



# Understanding Philadelphia Zoning 2019



City of  
**Philadelphia**



## What is an RCO?

The Philadelphia Zoning Code includes provisions for ensuring that neighbors of proposed developments are notified and have an opportunity to provide input regarding zoning decisions that may impact them. This is accomplished through a standardized system of direct notification and through public meetings that are held in communities and convened by **Registered Community Organizations** (RCOs).

§ 14-303(12) ("Neighborhood Notice and Meetings")





# Why does Philadelphia have RCOs?

- Provide a standard and predictable method for community input on development projects throughout the city
- Delineates the relationships between RCOs, City Council, and the City Planning Commission
- Outlines a specific set of responsibilities and procedures to which RCOs and applicants must adhere to





## What are the Requirements to be an RCO?

- An adopted statement of purpose concerning land use, zoning, development, or preservation
  - A geographic area with no more than 20,000 parcels
  - Governing rules that include: a description of geographic boundaries, its leadership selection process, and a definition of its membership that does not discriminate against any group protected under the Philadelphia Fair Practices Ordinance
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## What are the Requirements to be an RCO?

- Must conduct open meetings on a regularly scheduled basis
  - Publicly announce its meetings through media such as flyers, newsletters, newspaper notice, or electronic/social media
  - Has leadership chosen by the membership of the body at large
  - An organization's RCO status will be valid for 2 years
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## Who Determines the Coordinating RCO?

If there is more than one RCO whose registered boundaries include the applicant's property, the district councilmember whose district includes the applicant's property shall select one of those RCOs as the Coordinating RCO, or may select two or more RCOs whose registered boundaries include the applicant's property to serve jointly as the Coordinating RCO.

If there is no RCO whose registered boundaries include the applicant's property, then the district councilmember or an organization designated by that district councilmember shall serve as the Coordinating RCO.





# Who Needs to be Notified?

By certified mailing, send out information to the following:

- All Registered Community Organizations
  - Every property which is within 250 ft. of any portion of the applicant's property
  - Every property on the same block face as the primary frontage of the applicant's property and on the opposite block face from the primary frontage of the applicant's property
  - District Council Member
  - Planning Commission
  - Zoning Board or Civic Design Review Committee, as applicable
  - Director of Commerce (if the property is in an Industrial or Industrial Mixed-Use District)
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# Who do I Need to Notify?

<https://www.phila.gov/rconotification/>

The screenshot displays the City of Philadelphia's RCO Notification website. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for "Mayor's Office" and "City government directory". Below this, the City of Philadelphia logo is on the left, and navigation links for "INSTRUCTIONS", "CONTACT LISTS", and "LEGISLATION & REGULATI" are on the right. The main content area features a map of a neighborhood in Philadelphia, with a blue circle highlighting a specific area bounded by South St, Kater St, and Rodman St. A red pin icon is placed on the map within this highlighted area. A white popup window is overlaid on the map, titled "RCO NOTIFICATION FOR ZONING APPLICATIONS". The popup contains the following information: "1234 South St", "SUBJECT: 1232 SOUTH ST", "COUNCIL DISTRICT: 2", and "RCO: Hawthorne Empowerment Coalition". A large number "127" is prominently displayed in the center of the popup. Below the number, it states "PROPERTIES NEED TO BE NOTIFIED" and provides two buttons: "DOWNLOAD RCO LIST" and "DOWNLOAD ADDRESS LIST". An "Info" button is located in the top right corner of the popup. The background map shows various streets including Rodman St, South St, Kater St, and S 13th St, along with labels for "Saint Peter Claver Center for Evangelization" and "Supportive Housing - Bainbridge".

# Who do I Need to Notify?

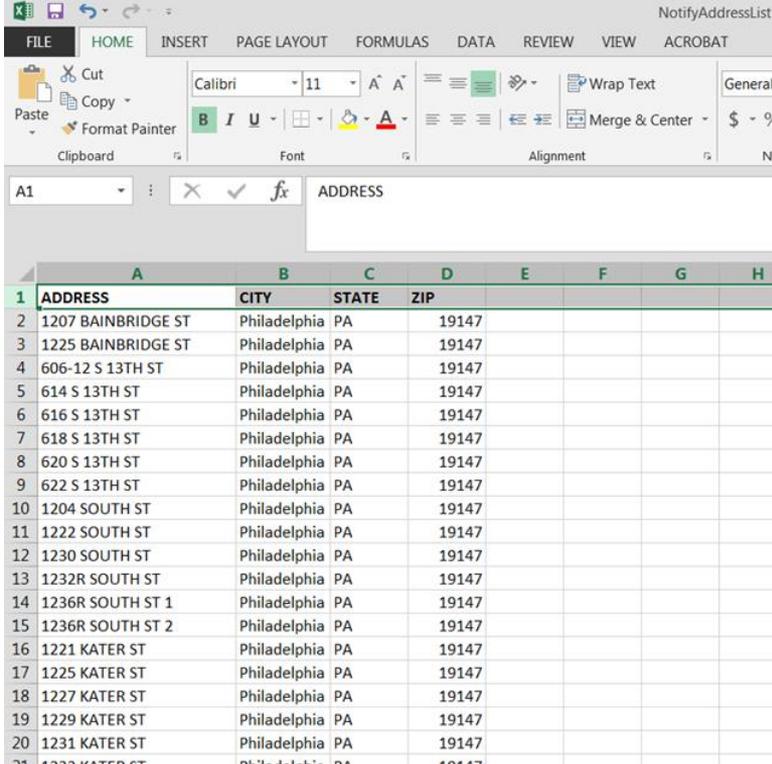
<https://www.phila.gov/rconotification/>

The screenshot shows an Excel 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							

# Who do I Need to Notify?

<https://www.phila.gov/rconotification/>



NotifyAddressList

FILE HOME INSERT PAGE LAYOUT FORMULAS DATA REVIEW VIEW ACROBAT

Clipboard Font Alignment

ADDRESS

	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				



# What to Include in the Notification?

- Name and address of the applicant
  - Address of the property listed on the application
  - Name and contact information of all RCOs and the name of the Coordinating RCO
  - Contact information for District Council Person
  - Location where copies of the application and any related information submitted by the applicant can be obtained
  - A description of the property involved by general vicinity, street address, size, and nearest cross street, and the zoning district in which the property is located
  - A copy of the refusal/referral issued by the Department of Licenses and Inspections for proposed variance or special exception
- 



## What to Include in the Notification?

- Date, time and place of the public meeting convened by the Coordinating RCO to discuss the application- If the Coordinating RCO has not yet set the public meeting, then the applicant shall note that another letter will be sent via regular mail informing the date, time, location, and coordinating RCO holding the meeting
  - “If you have received this notice as the owner, managing agent, or other responsible person at a multi-unit building, you are requested to post this notice at a prominent place in a common area of your building.”
  - Any additional information required by L&I, the Zoning Board, or the Commission
- 



# 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 including:

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;
  5. A copy of the refusal generated by L+I (when available).
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## What is the Timeline for Notification?

**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
  - The applicant contacted the Coordinating RCO to schedule a public meeting within 20 days of receiving notice from the Commission AND if no meeting has been held, the 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
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## **What is the Coordinating RCO Responsible For?**

- Hosting a meeting where all RCO's are invited to attend
  - Notifying the Zoning Board of the results of their meeting
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## **What Happens if the RCO is Non-Responsive?**

We recommend that you keep a digital copy of your outreach and bring that to the Zoning Board hearing and present it to the Board.

If this is an ongoing problem you can speak with the RCO Coordinator ([rco@phila.gov](mailto:rco@phila.gov))





# What do RCO's Require for Their Meetings?

There are no clear requirements and up to the discretion of the RCO. Many may ask for the following:

- Zoning Intake Form
  - Project Information Form
  - Copy of Zoning Refusal
  - Site Plan
  - Photographs (outside and inside)
  - Floor Plans
  - Elevations
  - Aerials
  - Shade Studies
  - Attendance at additional meetings
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## Who can Testify at the ZBA?

**ANYONE** can testify at a Zoning Board of Adjustment (ZBA) hearing about any development project

Do not need to participate in the RCO process or be a member of the RCO to testify

Impacted neighbors who may serve on an RCO do not have to take the same position as the RCO

All RCOs do not need to agree with the coordinating RCO or each other





Thank You! Questions?!

