

Good Afternoon Members of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission,

My name is Rosanne Loesch, and I am President of the Society Hill Civic Association.

Thank you for allowing us to come before the commission today to present the Master Plan for Society Hill for your approval. We very much appreciate the role of the Planning Commission in shaping urban development in Philadelphia. I have just a few introductory words and then Laura Ahramjian from KSK Architects, Planners, Historians will present our plan to you.

For the last more than two years our association's Master Plan Committee has worked diligently with the professional assistance and expertise of KSK, and also Urban Partners and Viridian Landscape Studio to make a detailed plan for the purpose of remapping our historic neighborhood. We then worked for a number of months with Ian Litwin from the Planning Commission to further refine the plan.

We would like to thank KSK, particularly, John Gibbons and Laura Ahramjian from KSK, Tavis Dockwiller from Viridian, and John Gallery from Urban Partners for their work and wise counsel.

We would also like to thank Superintendent Cynthia MacLeod of Independent National Historical Park and Paul Steinke, Executive Director of the Preservation Alliance who are here today to testify in support of Society Hill's Master Plan.

As Philadelphians know, as well as people from throughout the country and the world, Society Hill is an iconic architectural tribute to one of the most historic times in American history: the founding of our country in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It has the largest concentration of 18th and early 19th century structures in the U.S. and was the first urban renewal project based on historic preservation. Society Hill today is the result of the efforts during the mid-20th century of the City of Philadelphia, famed urban planner Ed Bacon, noted preservationist Charles Peterson, and the investment and sweat equity of thousands of Philadelphians who valued and labored for the goals of this project.

The key features of Bacon's plan were to:

- Preserve and restore historic structures and residences
- Create open space walkways and gardens,
- Preserve a close connection to the founding period buildings preserved in Independence National Historical Park.
- Preserve a low-rise scale throughout Society Hill with the exception of three iconic high-rise towers surrounded by a large park on Society Hill's eastern edge, and three high rise towers on Washington Square

The key concerns for the Society Hill community in reviewing the zoning for the neighborhood were the following:

- New development that does not correspond to the unique character of the Society Hill neighborhood
- Overly permissive zoning that conflicts with the continued preservation of historic resources
- Adverse impacts of buildings that would conflict with the goals of the original Redevelopment Plan
- Potential long-term reduction in open space due to the granting of zoning variances

We now have a Master Plan for Society Hill that addresses all of these goals and concerns.

We would like to particularly thank Ian Litwin for his time, attention and expertise in working through our plan with us. We very much appreciate it.

In conclusion, Society Hill holds a unique place in American history, remains a precious resource of Philadelphia, and deserves tailored treatment under the city zoning code to preserve its historic character. We respectfully request the commission to approve the Society Hill Master Plan that will now be described by Laura Ahramjian. Thank you for your time.