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Amending Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code, entitled "Zoning and Planning," by adding a new Section 14-1640, entitled "Ridge Avenue Special District Controls," under certain terms and conditions.

THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA HEREBY ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. Title 14 of The Philadelphia Code is hereby amended to read as follows:

TITLE 14. ZONING AND PLANNING.

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CHAPTER 14-1600. MISCELLANEOUS.

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§14-1640. Ridge Avenue Special District Controls.

(1) Legislative Findings. The council finds that:

(a) Major public and private investments have been made and continue to be made in and around Roxborough's Ridge Avenue section of the City to preserve and protect the economic development potential, prevent declining property values, encourage investment and commerce, promote residential uses in and adjacent to this area of the City, and protect and promote the economic vitality of this area of Philadelphia.

(b) It is desirable to maintain the street scale, historical character, and pedestrian- friendly atmosphere of Ridge Avenue and to encourage future development and redevelopment that does not compromise these desirable qualities. Ridge Avenue in Roxborough is easily accessible by public transportation, making it a viable candidate for residential development targeting those working in Center City Philadelphia, Manayunk, and Conshohocken.

(c) The revitalization of Roxborough's Ridge Avenue is important to the economic vitality and diverse character of a stable, walkable Philadelphia neighborhood in that it (Ridge Avenue) serves as a shopping and recreation area for City residents.

(d) As Ridge Avenue businesses responded to changing needs of the residents and trends of retail developments, the larger scale and service needs created dead spaces, utility yards and loading areas abutting residential areas. Provisions are needed to improve the appearance and safety of these spaces.

(e) Lack of controls, the desire to "modernize" structures in decades past, and the efforts of private landowners to expand rentable square footage-to orient shopping centers towards the automobile rather than the pedestrian-has resulted in irreparable damage to some noteworthy buildings along the corridor. The past trend has turned a number of nearby blocks along the corridor into parking lots to the detriment of the attractiveness of the character of the corridor as a pedestrian-oriented retailing environment.

(f) The design, size, number, and placement of business identity signs is an important aspect of competitive retailing environments. Retailers need to be allowed and encouraged to present their business at a variety of scales. Excessively-large, monolithic signs are detrimental to the overall retailing environment.

(g) Therefore, special land use and zoning controls, providing for prohibition of certain uses and the institution of certain development controls, are required to preserve the integrity of the residential community and to help guide appropriate commercial development.

(2) District Boundaries. Unless otherwise specified, the provisions of this Section shall apply to all properties zoned "C-2" Commercial fronting on Ridge Avenue between Hermitage Street and Monastery Avenue.

(3) Use Controls

(a) The following uses shall be prohibited:

(.1) Automobile repair shops;

(.2) Car washes;

(.3) Gas stations;

(.4) Sales & rental of motorized vehicles;

(.5) Temporary employment agencies;

(.6) Towing services;

(.7) Warehouse or self-storage facilities;

(.8) Wholesale showrooms.

(b) It is recognized that buildings can enhance the public pedestrian usage of the sidewalks by providing an interesting, lively and active presence at street level. Therefore, only active space shall be located on the Ridge Avenue ground floor frontage of any building in the subject area. Active space refers to establishments that encourage pedestrian interaction and cater to walk-in transactions. Therefore, the following uses shall be prohibited on the ground floor of any building:

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(.1) Business or professional office or agency

(.2) Funeral parlors, including the sale of mortician's goods

(.3) Laboratories (analytical, chemical, and research) and assay offices

(.4) Personal service or treatment of patients

(.5) School, radio or television studio

(.6) Water booster or sewer substations, telephone exchange buildings, railroad passenger stations, electric transforming or gas regulating substations

(c) The following uses shall be prohibited on the upper floors of any building:

(.1) Retail sales, except if occupied by the same operator as an extension of the ground floor business.

(4) Area Standards and Specifications.

(a) Area and Bulk Specificatons

(.1) Lot Occupation.

(.a) The maximum amount of net leasable ground floor area used for commercial purposes in buildings erected after the effective date of this Ordinance shall not exceed 8,000 square feet.

(.2) Building Height.

(.a) To top of Cornice. The main cornice line of any building shall not be less than 25 feet or more than 45 feet above the average sidewalk level.

(.b) Roof garden structures. The height of a roof garden structure, elevator or stair head house, or other small room that does not exceed 20% of the roof area and is less that 150 square feet in floor area, shall not be included in the measure of maximum building height, nor, for the purposes of zoning, shall it be considered a floor, so long as it is set back at least eight feet (8') from the edge or parapet.

(.3) Screening

(.a) Where a property abuts a Residential District, the development of any portion of such property abutting the residential district shall include adequate screening along the boundary line between districts, consisting of dense vegetative planting with trees and/or shrubs that shall be equally effective in winter and summer or a solid fence, at least six feet in height above mean curb level.

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(.4) Building Setback. Buildings shall be set back no more than five feet from the property line on Ridge Avenue. On corner lots, the side elevations shall be set back no more than five feet from the property line along any street intersecting Ridge Avenue. This applies to the first thirty feet of frontage on any street intersecting Ridge Avenue.

(5) Facade Controls.

(a) No building shall be erected nor any facade substantially altered unless plans of the facade have been approved by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission shall have 60 days to approve, disapprove or table a request for approval, after which its approval shall be presumed. For purposes of this subsection, "substantially altered" shall mean any repairs, modifications or reconstruction where the cost of such work exceeds fifty percent (50%) of the market value of the structure before such work commences.

(b) The Planning Commission shall approve facade plans under this subsection if it finds compliance with all of the following:

(.1) At least 70% of ground floor building facades shall be clear glass. Reflective, frosted or tinted glass does not count towards this percentage.

(.2) The sill height for first floor windows on Ridge Avenue shall be no more than 2'-6" above the ground floor level.

(.3) Public entrance doors should be at least 50% glazed or transparent when fronting on a public right-of-way. In the case of corner lots, this applies to any side fronting a public right-of-way.

(6) Sign Controls

(a) General Sign Standards

(.1) Workmanship of signs. Fabrication of signs and sign copy shall be completed in a neat and workmanlike manner. For the purposes of this subsection, "neat and workmanlike manner" shall mean that lettering and other graphic information shall be neatly- and evenly-formed, surfaces shall be true and properly prepared and finished and joints shall be neatly formed.

(.2) Only business signs relating to current building use shall be permitted.

(.3) Non-accessory signs shall be prohibited.

(.4) Projecting signs shall be permitted subject to prior written approval of the Art Commission.

(b) Sign types not permitted.

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(.1) Internally-illuminated box signs

(.2) Internally-illuminated awning signs

(.3) Freestanding pole signs and monument signs

(.4) Signs mounted to rooftops or that project above the main cornice line.

(.5) Signs with flashing or intermittent illumination.

(.6) Signs with digital electronic messages.

(c) Sign types permitted.

(.1) Wall signs consisting of a single panel or consisting of individual letterforms mounted onto the face of a building or a supporting framework. The individual letterforms may be internally-illuminated.

(.a) One wall sign is permitted for each ground floor business address.

(.b) Corner properties are permitted one wall sign for each building face facing a public street.

(.2) Projecting signs.

(.a) One projecting sign is permitted for each ground floor business address.

(.b) Corner properties are permitted one projecting sign for each building face facing a public street.

(.3) Awnings and Awning Signs.

(.a) Letterform and logo images are permitted only on sloped surface or on the vertical front panel of an awning.

(.4) Window signs consisting of letterforms or logo art applied to the interior surface of the glass shopfront or entry door.

(.a) Neon signs consisting of letterforms or logo art are permitted behind windows.

(.b) Second floor businesses are permitted one window sign.

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(.5) Temporary signs such as "grand opening" promotional signs, provided that they are removed after a period of not longer than 14 days

(.6) Merchandise signs, which advertise specific brands or products sold.

(.a) Any number of merchandise signs is permitted. See (d)(.6)(.a) below for total permitted sign area maximum.

(d) Sign regulations.

(.1) Wall signs.

(.a) Dimensions. The area of a wall sign shall not exceed 1.5 sq. ft. per linear foot of street frontage, with a maximum area of 40 sq. ft. Letters shall not be taller than 18 inches in height, and not shorter than 8 inches in height. Wall signs shall not protrude more than 10 inches from the building face.

(.2) Projecting signs.

(.a) Dimensions. Projecting signs shall not project more than 3 feet from the face of the building. The vertical dimension of projecting signs on a single story building shall not exceed 4 feet. The vertical dimension of projecting signs on multi-story buildings shall not exceed 8 feet.

(.b) Placement. The top of any projecting sign shall not be higher than the main cornice line. The lowest part of any projecting sign shall be at least 9 feet above the sidewalk.

(.3) Awnings and awning signs.

(.a) Dimensions. Awnings with signs shall not project more than 4 feet over the sidewalk. Letters applied to awnings shall not exceed 8 inches in height.

(.b) Placement. The top of an awning sign shall extend no higher than the bottom of the window sills or projected bay located on the second story of the building face, or 14 feet above the street line, whichever is lower.

(.4) Window signs.

(.a) Dimensions. The total area of window signs shall not exceed 15 percent of the area of the glass panel to which they are attached. The total area of signs on clear glass door panels shall not exceed 10 percent of the area of the glass panel to which they are attached.

(.5) Temporary signs

(.a) Dimensions. The total area of all temporary signs shall not exceed 9 sq. ft.

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(.6) Merchandise signs

(.a) Dimensions. The total area of all merchandise signs shall not exceed 9 sq. ft.

(7) Exterior lighting of buildings

(a) The following facade lighting types shall not be permitted:

(.1) Lighting attached to poles to illuminate buildings;

(.2) Floodlighting;

(.3) Unshielded light fixtures;

(.4) High-pressure sodium lamps;

(.5) Flashing lights.

(b) Facade lighting regulations. Lighting mounted to building facades shall comply with the following provisions:

(.1) All facade light fixtures shall be located, aimed, or shielded to minimize light trespass across property lines.

(.2) All lighting shall use cut-off type fixtures to prevent light trespass and unnecessary glare.

(.3) Lighting fixtures shall not be mounted above the cornice line of the building.

(8) Parking Standards and Specifications

(a) Parking facilities accessory to commercial buildings and commercial buildings with residential components shall comply with the following requirements:

(.1) Curb cuts. Vehicle access from Ridge Avenue shall be prohibited.

(.2) Location of parking. Off-street surface parking shall be permitted only within the rear 50% of the lot depth.

(.3) Landscaping. Within any parking lot having more than five parking spaces, an additional area shall be provided for the installation and maintenance of landscaping. The total landscaping shall not be less than 15% of the area of the parking lot, including all spaces, aisles and driveways, but excluding walkways and existing planted areas. Parking lots with more than five spaces shall include shade

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trees with at least one tree for each five parking spaces.

(9) Conflicting Provisions. Where the provisions of this Section conflict with other Sections of the Code, the provisions of this Section shall control.

Explanation:

Italics indicate new matter added.

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