

DAG CITY COUNCIL TESTIMONY REGARDING PROPOSED 76 PLACE DEVELOPMENT

Good afternoon, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Eli Storch, and I chair the Design Advocacy Group, a 23-year-old non-profit with the mission of advocating for design in Philadelphia's built environment, both in terms of quality and equity.

The Steering Committee of the Design Advocacy Group has opposed 76 Place since 2023, and I am here today to reaffirm that an arena cannot do what needs to be done on East Market. It cannot make the most of the opportunities presented nor can it meet the challenges posed by the site.

The design materials presented to the public show that, while introducing new problems.

It was our opinion then, as it remains now, that what Market East needs is an influx of 24/7 street-oriented activity, which is something that the proposal for 76 Place simply does not, when it was proposed, and has not, based on the limited revisions provided, achieved.

Much focus has been on the number of days when an event will occur. This is significant, but so too, is the fact that these events, be they basketball games or concerts, occur in the evening, leaving a deadened street presence facing Market Street on almost all days. It is hard to imagine that the limited interior retail space, with minimal street frontage, represents an upgrade on what exists presently, regardless of the amount of glazing on the overall mass of the building.

Additionally, locating this use proximate to the Convention Center, another massive building that presents primarily inactive facades, is similarly problematic. Adding another single-use mass to this area of the city, no matter how many digital billboards adorn it, is not a compromise worth making.

Much can, and should, and has, and will, be said about the pedestrian and vehicular issues the project faces, especially in light of recent news on the state of SEPTA, the threat to Chinatown, the insufficiency of the CBA, the continued lack of clarity on the actual bounds, program, and details of the development proposal, but I will leave that to others.

Across the street, the East Market project has already provided a successful model of the type of morning, noon, and night, mixed-use development that this area of the city requires to be successful. With a mix of restaurants and retail enlivening the sidewalks, including some newly reinvigorated spaces connecting Market through to Chestnut, using the project's site circulation. At 76 Place, the sacrifice of Filbert Street and the deadened rear façade along Cuthbert Street would take these blocks in the opposite direction.

As the leaders for our city, we hope that you, along with the Planning Commission and other experts in government and the private sector will develop and guide a comprehensive vision for Market East that has both long term family sustaining jobs, as well as short term construction jobs, laying the groundwork for the type of mixed-use development that will thrive, rather than relying on a pattern of reacting only to what is proposed.

Change is no doubt needed on Market East, however this project is not it.

Thank you for your time.



Eli Storch, AIA
DAG Chair