

Why does Philadelphia have RCOs?

- The RCO framework was written into the Zoning Code with the intention of providing a standard and predictable method for community input on development projects throughout the city. This framework establishes the criteria for becoming an RCO and delineates the relationships between RCOs, City Council, and the City Planning Commission. Most importantly, the Zoning Code outlines a specific set of responsibilities and procedures to which RCOs and applicants must adhere prior to hearings by the Zoning Board of Adjustments (ZBA) and Civic Design Review (CDR) Committee.

Who Gets Notification and Can I Get a List Ahead of Time?

Last year the Philadelphia City Planning Commission created an app so that applicants have access to the list of RCO's and impacted addresses to start preliminary contact. This app is found at <https://www.phila.gov/rconotification/> and will provide contact information and a highlighted list of impacted properties within 250' and shared block face.

The screenshot displays the 'RCO NOTIFICATION FOR ZONING APPLICATIONS' web interface. The browser address bar shows the URL <https://www.phila.gov/rconotification/#>. The page header includes the City of Philadelphia logo and navigation links for 'INSTRUCTIONS', 'CONTACT LISTS', and 'LEGISLATION & REGULATI'. The main content area features a map of a street grid with a blue circular highlight around a specific area. A sidebar on the left contains the following information:

- Address: 1234 South St
- Subject: 1232 SOUTH ST
- Council District: 2
- RCO: Hawthorne Empowerment Coalition
- Large number: 127
- Text: PROPERTIES NEED TO BE NOTIFIED
- Buttons: DOWNLOAD RCO LIST, DOWNLOAD ADDRESS LIST

Excel screenshot showing a spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
1	ORGANIZATION_NAME	PRIMARY_EMAIL	ORGANIZATION_ADDRESS	PRIMARY_NAME	PRIMARY_ADDRESS	PRIMARY_PHONE	
2	Hawthorne Empowerment Coalition	Zoning@hecphila.org	1346 Webster Street, 19147	Albert Hicks	1346 Webster Street Philadelphia, PA 19147	2156947528	
3							
4							

Excel screenshot showing a spreadsheet with the following data:

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
1	ADDRESS	CITY	STATE	ZIP				
2	1207 BAINBRIDGE ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
3	1225 BAINBRIDGE ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
4	606-12 S 13TH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
5	614 S 13TH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
6	616 S 13TH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
7	618 S 13TH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
8	620 S 13TH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
9	622 S 13TH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
10	1204 SOUTH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
11	1222 SOUTH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
12	1230 SOUTH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
13	1232R SOUTH ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
14	1236R SOUTH ST 1	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
15	1236R SOUTH ST 2	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
16	1221 KATER ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
17	1225 KATER ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
18	1227 KATER ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
19	1229 KATER ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
20	1231 KATER ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				
21	1233 KATER ST	Philadelphia	PA	19147				

Is it Only the RCO That Can Testify at the ZBA?

Remember, ANYONE can testify at a Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) hearing about any particular development project. You don't have to participate in the RCO process to weigh in.

What are the Requirements to be an RCO?

1. Has an adopted statement of purpose for the organization concerning land use, zoning, development, or preservation
2. Has a geographic area with no more than 20,000 parcels

3. Has governing rules that include a description of geographic boundaries, a description of its leadership selection process, and a definition of its membership that does not discriminate against any group protected under the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance
4. Conducts open meetings on a regularly scheduled basis
5. Publicly announces its meetings through media such as flyers, newsletters, newspaper notice, or electronic/social media
6. Has leadership chosen by the membership of the body at large.
7. Once accepted, an organization's RCO status will be valid for 2 years.

* Ward Committees must be recognized by their party and have boundaries that match those of the entire Ward, and must submit #4 and #5.

What is the Timeline for Notification?

Day 1 – Application is accepted by the Zoning Board of Adjustment

Day 7 – The Planning Commission to provide notification information to the zoning applicant. This includes

1. Contact information for affected RCOs and for the district councilmember whose district includes the property;
2. A link to list of affected properties (within 250' of the property line);
3. Template forms to be used by the applicant to notify these properties;
4. Link to Project Information Form (PIF) submitted by the applicant; and
5. A copy of the refusal generated by L+I (when available).

Day 27 - Deadline for Applicant to contact affected RCOs to schedule a meeting and to provide written notification to affected RCOs, affected surrounding property occupants, the District Council office, and, if applicable, the ZBA.

Day 45 - Deadline for the public meeting to be held and documented.

The ZBA or CDR Committee will hear the case after

- They have received a meeting summary or letter of explanation from the Coordinating RCO, OR
- The applicant contacted the Coordinating RCO to schedule a public meeting within 20 days of receiving notice from the City Planning Commission AND if no meeting has been held, has documentation of having made a good faith effort to schedule a meeting with the Coordinating RCO AND 45 days have lapsed since the Applicant filed the appeal to the Zoning Board or was notified that the project requires Civic Design Review.

What is the Coordinating RCO Responsible For?

1. The Coordinating RCO is responsible for either holding a public meeting or coordinating with other affected RCOs to convene the public meeting.
2. The Coordinating RCO is responsible for ensuring that ALL affected RCOs are consulted during the scheduling of the public meeting
3. The Coordinating RCO is responsible for ensuring that a written summary of the meeting is sent to the City Planning Commission (RCO.Notification@phila.gov), and the relevant District Council office (contact info provided on the notification letter to the applicant from the City Planning Commission), and the ZBA (RCOZBA@phila.gov) and/or Civic Design Review Committee, as applicable.
4. If no meeting was held, an explanation as to why not and written documentation of the efforts made to schedule the meeting must be provided.
5. The Coordinating RCO MUST offer the applicant a meeting date that is within 45 days of the application, regardless of the RCO's regular meeting schedule or other requests made of the applicant.
6. RCOs cannot demand that applicant pay any fees or make any other contributions in order for a meeting to be held.
7. Notice must be posted and delivered to affected addresses in advance of the public meeting. RCOs are asked to notify the ZBA if this requirement is not met by the applicant so that the case can be continued and another meeting held.

What Happens if the RCO is Non-Responsive?

RCOs must fulfill the procedural requirements and responsibilities of the Zoning Code and the Commission Regulations. Failure to do so may subject organizations to penalty, including suspension or revocation of the organization's RCO registration. Please see section of 12.5 of the Commission Regulations for more information.

What do RCO's Require for Their Meetings?

Comparative Zoning Committee Voting Procedures

The RCOs below were selected to illustrate different ways to collect votes at meetings with developers. The PCPC does not endorse any particular method. These RCOs post their procedures on their websites and are easy for anyone to review.

	Zoning Committee Members and Roles:	Applicant Submission Requirements:	Voting Process:	Advantages/ Disadvantages:
<p>South Kensington Community Partners (SKCP)</p> 	<p><u>Two co-chairs</u>- over-see the zoning process; do not vote</p> <p><u>Design Review Committee (DRC)</u>- reviews and advises applicants on construction and design issues</p>	<p>1-Completed SKCP "Zoning Intake Form"</p> <p>2-Copy of Zoning Refusal from the ZBA</p> <p>3-Site plan</p> <p>4-Photographs and floor plans</p> <p>5-Depending on scale of project, elevations, sections and renderings</p>	<p>1 vote each: Residents, business owners, and property owners in a ¼ mile radius of proposed project;</p> <p>1 vote from DRC;</p> <p>Zoning committee counts votes and decides whether to offer "support," "support with provisos," "opposition," or "continuance."</p>	<p>Moderate Community involvement</p> <p>Decision does not directly reflect the opinions of the community due to Zoning Committee final interpretation</p>
<p>Fishtown Neighbors Association (FNA)</p> 	<p><u>Executive Chair</u>- oversees FNA Zoning Committee</p> <p><u>Program Officer</u>- keeps record and calendar of activities</p> <p><u>Information Officer</u>- Liaison to FNA</p> <p><u>Project Managers</u>- acts as direct liaisons to developers</p> <p><u>Staff Members</u>- carry out practical/ administrative tasks</p>	<p>1-Floor plans</p> <p>2-architectural drawings</p> <p>3-footprints</p> <p>4-aerials</p> <p>5-façade elevations</p> <p>6-shade studies</p>	<p>Residents of Fishtown can vote as either <i>local voters</i> (live within 500 feet radius of project) or <i>community voters</i> (other residents that live in Fishtown).</p> <p>Voting results separated for local vs. community voters</p>	<p>High community involvement</p> <p>ZBA gets to see voting opinion of "near neighbors" separate from wider vote</p>
<p>South of South Neighborhood Association. (SOSNA)</p> 	<p><u>Zoning Chair</u> – leads community meeting, communicates the committee's decision to the ZBA</p> <p><u>Architectural Review Committee (ARC)</u>- reviews and advises applicants on their project's design to ensure it's aligned with SOSNA's vision of its built environment</p>	<p>1-Completed SOSNA Zoning Variance Meeting Request Form</p> <p>2-Completed meeting with SOSNA's Architectural Review Committee (ARC)</p> <p>Mark proposed site with SOSNA's Zoning Poster</p>	<p>On voting sheets, residents indicate "support" or "non-support".</p> <p>Zoning Committee reviews votes and tries to reach consensus.</p> <p>Letter written to ZBA expressing "support" "non-support", "opposition", or "no opinion".</p>	<p>High level of collaboration</p> <p>High community involvement</p> <p>Decision making process could be prolonged due to required meeting with ARC</p>