

June 20, 2024

John Mondlak  
Interim Director  
Department of Planning and Development  
City of Philadelphia

RE: Independent Design Consultants Report

Dear Interim Director Mondlak,

Convergence Design and Ian Smith Design Group (IS-DG) (collectively, the Design Review Team) were engaged by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) on September 18, 2023 to provide independent design review and consulting services to the City of Philadelphia in connection with 76Place at Market East, the arena project proposed by Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment (Development Team).

The attached Design Review Team Report provides design feedback regarding two official submissions to the City by the Development Team. These two official submissions were required for participation in the Philadelphia City Planning Commission's Civic Design Review (CDR) for Master Plans process. Design Submission #1 was reviewed by the Review Team in the Fall/Winter of 2023 and Design Submission #2 was reviewed by the Review Team in the Spring of 2024.

The Philadelphia City Planning Commission's CDR Committee provides advisory design review recommendations to development teams for large scale development projects. Council Member Squilla (1<sup>st</sup> Council District) initiated the Civic Design Review for Master Plan process for the proposed arena site in the Fall of 2023. The arena proposal as reflected in Design Submission #1 was reviewed by the CDR Committee at a virtual public meeting on Monday, December 18, 2023. Changes made to the design were incorporated in Design Submission #2 and presented by the Development Team at a second virtual public CDR Review on Tuesday, April 2, 2024. Under the Philadelphia Zoning Code, the CDR process for Master Plans is limited to two CDR Committee meetings.

Simultaneous interpretation into Spanish, Mandarin, and Cantonese, as well as ASL, was provided at both CDR Committee meetings. More than 75 verbal and 300 written comments were provided by members of the public.

The Design Review Team provided feedback during both CDR for Master Plan review processes and the attached report summarizes their findings for both design submissions from the Development Team.

In addition to supporting the City through the CDR for Master Plans process, the Design Review Team toured the proposed development site on several occasions, met with the Development Team's architects and engineers to review the plans and tour the underground parking facility and SEPTA's Jefferson station, and reviewed and discussed the plan for East Market Street commissioned by the Center City District. These conversations and site visits took place in Fall 2023 and Winter 2024.

This memo is intended to provide a high level overview of the independent consultant's findings.

### **Areas of Agreement**

#### ***Aspects of the design submission(s) with which the Design Review Team agrees.***

1. The Design Review Team noted that a new arena located at 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets is "appropriate for Center City Philadelphia." The Review Team believes that arenas benefit urban downtowns by attracting crowds on event days and adding to the vitality of the city setting.
2. The Design Review Team noted that in the plans presented at CDR, the event floor was raised above ground level to provide improved connectivity and activity at street level. The Review Team appreciated that the raised event floor allows for more retail options, opportunities for more active public spaces (both interior and exterior) and better pedestrian connections through the full block site and to SEPTA's Jefferson Station.
3. The Design Review Team noted that the facades depicted in the submissions showed maximized transparency along Market, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Street building facades. The Review Team also applauded the amount of transparency for the 10<sup>th</sup> Street bridge. The Design Review Team encourages maximizing transparency as much as possible to help activate and enliven the public realm along a major arterial street that has historically been insular in nature, especially since the construction of the Gallery mall.
4. The Design Review Team noted that maximizing sidewalk widths adjacent to the arena parcel is crucial for pedestrian circulation around the arena on both event and non-event days. The sizes of the widened sidewalks proposed by the

Development Team are a reasonable compromise between the need for sufficient pedestrian flow and the need to preserve vehicular movement around the arena.

### **Areas for Additional Information**

***Aspects of the design submission(s) for which the Design Review Team believes it lacks sufficient information or detail to form an opinion.***

The Design Review Team acknowledges that the Development Team is at an early stage of conceptual design, and requested additional information from the Development Team to further clarify the design intent of the Development Team and give a better understanding to the public about ways the proposed arena would be used and how it would function. Specifically the Design Review Team requested:

1. Additional arena floor plans to allow for a better understanding of what areas of the ground floor can be further adjusted to allow for more active uses, instead of back of house functions as shown in the floor plans that were submitted.
2. More information regarding the north elevation of the proposal. This north facing façade is the closest connection to the Chinatown neighborhood and is a key element in the transition from Market Street to the core of Chinatown to the north. More details are needed to better understand the relationship of the arena design to the adjacent businesses on both 10th and 11th Streets.

### **Areas of Concern**

***Aspects of the design submission(s) the Design Review Team believes could be substantially improved in order to deliver a project more beneficial to the residents of Philadelphia.***

1. The Design Review Team noted that their largest concern with the proposal to date is the lack of a true civic and public open space on or adjacent to the site. The proposed arena site does not currently offer a significant public space appropriate to the scale and importance of the arena in this downtown location. In assessing dozens of other NBA/NHL arenas constructed this century, the majority offer a large public plaza or public space as both an amenity to the city and as a place for large gatherings for pre- or post-event crowds. The lack of a plaza does not allow for a welcoming “front door” and is a major concern.
2. The Design Review Team noted that the current plans at this conceptual stage do not include the type and amount of structural support systems required to hold the arena floor above grade or indicate how these systems would impact transparency

and overall design of the façades. The need for structural support will have to be addressed, which will require continued review for impacts to façade transparency and overall design.

### **Areas for Further Exploration**

***Aspects of the design(s) submission that, while not expressly concerning, should be further developed in future submissions.***

1. The Design Review Team encourages the Development Team to consider ways of improving or adding a more generous public plaza or outdoor gathering space(s). These spaces need to go beyond queuing pre and post event, and should be a space for celebration, gathering or events themselves. Suggestions include finding ways to carve the building away further from a corner to create a larger open space on the site or, if this is not feasible, look to adjacent parcels or make changes to make the site more engaging.
2. The Design Review Team encourages further refinement and updates to the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. Currently the bridge reduces daylight and sky exposure, creating an unwelcoming effect for all visitors. The Design Review Team recommends creating a narrower bridge connection, adjusting the height of the bottom of the bridge to allow for more light and air or considering ways to make the bridge's facades as transparent as possible. Too often bridges are seen as an afterthought to a larger development, but because of 10<sup>th</sup> Street's importance as a gateway to the north and to the Chinatown neighborhood, it is an important aspect of the proposed building. Further exploration should include high attention to material details and reflectivity and unique lighting options to showcase and create a vibrant and welcoming environment.

Sincerely,



Martine DeCamp, AICP  
Interim Executive Director  
Philadelphia City Planning Commission  
Department of Planning and Development  
City of Philadelphia

# DESIGN CONSULTANT REPORT

# 76 PLACE *at Market East*



image source: HBSE CDR submission



IAN SMITH DESIGN GROUP

# Introduction

June 13, 2024

Convergence Design and Ian Smith Design Group (IS-DG) (collectively, Design Review Team) was engaged by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) on September 18, 2023 to provide design review and consulting services to the City of Philadelphia in connection with the new arena project – 76Place at Market East, proposed by Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment (HBSE, Development Team).

Convergence Design and Ian Smith Design Group are tasked with reviewing each separate, but continued design iteration that has (or will be) submitted by HBSE as part of an in progress, on-call design review contract. Convergence and IS-DG worked together to deliver complementary feedback with perspectives from both inside and outside the City of Philadelphia. The Design Review Team’s professional interest is to approach all presented content objectively. Convergence Design delivered their professional views based on decades of extensive experience in sports facility design and their focus on entertainment venues in urban city centers. Ian Smith Design Group’s contribution bring their career of experience working in the City of Philadelphia to evaluate the proposal’s impact within Philadelphia’s specific urban fabric and neighborhood contexts.

The purpose of this on-call contract is to provide the City of Philadelphia and PIDC with design considerations for each submission, noting the design pros and cons of what has been presented to date by the Development Team. The Design Review team has focused solely on the architecture and urban planning aspects of each proposal, allowing for other consultant teams to focus on other aspects of this civic proposal including transportation and traffic, economic impact and community impact.

The Design Review Team has been tasked with reviewing two official submissions for the proposed arena to date, specifically:

## **Design Review #1**

- Early concept design review – submitted in Fall/Winter 2023 as part of the Philadelphia City Planning Commission’s (PCPC) Civic Design Review (CDR) for Master Plan Review #1, which took place on December 18, 2023.

## **Design Review #2**

- Early concept design document – submitted in Spring 2024 as part of PCPC’s CDR for Master Plan Review #2, which took place April 2, 2024.

Both reviews were provided to the City as part of the development team's required submission documentation for the Planning Commission's Civic Design Review (CDR) for Master Plans process. The Design Review Team reviewed the Design Team's submission documents in October and November 2023 as part of Design Review #1, and then in March 2024 as part of Design Review #2. The Review Team has visited the project site on multiple occasions. While the Review Team has offered professional opinions informally in a variety of contexts, this report is the first formal response to the Development Team's two design submissions thus far.

The Design Team acknowledges that many of the concerns presented by the public, the design community, and regulatory agencies have received various and deliberate responses in several settings, including through the second Civic Design Review for Master Plans public meeting on April 2, 2024. This is represented by a number of adjustments between Design Review #1 and Design Review #2. The result of these adjustments is acknowledged in the following report as part of our analysis of Design Review #2. You will find in the later part of this report our assertion that a more detailed exchange is still required and anticipated. We further acknowledge the need for continuing a welcoming and deliberate open dialogue between all stakeholders. This will allow for sustained evaluation of the proposal, helping to push for a positive outcome leading to civic acceptance of a project this impactful. The potential for collective enjoyment of this center of entertainment and commerce within Philadelphia's urban center is reflected in the following content and deserves every consideration.

# Report Approach and Methodology

The Review Team was engaged by the Philadelphia Industrial Development Corporation (PIDC) on September 18, 2023 to provide design review and consulting services to the City of Philadelphia in connection with the proposed new arena project. Since September 2023, the Review Team has engaged with PIDC, the Philadelphia Department of Planning and Development (DPD) and the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC), and related agencies in a variety of settings, as we have developed a general understanding of the project and its urban context. The Review Team also met with Center City District (CCD), reviewing CCD's Market Street East Vision Plan ([link](#)), and has met with the Development Team and their design teams, as well as with PIDC's Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC).

This review report showcases both the pros and cons of the arena's design proposal and is organized in the following manner:

## **1. Areas of Agreement**

Aspects of the design submission with which the Review Team concurs.

## **2. Areas for Additional Information**

Aspects of the design submission for which the Review Team believes it lacks sufficient information or detail to form a useful opinion.

## **3. Areas of Concern**

Aspects of the design submission the Review Team believes could be substantially improved in order to deliver a project more beneficial to the residents of Philadelphia.

## **4. Areas for Further Exploration**

Aspects of the design submission that, while not expressly concerning, should be further developed in future submissions.

## **5. Conclusion and Recommendations**

Recap of the main points of the Design Review and recommendations to consider moving forward.



# Design Review #1

## **Introduction**

This design review pertains to the early concept design document “76 Place at Market East Civic Design Review” submitted by Harris Blitzer Sports & Entertainment (HBSE, Development Team) to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) in support of the first Civic Design Review (CDR) for Master Plans review that was conducted during a virtual (Zoom) public meeting on Monday, December 18, 2023.

The views expressed in this review are the professional opinions of Convergence Design and Ian Smith Design Group (collectively, Design Review Team).

## Areas of Agreement

**1. Appropriateness:** In our view, a new arena for NBA basketball and other events at 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets is appropriate for Center City Philadelphia, assuming it is done well. Our reasons for offering this view include:

- Arenas, while usually intended to be profitable, are fundamentally a civic amenity that adds to the quality of life in a community by providing entertainment options to residents. Access to high-quality entertainment options is an important aspect of any community's quality of life.
- Arenas are an appropriate use for center city sites. The large crowds attracted on event days add to the vitality of the urban setting.
- A Center City site can better accommodate the influx of visitors than other sites. While the existing South Philadelphia Sports Complex is able to accommodate vehicular traffic associated with the event facilities located there, the Center City urban grid helps to welcome both pedestrians and vehicles in a diffused, dispersed manner, far better than either huge parking lots or huge parking structures are able to.
- The mass and volume of the proposed arena are, in general, not out of character with Center City, Market East, or portions of Chinatown, although each district has its own distinct character. (We will offer more specific opinions related to massing later in this report).
- The location proposed has excellent connections to transit, which will lessen the need for rideshares and/or parking for private automobiles.
- The proposed inclusion of housing and retail will help to ensure the activation of the arena site on "dark days" when no event is scheduled. The Developer's projected level of activity is 150 event nights per year. For context, an analysis of 12 similar urban arenas showed that they held an average of 194 events per year.
- The project's proximity to other significant attractions such as the Pennsylvania Convention Center, Reading Terminal Market, Fashion District Mall, Independence Mall, and City Hall make it an important part of the larger network of Center City destinations, and should contribute to visits comprising more than one stop.
- The compact site closes one street (a portion of Filbert Street), which should have limited impact on urban connectivity within Center City. This impact will be addressed in a separate consultant led traffic impact study.
- To the extent that downtown arenas are disruptive, more often than not, they are disruptive in a positive way, enabling the creation (or sustaining) of bars, restaurants, and shops that cater to guests arriving on foot from transit, parking, or rideshare services. For example, a 48% increase in pedestrian activity and a 40% increase in restaurant sales in downtown Sacramento are attributed to activities at Golden 1 Center since it opened. Similarly, Little Caesar's Arena in Detroit has triggered development of District Detroit, with nearly 700 mixed-income residences, 1-million square feet of commercial space, and 467 hotel rooms along with renovated historic buildings.

A few examples of downtown areas with successful NBA/NHL arenas:

- Enterprise Center, St. Louis (NHL)
- Fiserv Forum, Milwaukee (NBA)
- Target Center, Minneapolis (NBA)
- Little Ceasar’s Arena, Detroit (NBA/NHL)
- PPG Paints Arena, Pittsburgh (NHL)
- Bridgestone Arena, Nashville (NHL)
- American Airlines Center, Dallas (NBA/NHL)
- Scotiabank Arena, Toronto (NBA/NHL)
- TD Garden, Boston (NBA/NHL)
- Rocket Mortgage Arena, Cleveland (NBA)
- Nationwide Arena, Columbus (NHL)
- Madison Square Garden, New York (NBA/NHL)
- State Farm Arena, Atlanta (NBA)
- Amway Center, Orlando (NBA)
- Spectrum Center, Charlotte (NBA)
- Toyota Center, Houston (NBA)



*Fiserv Forum, Milwaukee. Image Source: Design Review Team*

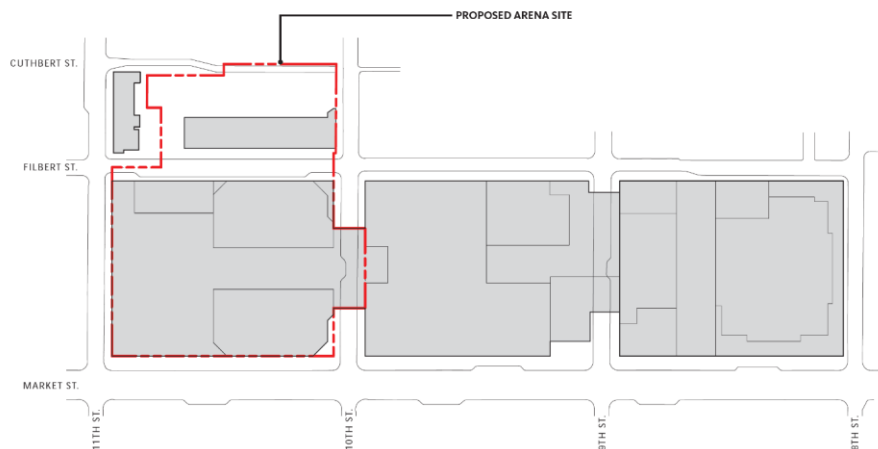
In short, it is the view of the Review Team that the proposed location of 76 Place is entirely appropriate. Reasonable attention to traffic, parking, public realm needs and building design should result in an enhanced Market East District in Center City Philadelphia. “Reasonable attention” here means planning with care for traffic and parking (which are being addressed in another study), designing a building suitable for its urban setting, and giving proper attention to public spaces at the exterior of the building, including sidewalks, transit stations, streets, and public open space. The last item, public open space, is an area of concern that will be addressed in this report.

- 2. Site Location:** While it is a tight fit, we believe the proposed site location between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets on Market Street is an advantageous location for a center city arena in Philadelphia. As noted above, this site has excellent proximity to transit, existing parking resources, and other key Center City attractions that should make for a compelling destination.



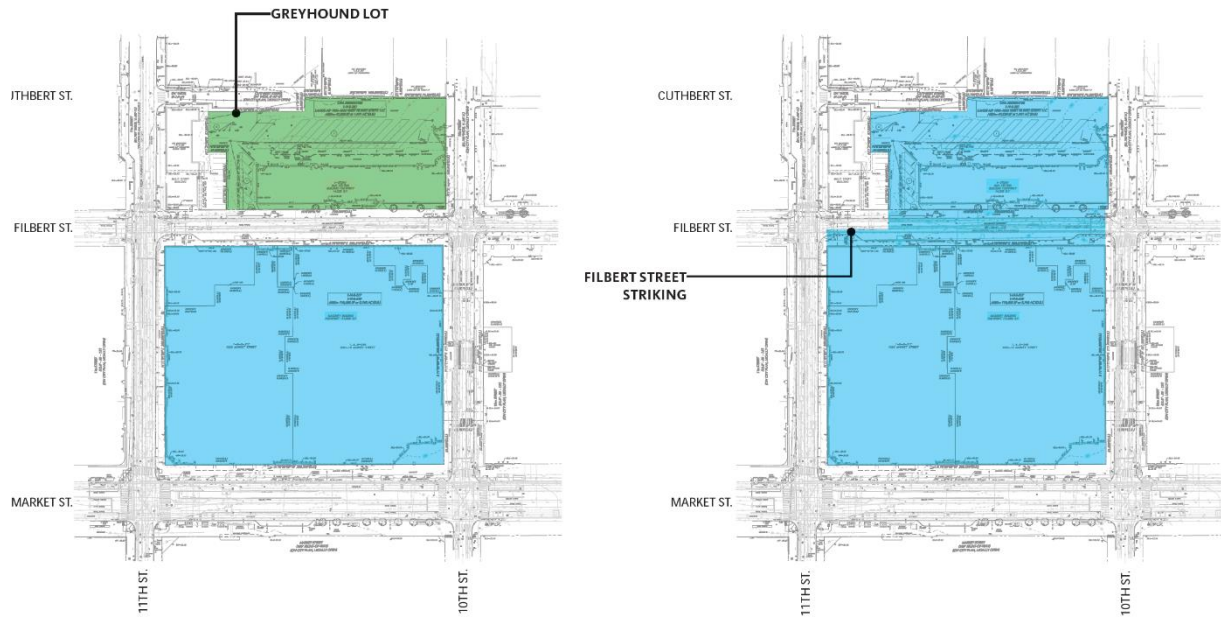
Existing Context | Location Plan. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission

- 3. Site Boundaries:** The Review Team recognizes the extreme difficulty of acquiring and demolishing the parking structure and hotel that exist on the northwest corner of the block bounded by Market Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and Cuthbert Street. This fact creates an excluded parcel that constrains the geometry of the arena in some manner. That said, the site proposed for the new arena is barely adequate in size for the proposed use.



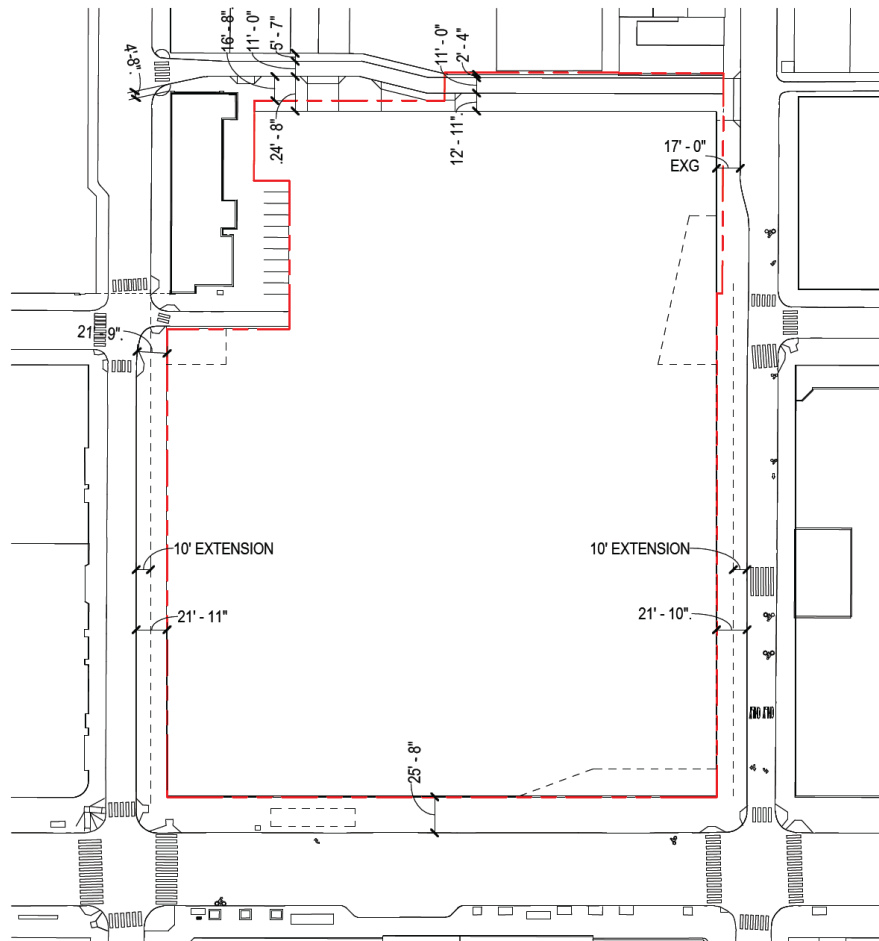
Existing Context | Location Plan -Fashion District. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission

- 4. Striking of Filbert Street:** Vacating of any downtown right-of-way should be done with great caution. We believe that striking Filbert Street is appropriate given the overall dimensions and program for the new arena.



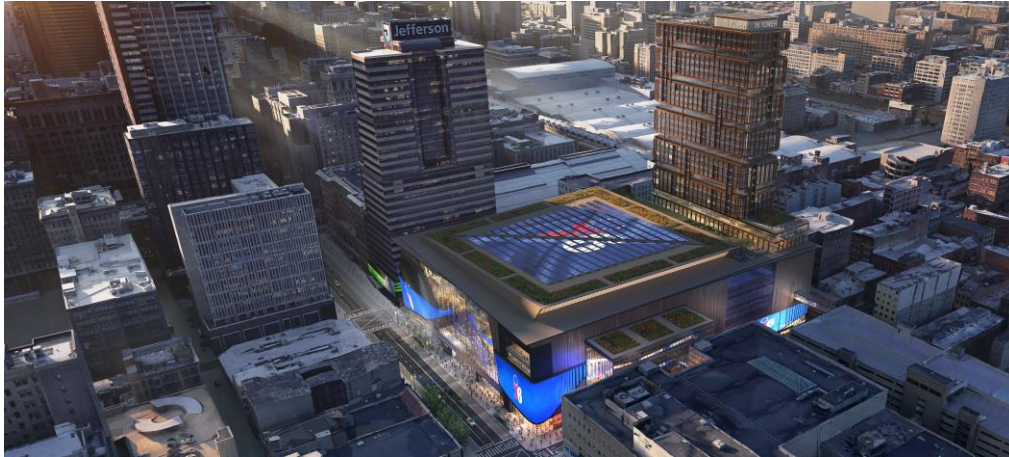
*Proposed | Lot Consolidation Plan. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

**5. Sidewalk Widening:** The Review Team agrees with the Developer that widening sidewalks on the four streets bordering the new arena (10<sup>th</sup> Street, Market Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and Cuthbert Street) is entirely appropriate and will help to improve pedestrian circulation around the arena on event days. On non-event days, the wider sidewalks will be uncrowded. As to the specific dimensions of the sidewalks, while wider is better, we recognize that, except for Market Street, the existing street rights-of-way are not generous to begin with. We believe the proposed widenings are a reasonable compromise between the need for sufficient pedestrian flow and the need to preserve vehicular movement around the arena. Not widening the sidewalks would be a mistake, in our view.



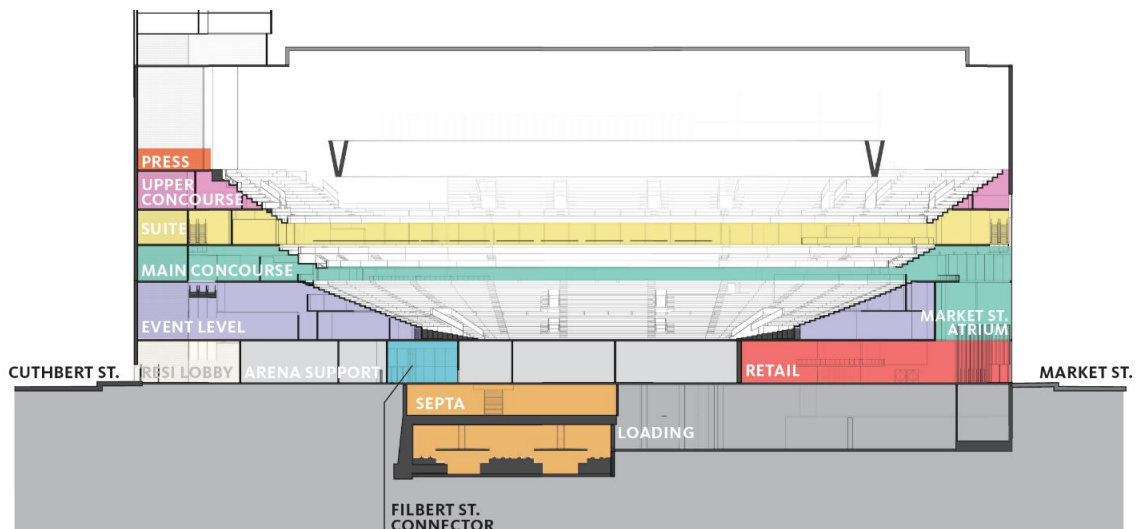
Proposed | Sidewalk Modifications. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission

- 6. Residential Tower:** The Review Team commends the Developer for including a residential component in what is already a complex urban framework. We leave it to others to assess the appropriate level of affordable housing in the unit mix, but inclusion of multiple uses increases the urban vitality of the subject parcel by introducing pedestrian traffic at different times of day.



*Proposed Residential Tower (to right of arena). Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

- 7. Elevated Event Level:** We commend the Developer for raising the event floor above grade to provide improved connectivity and activity at street level. While there is more to be said about the ground floor plan, the Review Team is encouraged by the decision to raise the event floor a full level above the street to allow for more retail, activated public space, and better connectivity through the site.



*Proposed Massing | Program Section. image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

- 8. Transparency:** While the exact configuration of the building facades is still under development, we commend the degree of transparency suggested in the submitted renderings, which will help to activate Market Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Street. We also commend the high degree of transparency shown at the 10<sup>th</sup> Street bridge connection to the Fashion District Mall.



*Proposed Market Street façade. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

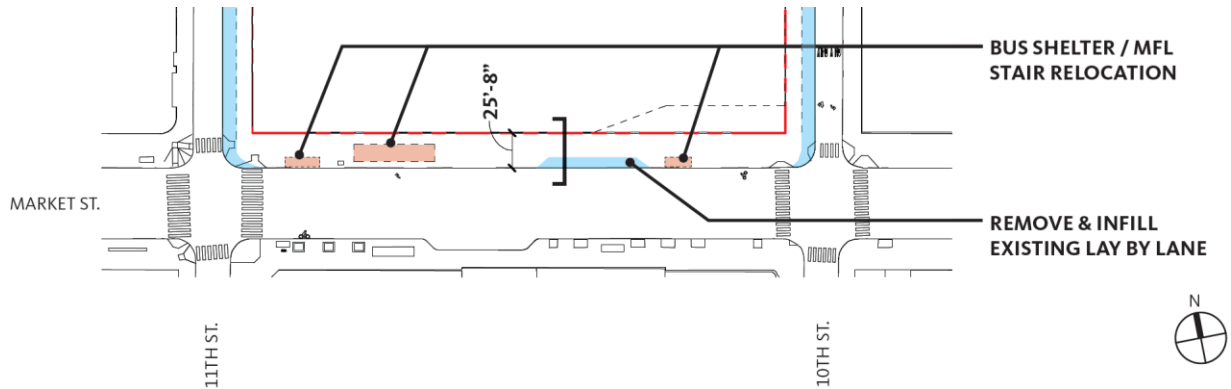


*Proposed 10th Street Bridge. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

- 9. Distributed Parking:** Private cars will be one of many ways people access the new arena. The Developer's strategy of employing existing parking resources in close proximity to the arena site as opposed to constructing a large new parking structure is appropriate. The Developer's ability to form agreements with owners of these parking resources to accommodate evening events will be an important operating consideration. The distribution of parking at various locations around the arena will both dilute pedestrian traffic and enhance street life in Center City Philadelphia.






**10. Decluttering Market Street:** We agree that the relocation of transit stops and subway entrances from Market Street between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets adjacent to the arena site is a good idea, creating needed space for event day pedestrian access and flow.

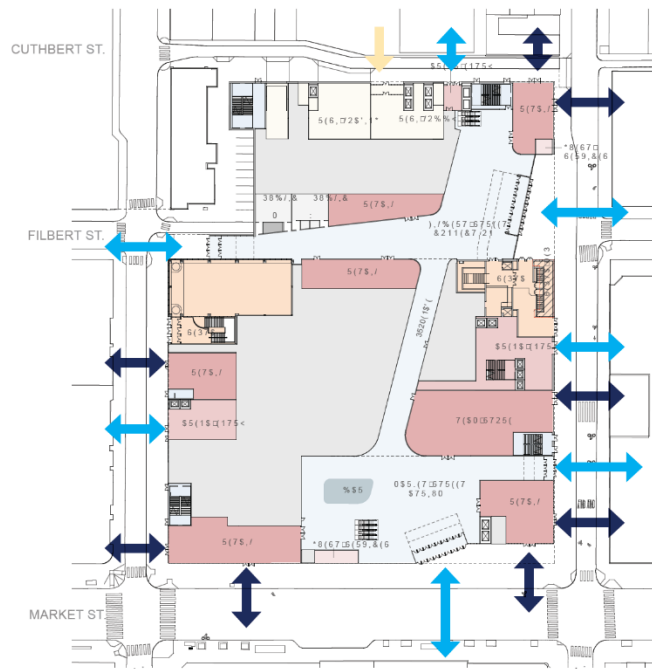


*Decluttering Market Street sidewalk. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

**11. Subgrade Loading:** The existence of the mall loading dock below the site is a major benefit to the project, as it removes surface truck traffic from the immediate perimeter of the arena. While details remain to be worked out, the existence of this service tunnel is the right way to serve the arena, which will have large numbers of trucks arriving for concert events in addition to the day-to-day arrivals of food and merchandise.

**12. Distributed Access:** In order for arena crowds to arrive and disperse without undue congestion on local streets, multiple points of arrival and departure are necessary. While we think that the southeast entrance (at 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets) will effectively serve as the venue's front door, having a number of other entries for ticketed events (not to mention SEPTA's Jefferson Station) will be crucial to avoiding excessive crowds on the surrounding streets. It should go without saying that entrances to the SEPTA station must be accessible at all hours of SEPTA operation, regardless of event activity (or inactivity). The broad distribution of access points for spectators, premium spectators, residents, and transit patrons is thoughtful and generally logical.

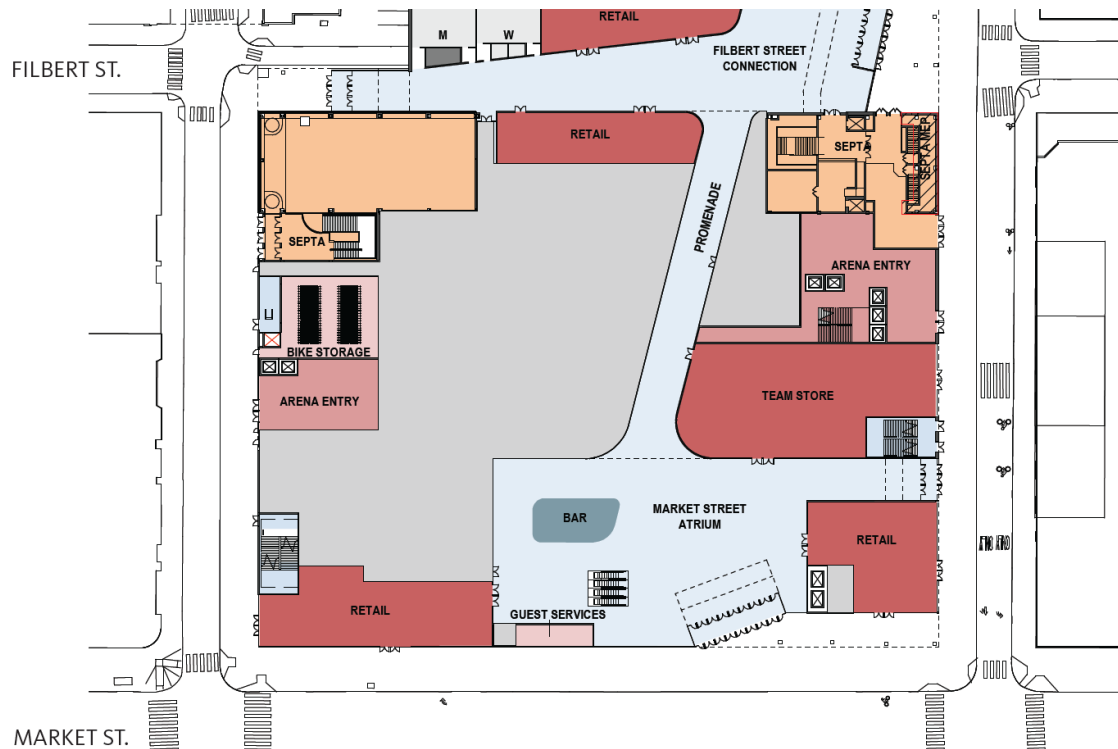
-  Event Day Ticketed Access
-  Non-Ticketed Circulation (Public)
-  Residential Entrance



*Proposed | Plans - Street Level. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

## Areas for Additional Information

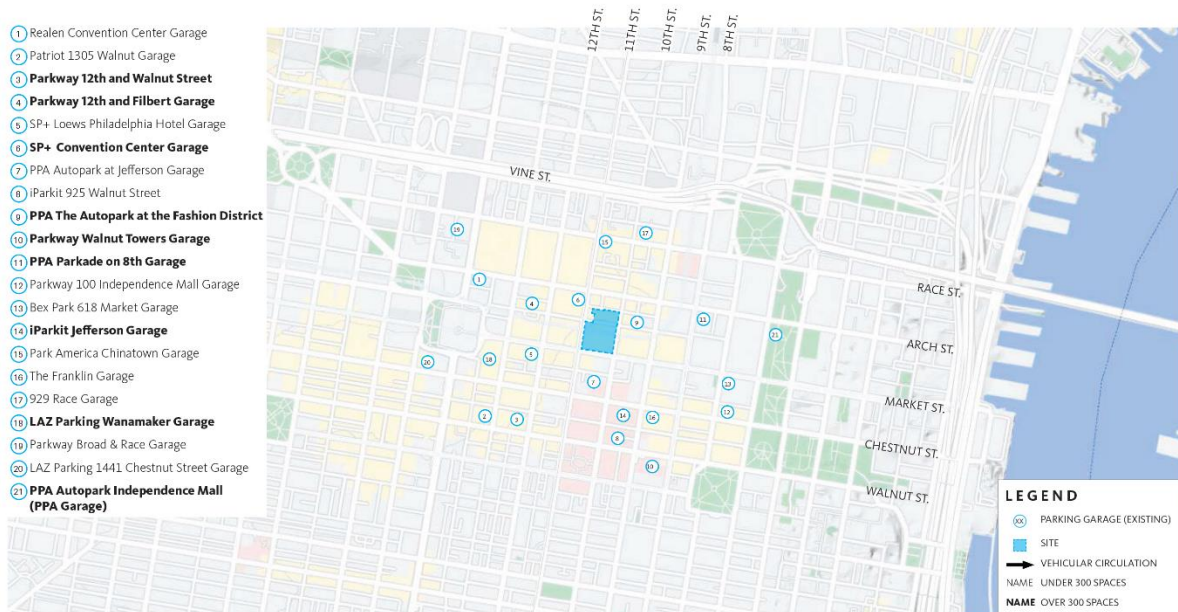
- 1. Ground Floor Plan:** The Ground Floor Plan, as submitted, includes a large amount of undesignated space which presumably is for arena support functions that require grade level access. Given the importance of this level to the overall success of the public realm and urban design, we request that a more complete floor plan be provided.



Ground Floor Plan. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission

- 2. Arena Plans:** While it is not in the Review Team's scope to critique the functional aspects of the arena plan per se, we believe it is important to have a general understanding of the arena layout in order to comment effectively on its urban design implications. For example, the orientation of the seating bowl, the disposition of spectator amenities, even the number of concourses are all design conditions that will impact the exterior of the building (and thus the public realm) but are not evident in the submission set analyzed by the Review Team.
- 3. North Elevation:** The side of the proposed arena facing Chinatown is not fully depicted in the materials provided. This aspect of the project is very important to the neighborhood and more information regarding materials, fenestration, lighting impacts, etc. is required.

**4. Parking Inventory:** The diagram on Page 59 of the CDR submission shows a number of parking garages in the vicinity. This exhibit would be improved by including the capacity of the garages shown.



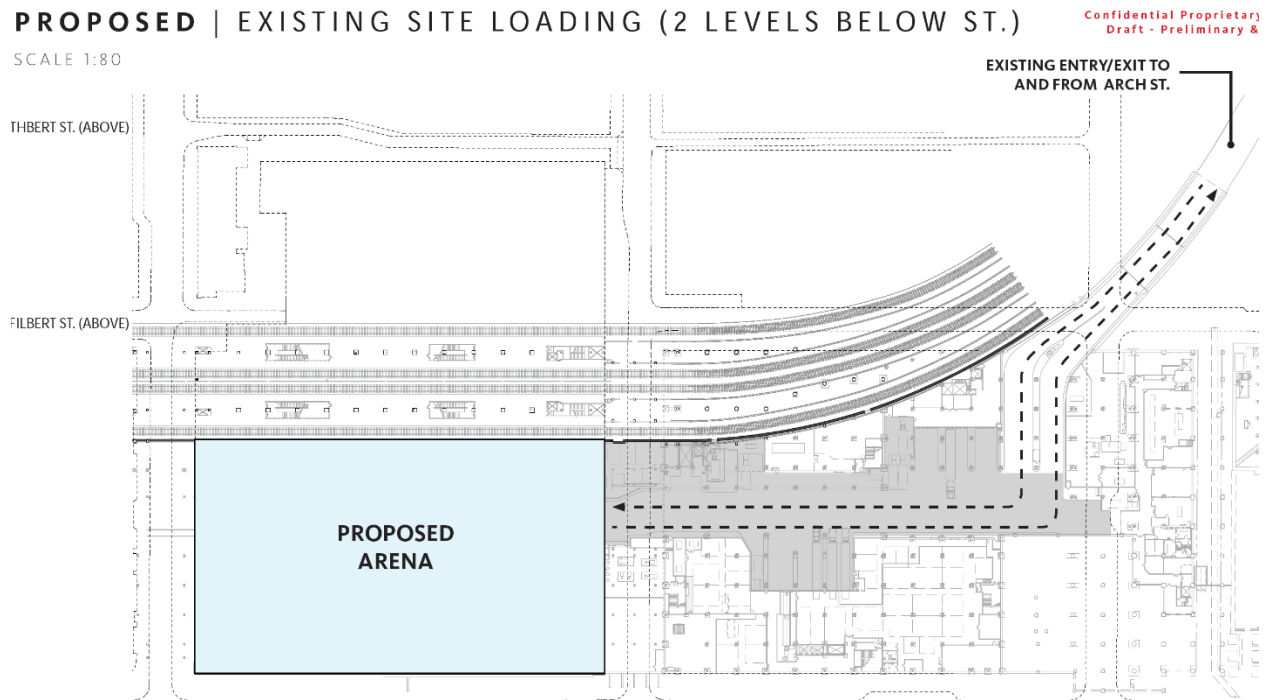
Circulation | Car- Parking Garages. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission

**5. Roof:** No roof plan is provided. The rendering on Page 21 of the CDR submission shows what we assume is a lighted sign facing upwards, and what appears to be plant material, but it is unclear whether there is any occupied space on the roof of the arena.



Proposed Roof rendering. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission

6. **Sustainability:** The submission acknowledges a commitment to sustainability but does not make any concrete statement regarding sustainability goals or certifications that will be sought for the project.
  
7. **Loading:** We are interested to see how trucks arrive at the arena loading area, truck turning movements, and the location of freight elevators in the project plans. None of these are clear from the submittal.



*Proposed | Existing Site Loading (2 Levels Below St.). Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

8. **Additional Context:** Currently, the CDR submission set does not provide renderings that show the project within its context. Further details should be provided showcasing the proposed arena and the surrounding building and streetscape context in all elevations and renderings.
  
9. **Rendered Views:** The renderings should be presented with more realistic perspectives or vantage points. These renderings should be in addition to the effort of presenting images of the entire facade. The POV distance is inauthentic and should be presented in a way that reflects how big the structure might actually feel. Suggestions for additional renderings include:
  - Renderings along Cuthbert Street that present the experience of the proposed streetscape along the north elevation that show the quality or impacts of the narrowness of the corridor.
  - A rendered view of one's approach from the north heading south along 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

- A rendered view emerging from the eastern side of 10<sup>th</sup> Street approaching the Filbert Street entrance framed by the corners of the flanking buildings on either side of Filbert Street.

**10. 11<sup>th</sup> & Cuthbert:** Rendered view of how the "T" intersection along 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Cuthbert Street should be presented as to how it might look or feel. The Review Team is curious how people might feel over time attempting to egress from the area and traveling down Cuthbert Street to the west - that is, will the space feel oppressive and dark to users traveling under the existing parking garage bridge?



*Cuthbert Street looking west. Image source: Design Review Team*

**11. 11<sup>th</sup> & Filbert:** Rendered view of how the intersection of Filbert Street and 11<sup>th</sup> Street should be presented as to how it might look from a variety of view angles. This should include information or a sense of the vestibule and its impact on the existing or proposed sidewalk conditions.

**12. Materials:** Renderings provided show what appears to be vertical wood panels on opaque portions of the façade. While we recognize that these renderings are preliminary in nature, we question:

- Whether actual wood could or should be used on a civic building of this type.
- If the product is not actual wood, the appropriateness of using a simulated wood exterior material.
- Whether wood as an exterior finish material has any precedent or rationale for use in Center City. We think many more appropriate options for opaque façade surfaces exist.



*11<sup>th</sup> Street façade detail. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

## Areas of Concern

- 1. Public Realm:** While we recognize that the building program largely fills the site, we regret that the site does not offer a significant public space appropriate to the scale and importance of the arena. Looking over NBA/NHL arenas constructed in this century, many offer a large public plaza or other public space as both an amenity to the city and as a place for large gatherings of pre-event crowds. The lack of such a plaza at the proposed arena site is concerning. Despite guests arriving from all directions, an arena needs a welcoming front door with space for queuing, meeting friends, and the occasional celebration.

While not, strictly speaking, a programmatic requirement, having a significant open space next to a downtown arena is common enough that it could be considered normal. Only a few NBA-NHL arenas lack proximity to an outdoor event space, plaza, or park. Among those exceptions are TD Garden in Boston, and Capital One Arena in Washington, DC. The Target Center in Minneapolis is surrounded by existing buildings but still has a small corner plaza that could accommodate about 1,500 spectators at an event.

Enlarging the arrival plaza at 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Street is one possible solution to this challenge. Another compensating factor could be the design of the proposed large atrium space on Market Street. While enclosed and at times part of the ticketed environment, this atrium could provide both a public amenity and a buffer for arriving crowds in the manner of a public plaza. There are examples of interior spaces that serve as public realm amenities in Philadelphia and elsewhere, although the accessibility and public nature of these spaces is sometimes contested.

Examples in Philadelphia include 30<sup>th</sup> Street Station, Philadelphia Museum of Art, the Kimmel Center, and the Parkway Central Library. An atrium space of approximately 7,500 square feet with 30 (or more) foot ceilings would be sufficiently large to serve as an indoor public space appropriate to the scale of the arena above it.



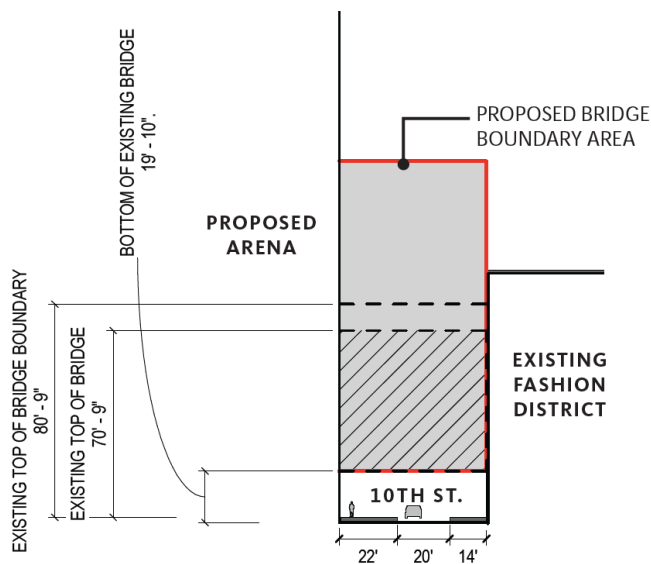
*Battelle Plaza at Nationwide Arena, Columbus, Ohio. Image Source: Design Review Team*



**2. 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge:** Large bridges over public streets are always a public concern, because they close off daylight and sky exposure. We recommend that the footprint of the 10<sup>th</sup> Street connection be as narrow as possible, that the bottom of the bridge (soffit elevation) be as high as possible, and that the architects pay special attention to the design of the underside of the bridge, since it is in the public right-of-way. Covered streets often seem too dark, poorly lit, and foreboding. Specific design attention should be paid to materials used and their reflectivity, in addition to adequate or unique lighting, and providing design details that showcase a welcoming and vibrant space. The photo below illustrates a high level of attention to a public walkway under a structure. The photo following shows a substantial vertical clearance under a building crossing over an urban street in Washington, DC; we estimate the vertical clearance at 27 feet. The proposed clearance of 19 feet 10 inches is substantially less than this.



*Cuyperspassage, Amsterdam. Image Source: Benthem Crouwel Architects*



*Section – Proposed 10<sup>th</sup> St. Bridge Boundary.  
Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*



*Building over street, Walter Washington Convention Center, Washington, D.C. Image source: Design Review Team*

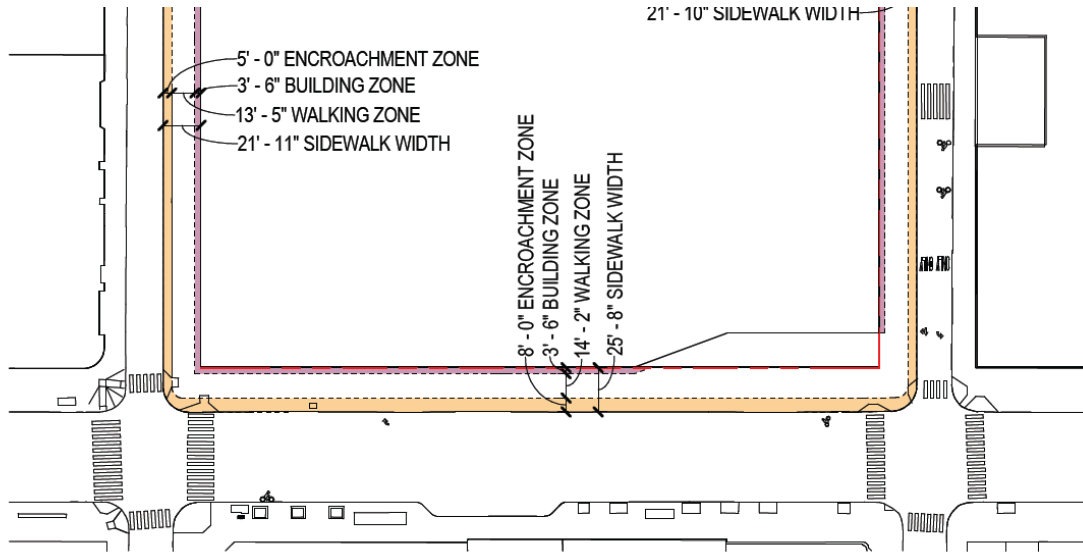
- 3. Structure:** The rendered views are optimistic, in our opinion, regarding the type and amount of structure required to hold up the arena and residential tower. Plans do not show columns for the most part. Our concern is that as structural concerns become more real, the character of the building will change substantially from what is shown in this CDR submission.
- 4. Exterior Surge Space:** While we don't disagree substantially with the estimates of pedestrians arriving at the various entries shown on Page 49 of the CDR submission, we are concerned that the surge space within the property line at 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets, as well as at 11<sup>th</sup> and Filbert Streets, is inadequate.

The Review Team would like to see the outdoor surge space at the 11<sup>th</sup> and Filbert Street entrance expanded and the vestibule pushed farther east. Regarding the 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Street entry, we can only observe that more space outside the entry would be better. Entries with lower volumes which propose doors nearly flush with the street wall are less of a concern, although any doors opening into the right-of-way should be recessed or designed to minimize potential conflicts with sidewalk users.



Circulation | Pedestrian Study Arrival Door Splits. Image Source: November 2023 CDR submission

**5. Street Furniture:** Pages 32 and 33 of the CDR submission, show a 5 foot encroachment zone on the sidewalk, which is a reasonable allowance for things like street trees, street light poles, traffic signals, bollards, and directional signage. However, the submission also suggests raised planters, which we feel would unduly restrict high volume pedestrian flows on sidewalks adjoining the arena. In our view, sidewalk encroachments should be limited to items that are primarily vertical in nature (trees, poles, bollards) and should not include large horizontal obstacles that impede pedestrian flow.



*Proposed | Site Plan. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*

- 6. Street Terminations:** The Review Team believes that the building design should reflect the termination of Filbert Street on both the east and west facades with a distinctive architectural expression of the right-of-way in some form. Terminating urban streets is a major issue and should be dealt with respectfully, acknowledging that although the public right-of-way may no longer exist, the public is still welcome to travel through. An example of an architecturally successful street termination is seen at Houston's Minute Maid Park in the photo below.



*Minute Maid Park, Houston, termination of Prairie Street. Image Source: Design Review Team*


- 7. Exterior Signage:** While we acknowledge that dynamic LED-board exterior signage is typical and somewhat expected at new urban arenas, the amount of LED signage visible from Market Street, 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, and Cuthbert Street needs to be carefully managed. The amount of signage shown in the submitted rendering along Market Street feels proportionate, with smaller amounts along 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Streets, and relatively little along Cuthbert Street, which is where the entrance to the residential tower is to be located. We expect the amount of signage to be the subject of a detailed negotiation between the City and the Development Team. Our initial impression is that LED signage shown in the CDR submission is only one approach to creating a unique façade or attractive building, but should be recognized as a singular element, and not precedent setting for animated electronic signage for the corridor.



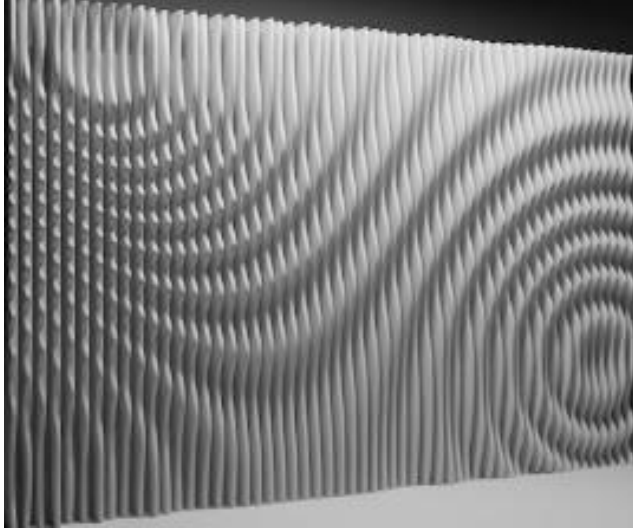


*Proposed | Market St. At 11th St. Image source: November 2023 CDR submission*





**8. Public Realm Activation:** The ground floor plan as shown details small patches of retail space dispersed along long, undifferentiated corridors connecting various entrances. While preliminary and capable of being improved, the lack of activation along these internal public pathways is a potential concern. The Review Team strongly suggests: first, the inclusion of more active retail space along these public pathways; and second, that a range of strategies be employed to activate those pathways where retail is not feasible or possible. Design strategies to activate urban spaces (interior or exterior) where retail is not possible include:

	Glazed openings into occupied spaces
	Outdoor dining (including indoors in atrium-like spaces)
	Display windows





	<p>Dimensional window displays (like trophy cases)</p>
	<p>Mosaics and murals</p>
	<p>Vegetated (green) walls</p>



		Relief sculpture
		Waterwall features
		Interior video displays

		Permanent seating
		Game tables
		High levels of architectural detail
		Implied transparency (glass block, stained glass, etc.)

		Programmable lighting effects
		Balconies
		Elaborate entrances/gateways
		Interactive displays/ public information kiosks

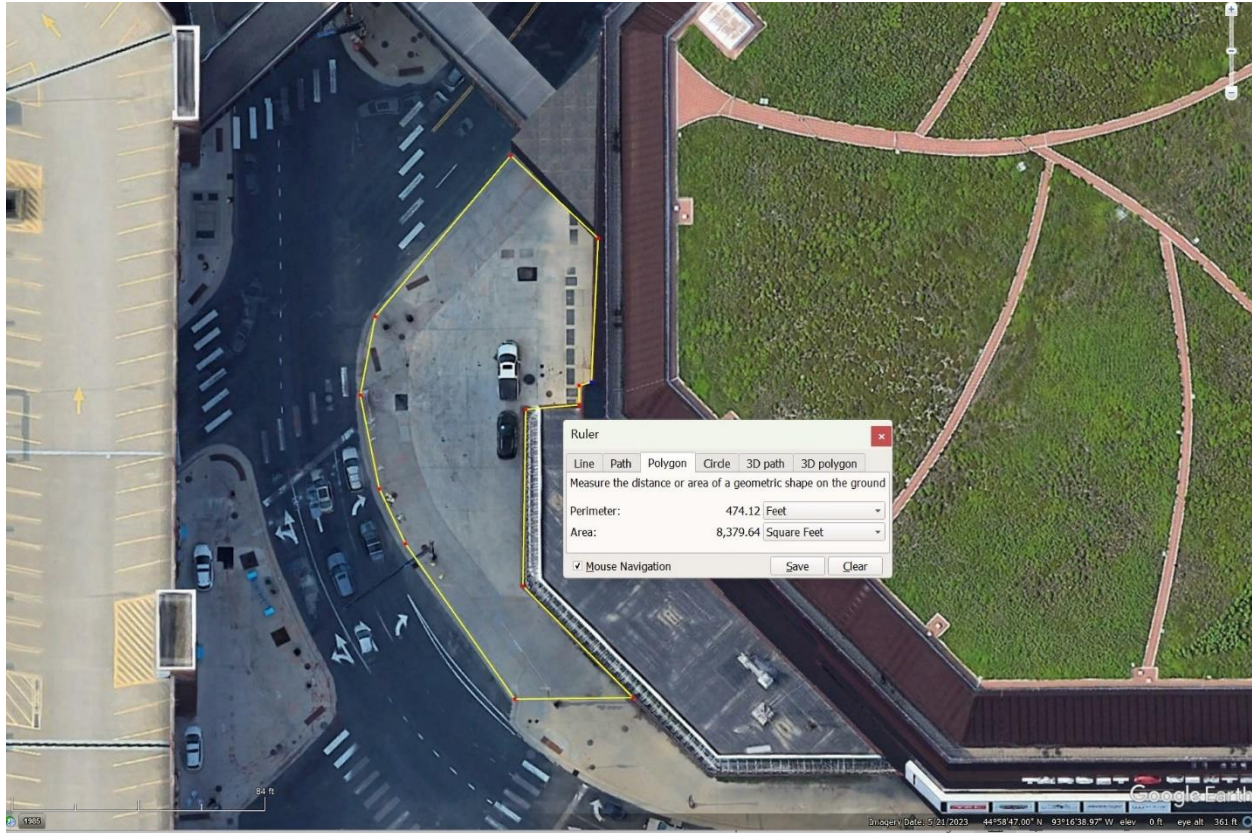
	Historical markers/plaques
	Canopies and awnings
	Light sconces
	Charging stations



Community  
engagement  
spaces

## Areas for Further Exploration

- 1. Public Open Space:** Can a corner of the building mass be carved away to create a larger open space on the site? If that is not feasible, can another parcel of land be acquired across one of the three streets (Market, 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup>) that create an open space that would help support the foot traffic generated by the arena?



Corner Plaza, Target Center, Minneapolis. Image source: Google Earth

- 2. Exterior Elevations:** Considerable work remains to be done on the exterior elevations of the arena. Areas of particular interest include choices of exterior materials, percentage and types of glazing, and the disposition of LED signage along the building's façade.
- 3. Transparency:** While the concept elevations depict a high degree of transparency, it may be the case that structural and programmatic considerations (e.g., the locations of restrooms and concessions along the concourse) may diminish the actual portion of the arena façade that is transparent. We are interested in seeing the development of arena floor plans that will help to answer this question.

- 4. Structure:** The concept design seems to understate the impact of structure required to support the arena and housing tower. We are interested in seeing, as the design develops, how columns, beams, spandrels, and bracing impact both the visual environment inside and outside the building, as well as how those elements may impact the public realm, whether indoors or outdoors.
- 5. Roof:** The arena roof is both a challenge and an opportunity. The Review Team is interested in how the Developer plans to activate the roof (or not) with occupied roof terraces, planting, solar options, or other proposed activations.
- 6. Landscaping and Hardscaping:** While opportunities for planting are decidedly limited at this site, the Review Team is eager for the Development Team to submit landscape designs that illustrate proposed sidewalk paving patterns, tree grates (or other planting strategies), and to integrate those plans with the acknowledged relatively narrow pedestrian paths that exist at the perimeter of the site.
- 7. Bridges:** The submitted document shows the proposed dimensional limitations on the three bridges connecting the arena site to adjoining blocks, but the design of the bridges themselves are still conceptual and vague. The Review Team will be interested in more regarding how the bridges are supported, structured, and enclosed, as well as more specific commitments regarding their dimensional characteristics, materials, and proposed lighting.

**8. Additional Views:** As the design develops, we would like to see additional (and more realistic) views of the project including (but not limited to):

- Views along Market Street looking west toward City Hall
- From between 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets
- From Filbert Street between 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> Streets looking east
- From 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Cuthbert Street



*View from 10<sup>th</sup> and Cuthbert Streets. Image source: Design Review Team*



**9. Market Street East Vision Plan:** Issued by Center City District and consultant team lead by Sasaki in August 2023, the Market Street East Vision Plan makes several suggestions for modifications or enhancements of the area around the proposed arena. Most of these suggestions, some of which are in the image below, are aligned with the comments in this review. One area of disagreement is that the Design Review Team does not advocate for including raised sidewalk planters on walks adjoining the new arena, though they would be welcome elsewhere. The Vision Plan suggests a public plaza at the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets, a notion the Review Team supports, although it remains to be seen how the three non-arena corners of that intersection might be involved in creation of such a plaza apart from accented paving.

**1 10th and Market** Pull corner back to create plaza



Image source: Sasaki

## **Conclusion and Recommendations of Design Review #1**

The Design Review Team is persuaded that a new NBA arena and related improvements will fit on the proposed site, but it is an extremely tight fit. Further attention should be given in subsequent iterations of the design to the following:

- Creating and better refining civic and public gathering spaces for queuing, meeting friends, celebrating, and pre- and post-event activities.
- Maintaining the maximum possible clearance widths of adjacent sidewalk and avoiding street furniture that impedes pedestrian movements.
- Minimizing the footprint of proposed or upgraded bridges over public rights-of-way and keeping the soffit (base) of these bridges as high as possible to allow for maximum light, air and relief.
- Clarifying the functions of the arena, especially at ground level.
- Clarifying the proposed structural support system, especially behind large window curtain walls.
- Clarifying the design intention for back of house operations and opaque wall surfaces and roof areas.

**End of Design Review #1**

# Design Review #2

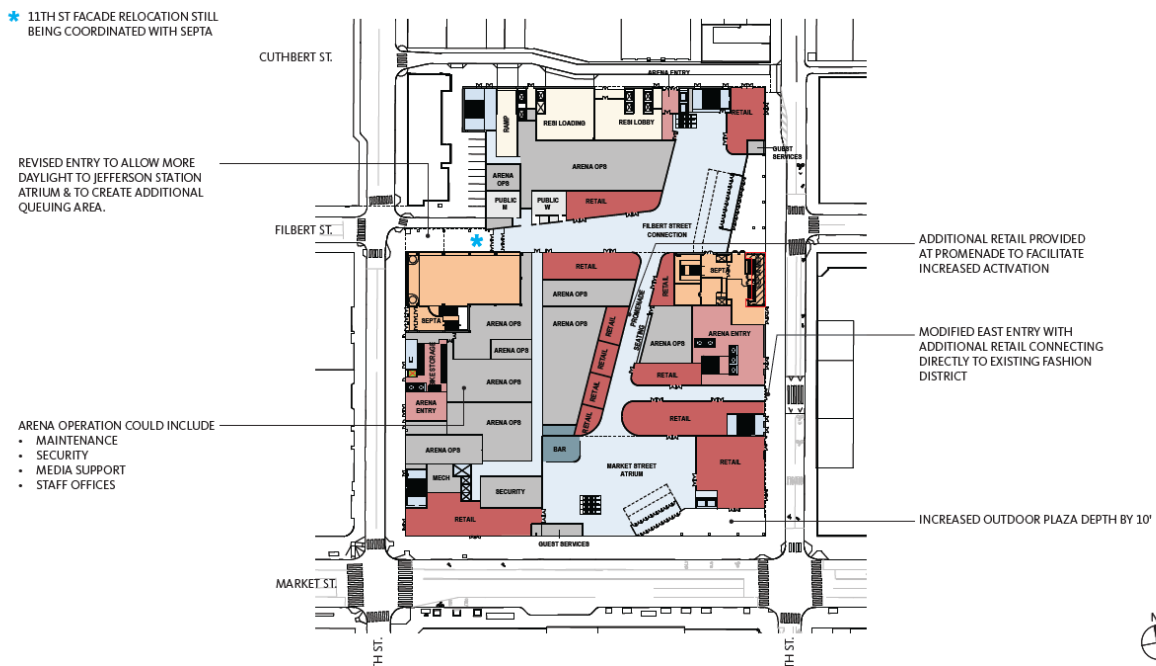
## Introduction

This design review pertains to the early concept design document “76 Place at Market East Civic Design Review” submitted by Harris Blitzler Sports & Entertainment (HBSE, Developer) to the Philadelphia City Planning Commission (PCPC) in support of the second Civic Design Review (CDR) for Master Plans review that was conducted during a virtual (Zoom) public meeting on Tuesday, April 2, 2024.

The views expressed in this review are the professional opinions of Convergence Design and Ian Smith Design Group (collectively, Design Review Team).

## Areas of Agreement

- 1. Ground Floor Plan:** The second submission contains a more informative ground floor plan. The additional details help to clarify the Development Team's intent for back-of-house (BOH) functions. The addition of this information helps better inform the needs of the arena for security, food and beverage and other functions.
- 2. Retail Activation:** The Review Team agrees with the added retail activation within the internal passageways as shown in the provided ground level floor plan below.
- 3. Seating:** The Review Team agrees with the inclusion of permanent seating to activate the internal passageway where retail is not provided.
- 4. 10<sup>th</sup> Street Entry:** The Review Team agrees with the relocated mid-block entrance on 10<sup>th</sup> Street that aligns with the existing entrance to the Fashion District Mall to the east.



- Atrium Ceiling Height:** The Review team notes the high ceiling helps this space to feel appropriately grand, public, and welcoming.



*Promenade Rendering. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

- Transparency:** The Review Team appreciates the high degree of transparency shown in the rendering.



*Event Day Rendering. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

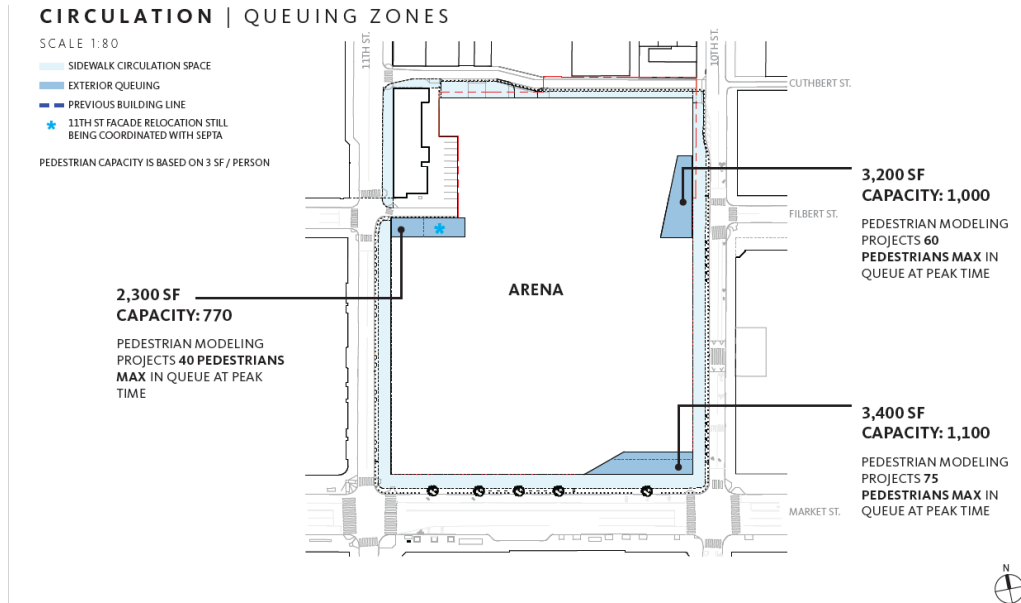
- 7. Additional Views:** The Review Team appreciates the addition of this non-event or “dark day” view to provide additional context for how the building will appear when events are not taking place.



*Non-event Day Rendering. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

- 8. Pedestrian Modeling:** Pages 23 -37 of the CDR submission document review and discuss the provided pedestrian modeling and traffic impacts. Additional details regarding the Pedestrian and Traffic Assessment can be found in the traffic impact study. For design impacts of this work, the Review Team has analyzed the modeling and notes general appropriateness of the proposed building entrances, plaza locations, and overall capacity allowances. Overall the modeling notes that the entry spaces provided will allow for a reasonable level of service and will allow for the minimum space required for ingress and egress on event days.

**9. Queuing Capacity:** This submission states on page 37 that “The proposed queuing capacities of 1,000 and 770 people for the secondary entrances are adequate.” The Review Team notes these spaces are adequate but would benefit and would be improved with additional square footage and a higher level of design and programming moving forward.



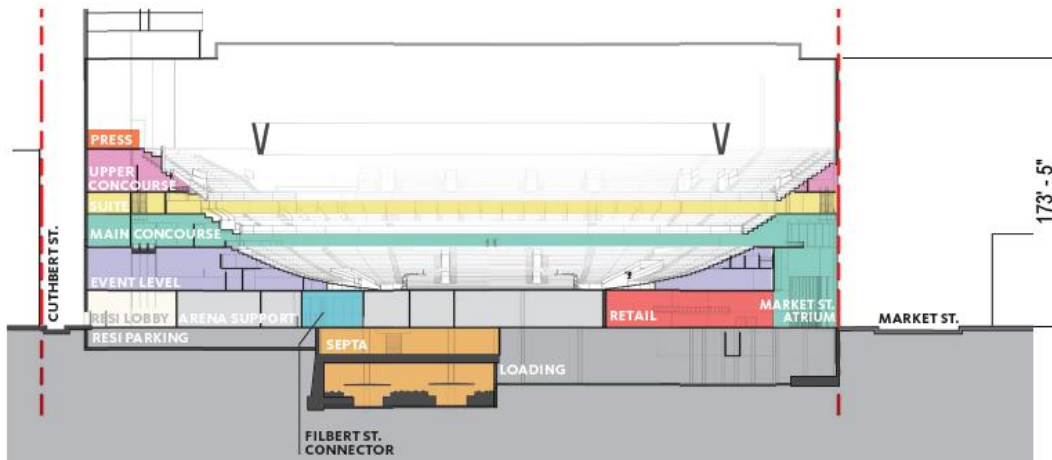
Circulation | Queuing Zones. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

**10. Bike Rack Orientation:** The Design team suggests parallel bike rack parking (to the street) to maximize walking zone widths on all surrounding sidewalks. The Development Team should consider a bollard that is also a bike rack to reduce sidewalk clutter.



Sidewalk Detail. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

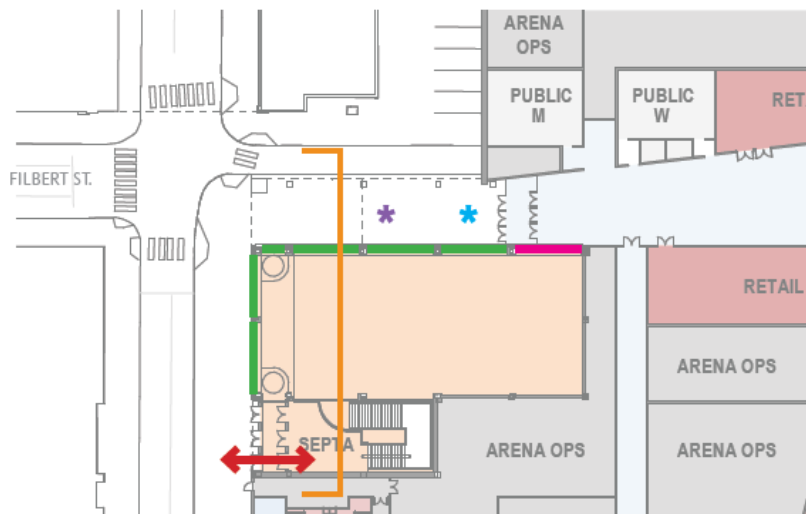
**11. Building Height:** The proposed building height of 173' - 5" seems realistic and appropriate given the information provided in the building cross section below.



Section Detail. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

**12. Relocated Filbert Street Entry:** The Review Team notes the revised Filbert Street entrance and door location which are improvements from the prior plan submission in November 2023. This new proposed setback will allow for additional light and air into the SEPTA station and Jefferson Regional Rail Platform.

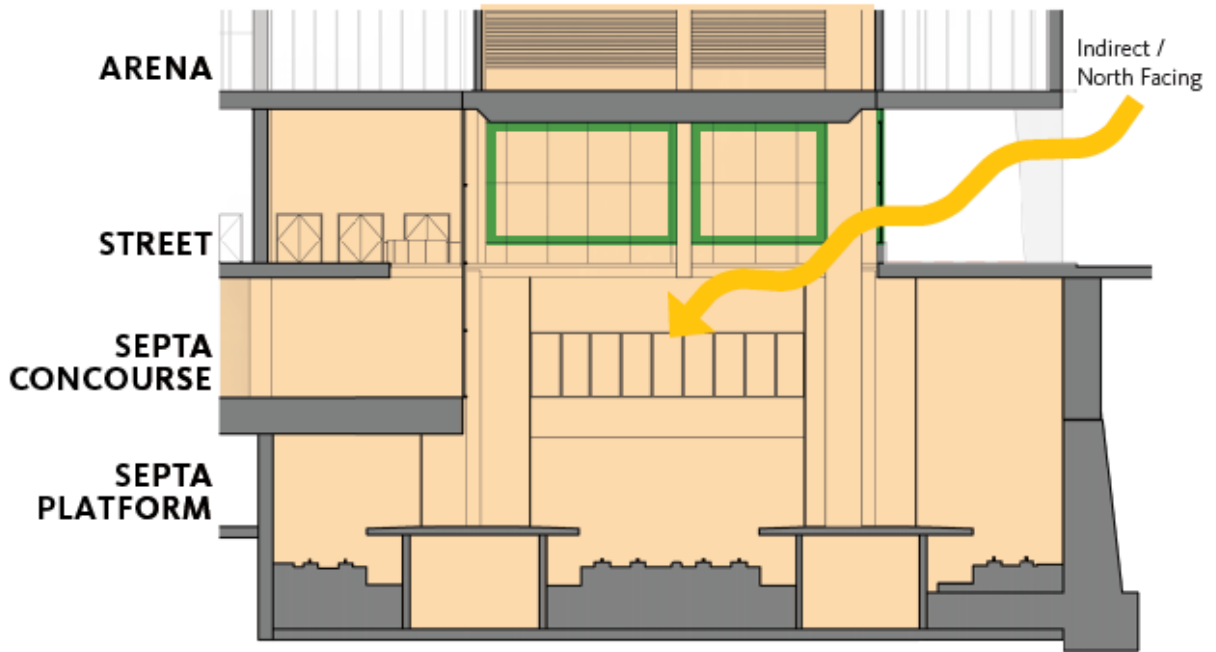
- EXISTING GLAZING TO REMAIN - DAYLIGHT
- EXISTING GLAZING TO REMAIN - BORROWED LIGHT
- ★ 11TH ST FACADE RELOCATION STILL BEING COORDINATED WITH SEPTA
- ★ PREVIOUS ENTRY DOOR LOCATION



Entrance Detail. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission



**13. Station Section Drawing:** The “Jefferson Station Atrium Cross Section” is an extremely helpful drawing which shows the relationship of the new building to the SEPTA train platform and how indirect daylight will filter into the platform area. Note that the arrow indicates daylight, but not direct sunlight.



Section Detail. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

## Areas for Additional Information

- 1. Arena Plans:** The second submission does not contain floor plans for the arena above or below the ground level, except for plans at the level of the SEPTA regional rail station. More information would be helpful to see if additional back-of-house functions can be relocated to allow for further activation of the ground floor for the public on event and non-event days.
- 2. North Elevation:** Beyond a rendering from a very acute angle, the second submission does not provide much information about the design of the north façade of the project. This should include materials, fenestration and the relationship between this proposed elevation and the existing buildings across Cuthbert. This north façade is the closest connection to the Chinatown neighborhood and is a key element in the transition from Market Street to the core of Chinatown to the north. More details are needed to better understand the relationship's design with the adjacent businesses on both 10th and 11th Streets.



*Proposed Rendering. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

- 3. Sustainability:** The second submission acknowledges sustainability as a desired project goal but makes no specific commitments to any sustainable certification program or level.
- 4. Loading:** The second submission does not contain additional information regarding how the building loading will function beyond the stated intention to use the mall loading tunnel with access off of Arch Street several blocks to the east.
- 5. Additional Context:** The second submission renderings are still wide angle views from a vantage point very close to the proposed structure that show little of the surrounding context.
- 6. Rendered Views:** The second submission's renderings are similar to the first in that they lack realistic representations of surrounding context.
- 7. 11th & Cuthbert:** Second submission does not include a Rendered view of the intersection along 11th Street and Cuthbert Street. This should be presented as to how it might look or feel to better understand the proposed condition and relationship to the existing bridge. A small drawing of this intersection looking west is included.
- 8. 11th & Filbert:** A rendered view of how the intersection of Filbert Street and 11th Street is not included in the second submission.
- 9. Materials:** The second submission offers little information regarding exterior material choices beyond indications of glazing.
- 10. Public Realm Activation:** In the second submission, more detail is provided regarding how the Development Team intends to activate the public realm, particularly in the public concourses at ground level. Progress of the submitted plan in this regard is substantial. Nevertheless, areas of blank walls remain, and additional detail at a variety of scales will be needed to avoid some of these passageways feeling like tunnels from one place to another. Additionally, there is little information provided regarding proposed outdoor Public Realm activities or programming.

**11. Structural Support:** The Design Review Team still questions what is actually supporting the glass wall (and the arena). Indications of structure are still very notional and unconvincing.



*Event Day Rendering. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

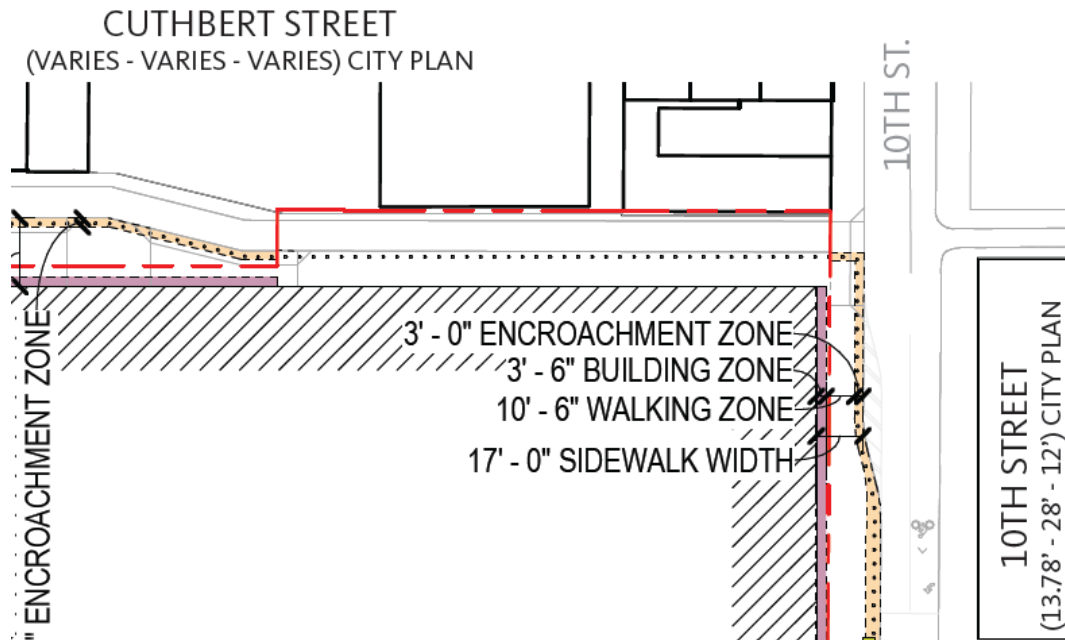
**12. Materials:** Current renderings show a relatively small amount of opaque wall on the Market Street façade. It is not clear from the submission what this material is intended to be—even generically.

**13. Roof Activation: Roof:** The second submission does not include a roof plan, nor much information about the intended uses or functions (if any) on the arena roof beyond what can be surmised from aerial renderings. There is currently a missed opportunity for activation or sustainability measures.



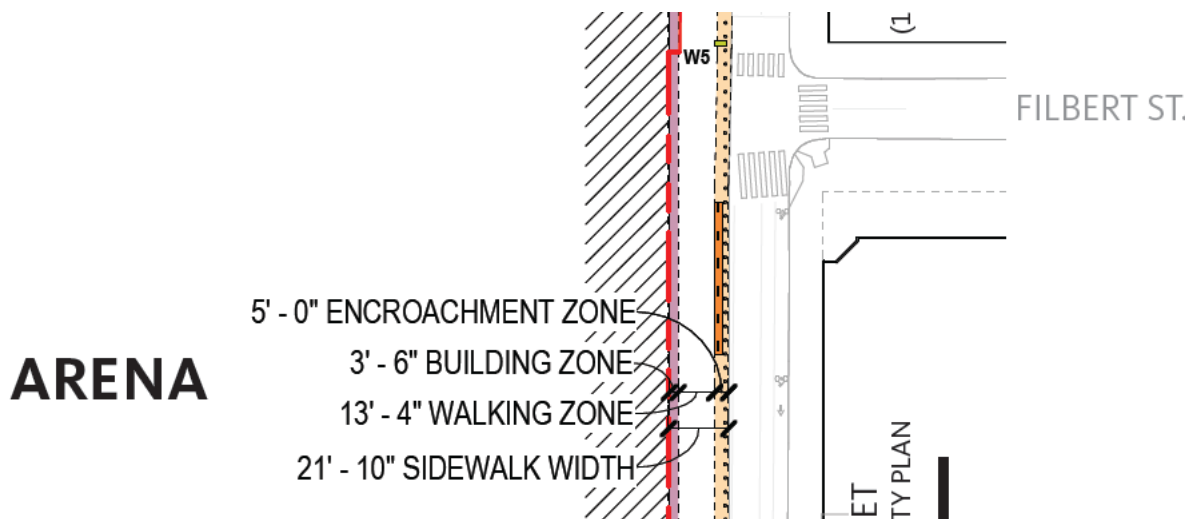
*Proposed Rendering. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

**14. Sidewalk dimensions:** There is minimal sidewalk width along portions of Cuthbert Street. More information is needed regarding the proposed elevation and the residential/arena ingress and egress. Is this space also intended for short term loading functions?



Sidewalk Plan Detail. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

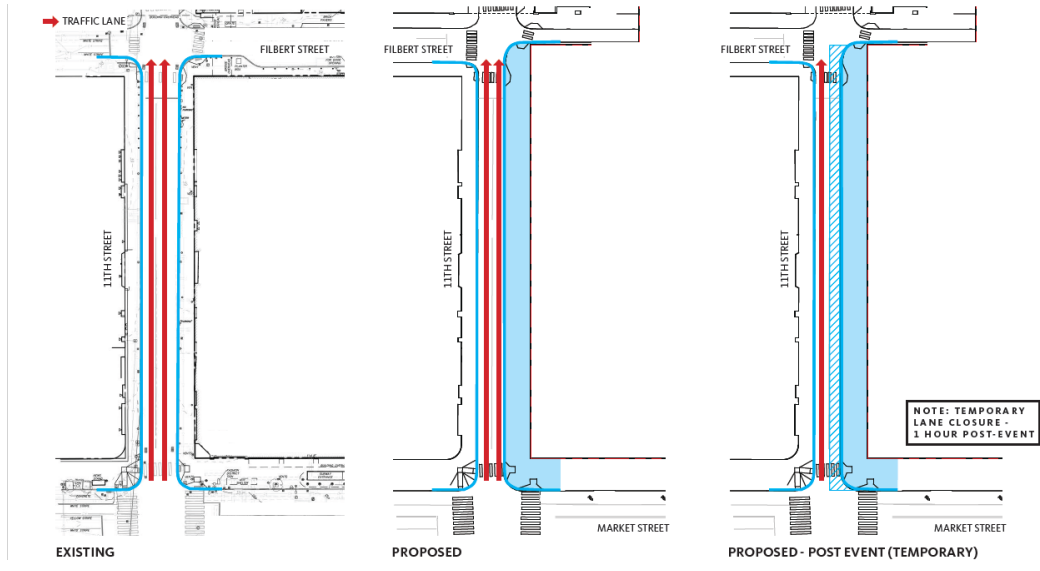
**15. Bike Racks:** Need more information on the nature and orientation of bike racks on the critically narrow 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Street sidewalks.



Sidewalk Plan Detail. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

**16. Event Management Plan:** Proposer states on Page 27 of the submission, "A Transportation Event Management Plan will be prepared..." This Event Management Plan may impact aspects of the design. More information is needed.

**17. Temporary Lane Closures:** Submission states: "NOTE: Temporary Lane Closure - 1 hour post-event." It is not clear what the purpose of the post-event lane closure is. The way in which the lane closure is designed is also in question. Is this through temporary measures (event day safety cones or flex posts) or more permanent design measures such as paving options? More information is needed regarding the design aspects of the proposed closures.

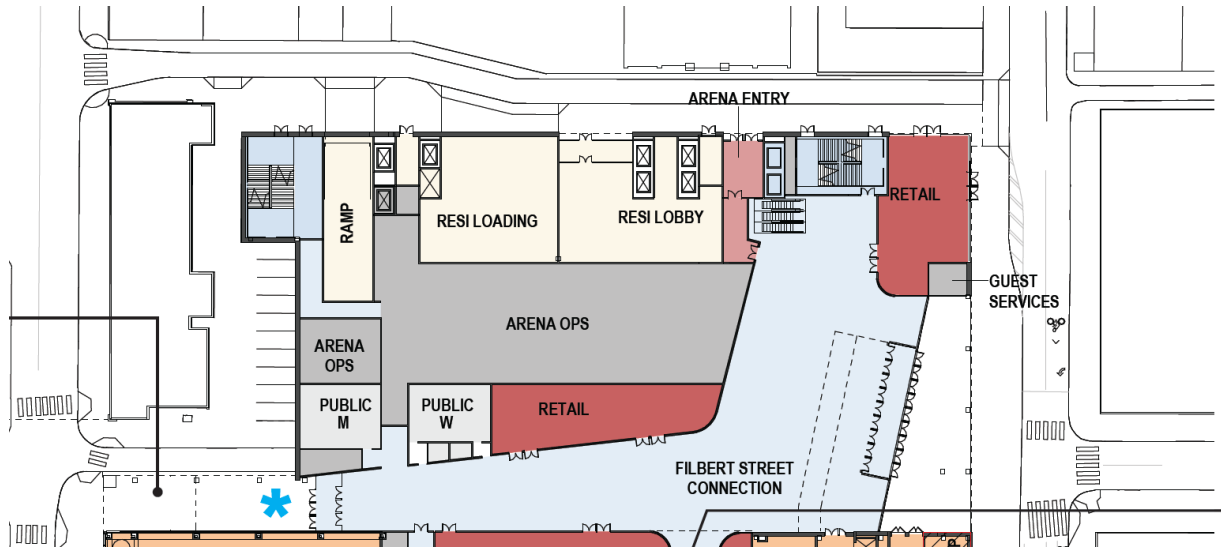


Lane Closure Details. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

## Areas of Concern

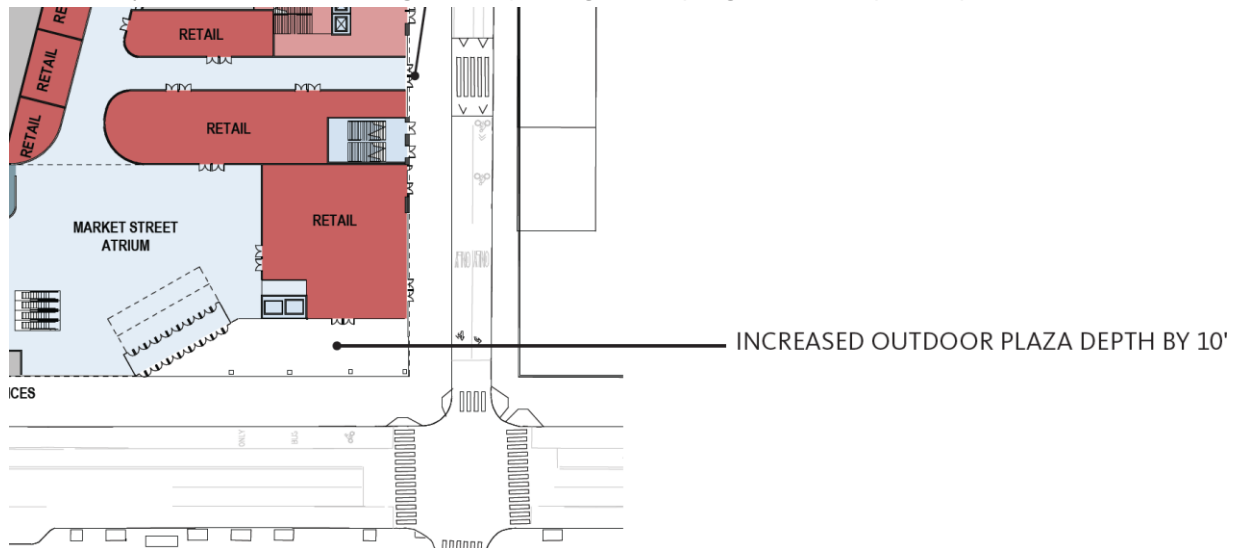
- 1. Public Realm:** The second submission does not include a significant public open space proximate to the proposed arena, either on site or nearby. Our concern with this lack of a significant public plaza remains.
- 2. 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge:** The second submission appears not to have modified the size, mass or height of the proposed bridge over 10<sup>th</sup> Street to any appreciable degree.
- 3. Structure:** The second submission does not offer any additional detail of how the structure of the arena will be supported, particularly at the large, glazed areas of the façades.
- 4. Exterior Surge Space:** The second submission has enlarged, slightly, the areas for public circulation at the main points of entry. However, the Design Review Team remains concerned that the question of adequate outside public space has not been sufficiently addressed.
- 5. Street Furniture:** The second submission does not appear to have modified any of the proposed street furniture that was noted as a concern in the first submission.
- 6. Street Terminations:** The second submission does not indicate that any architectural gesture has been made toward acknowledging the termination of Cuthbert Street at the east or west edges of the site.
- 7. Exterior Signage:** The second submission is substantially similar to the first one with respect to the quantity and distribution of external LED signage. We expect this to be a subject of substantial discussion going forward.

- 8. Deactivated Interior Frontage:** Area designated “Arena Ops” is still an unfortunately deactivated frontage facing a major point of entry for the arena (from 10<sup>th</sup> Street).



Proposed Ground Floor Plan Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

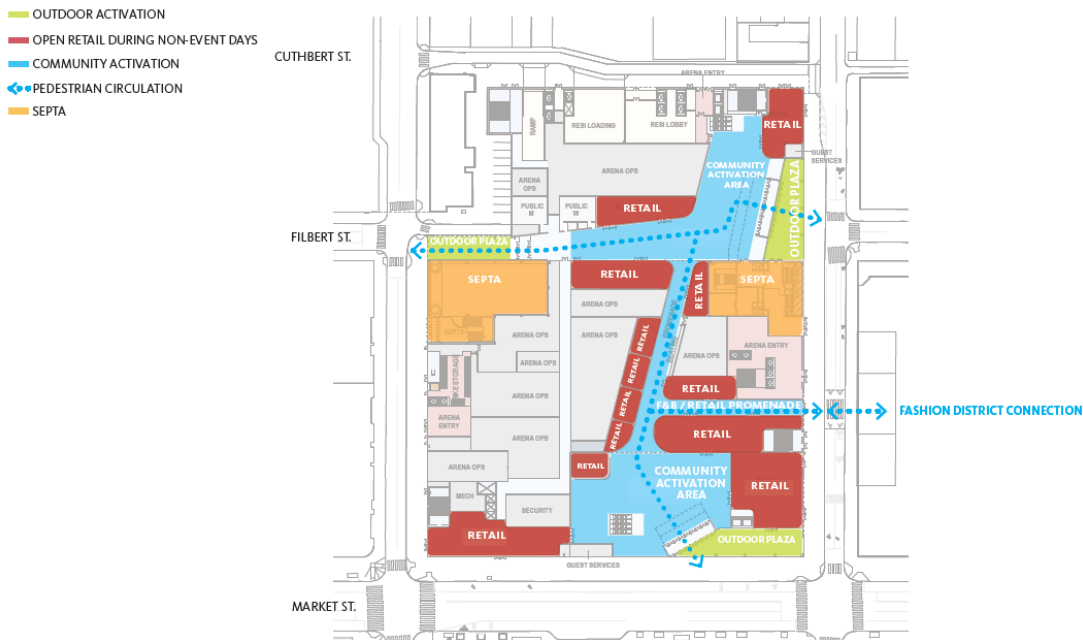
- 9. Arrival Zone:** Increased square footage for entry spaces is appreciated, although the primary (10<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets) and secondary entrances (11<sup>th</sup> and Filbert Streets and 10<sup>th</sup> and Filbert Streets) still fall short of being civically designed or programmable public plazas.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission



**10. Outdoor Activation:** The “outdoor activation” spaces are important and necessary. The Review Team is unsure they would qualify as plazas, especially during non-event days. Plaza spaces have a more discrete form and a defined edge condition typically by either buildings or landscaping. While it is encouraging to see the spaces increase in overall square footage, more information is needed regarding their design, materials and what brings people to utilize these spaces on non-event days.



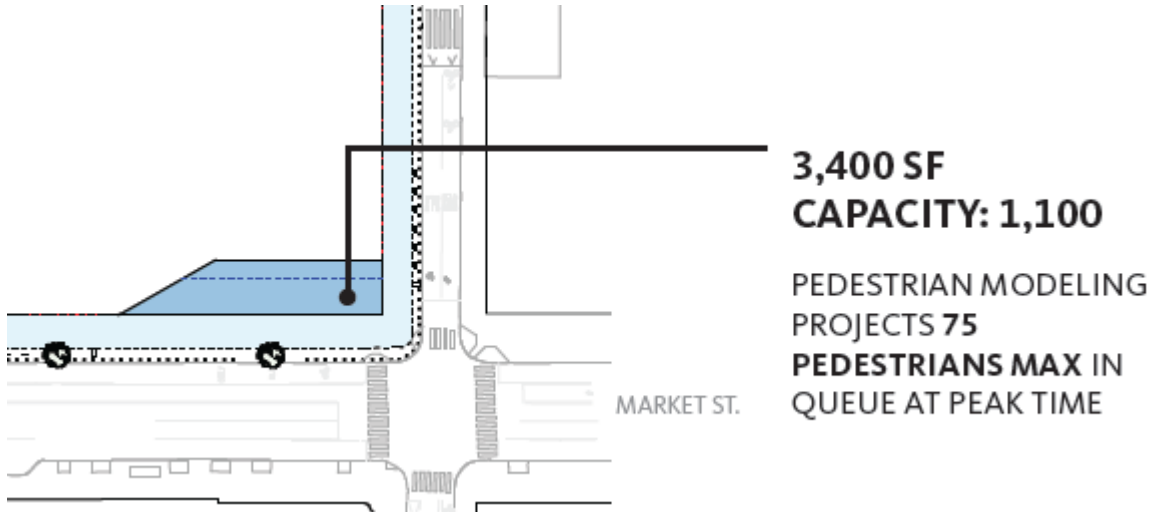
Proposed Ground Floor Plan Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

**11. Retail Promenade:** This "F&B Retail Promenade" feels narrow and may become potentially crowded during events and even non-event days.



Proposed Ground Floor Plan Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

**12. 10<sup>th</sup> & Market Street Arrival Zone:** Stated capacity: 1,100 people. The Review Team notes the size of this primary open space should be greater. Consider other mitigating capacity fixes on adjacent corners of the intersection or how more of the interior space can become outdoor amenity space.



*Circulation | Queuing Zones. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

**13. Sidewalk Signage:** Review Team does not recommend pedestrian signage perpendicular to the walking zone on the sidewalks of 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, Market and Cuthbert Streets. While wayfinding is important, the tight sidewalk conditions will be further cluttered by site elements such as these monument signs.



**VIEW 3 - 11TH ST. LOOKING NORTH**

*Sidewalk Detail. Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission*

## Areas for Further Exploration

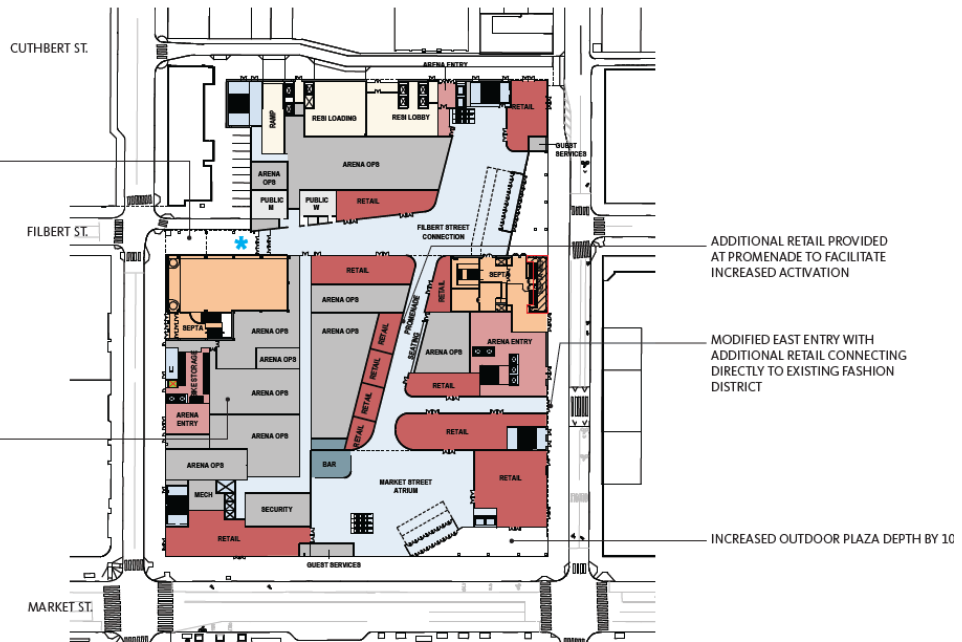
- 1. Public Open Space:** While arrival plazas have been slightly enlarged in the second submission, the Review Team remains concerned that a significant public open space is still missing from the proposal.
- 2. Operational Functions at Ground Level:** Regarding the various gray spaces labeled “Arena Ops”, most or all of these functions are recommended to occur at the event floor level. Review Team wonders what is requiring the Development Team to maintain so many back of house functions at street level. There are very few arena operations functions that need to be at street level, yet a great many of them (though unspecified) seem to be located here.

\* 11TH ST FACADE RELOCATION STILL BEING COORDINATED WITH SEPTA

REVISED ENTRY TO ALLOW MORE DAYLIGHT TO JEFFERSON STATION ATRIUM & TO CREATE ADDITIONAL QUEUING AREA.

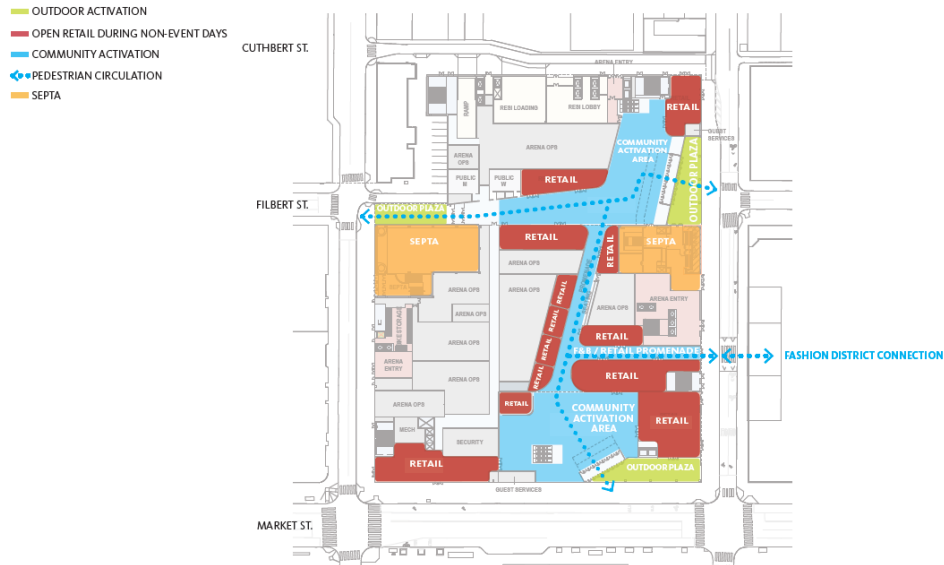
ARENA OPERATION COULD INCLUDE

- MAINTENANCE
- SECURITY
- MEDIA SUPPORT
- STAFF OFFICES



Proposed Ground Floor Plan Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

- 3. Community Activation:** While the Review Team appreciates the second submission designating the northern lobby as a "community activation area", our suspicion is that it will be less active than the similarly labeled space on Market Street. More information is required regarding how these two functions (residential tower and its associated elements and the arena) work together (if at all).



Proposed Ground Floor Plan Image source: March 2024 CDR Submission

- 4. Public Realm:** The "community activation area" along Market Street could be an important public space on the order of a train station or grand hotel lobby. We hope the architectural expression and civic grandeur of this space matches the intent.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations of Design Review #2**

The Design Review Team is gratified that many concerns expressed in Design Review #1 were addressed by the Development Team. It appears that most of the very specific challenges of this project at this location can be solved, though not all of them are fully resolved as of this submission.

A number of areas of concern remain, prominent among these are the following:

- Creating and better refining civic and public gathering spaces for queuing, meeting friends, celebrating, and pre- and post-event activities.
- Minimizing the footprint of proposed or upgraded bridges over public rights-of-way and keeping the soffit (base) of these bridges as high as possible to allow for maximum light, air and relief.
- Further activating public corridors both inside and outside the building at grade level.
- Clarifying the proposed structural support system, especially behind large window curtain walls.
- Clarifying the design intention for opaque wall surfaces and roof areas.
- Revealing the design intent for the north side of the project.

**End of Design Review #2**