administrative Code, which governs fees and penalties for administrative permits. Title 4 also contains the Building Code, Electrical Code, Fire Code, Mechanical Code, Plumbing Code and Property Maintenance Code, among others.
- The Streets Code (Title 11, the Philadelphia Code)  
Contains laws governing our public rights-of-way, including rules on projections and encroachments into the sidewalk such as sidewalk cafes, awnings, canopies, signs and bay windows.

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<sup>8</sup> A sample of the Web-Based Code will be available in early 2011.

## Appendix C: Directory of Additional Resources

### 3| The Comprehensive Plan<sup>9</sup>

The City Planning Commission is responsible for the preparation and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan for the city which shows its present and planned physical development. The Zoning Code is a tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan's long-range vision for the city and its neighborhoods.

### 4| Citizens Planning Institute

The Citizens Planning Institute's mission is to empower citizens to take a more effective and active role in shaping the future of their neighborhoods and of Philadelphia, through a greater understanding of city planning and the steps involved in development projects. Visit [www.citizensplanninginstitute.org](http://www.citizensplanninginstitute.org)

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<sup>9</sup> The City Planning Commission will publish its new Comprehensive Plan, *PHILADELPHIA2035*, in early 2011.

## Appendix D: Application Forms and Materials

[This appendix will assemble the forms that are currently available on L&I's website at [www.phila.gov/LI](http://www.phila.gov/LI)]

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