

**Manayunk Neighborhood Council, PO Box 4667, Philadelphia, PA 19127**

[www.ManayunkCouncil.org](http://www.ManayunkCouncil.org) 215-487-2125



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The Honorable Curtis Jones, Jr.  
City Council  
Room 404, City Hall  
Philadelphia, PA 19107

November 21, 2016

Dear Councilman Jones,

In September 2015, Manayunk Neighborhood Council (MNC), wrote to you with the community's concerns about the Saint Mary's property. We were concerned that the closing of the church, and the probable sale of the property by the Archdiocese, would have a large impact on the community. We requested that you take an active part in ensuring that the disposal of the such a large property in the center of Manayunk took into consideration these concerns.

We have recently been informed that you have directed the Philadelphia City Planning Commission to draw up a Master Plan for the properties, referred to as St. Mary of the Assumption, extending between Carson, Conarroe and Gay Streets in Manayunk. Upon receipt of this information, we asked Senior Planner Matt Wysong to meet with members of MNC to explain the process and implications of this directive. Josh Cohen was also invited to this meeting.

Developer Jack Bienenfeld has entered into an Agreement of Sale with the the Archdiocese for the property. We understand that the Master Plan, which is to be developed, will be based on raising the zoning classification from the present RSA-5 to either RMX-1 or RMX-2; a change from Single Family Houses to Multi-family units. This change directly reflects changes that Mr. Jack Bienenfeld has proposed.

We are adamantly opposed to the imposition of such a Master Plan; the proposed change in zoning classification will inevitably result in a higher density, car-centric, transient-centric, development which is exactly what neighbors were trying to avoid. Such a Master Plan is neither necessary nor acceptable; it appears to be only an example of 'spot-zoning' for the benefit of a developer. We see no reason why the existing multiple properties cannot be consolidated and sub-divided and developed 'by right' under the existing zoning classification. Any exceptions such as the Church and Rectory which recently have been added to the City's Historic Buildings Register, could be handled by Appeal to the ZBA in accordance with the the Zoning Code.

In our meeting with Matt Wysong, we cited the recent example of the neighboring St. Lucy's Church property which included similar elements - an existing church, school and rectory, together with a parking lot. All of these elements were handled through Zoning. We cannot understand why the Councilman's office would not allow this property to be dealt with in the same way, in compliance with the Zoning Code. During our meeting, Josh Cohen was unable to explain the basis for this request for a Master Plan, particularly as it was undertaken without any discussion or notice given to the community.

We intend to have a public meeting in December, as a follow-up to our first meeting 8 months ago, to bring neighbors up to date. In advance of that date, we, therefore, request a meeting with you and the PCPC to understand the basis and reasons for your instruction to the PCPC to develop this Master Plan so we can advise the community on all the developments affecting this property.

Thank You,

Kevin Smith, President