CITY COUNCILMAN Kenyatta Johnson wants the Bellevue garage at Broad and Locust streets removed from a bill that would create special zoning for six-story, full-motion 3-D digital advertising structures called urban experiential displays.

"When this legislation was first proposed, I was open to the idea because the businesses on the Avenue of the Arts supported it as a way to fund improvements and activities on the avenue," the 2nd District councilman told the Daily News in a statement yesterday.

"However, since the public hearing on the legislation, I have heard from many residents who oppose the idea. I value the concerns of the residents of the 2nd Council District and of..."
Councilman Kenyatta Johnson pulls his district out of 3-D advertising bill


the Center City Residents' Association and I thank them for reaching out to me."

Johnson said he'd work with the Avenue of the Arts "to find alternative ways to fund key improvements on Broad Street."

Councilman Mark Squilla's bill, as originally drafted by Catalyst Outdoor Advertising, a Malvern-based company, was going to allow three urban experiential displays:

- Broad and Race streets, near the Pennsylvania Convention Center
- 12th and Arch streets, near the Reading Terminal Market
- Broad and Locust streets, on the Bellevue garage wall near the Academy of Music.

But Johnson's request to remove his district from the legislation means there would be no zoning change to permit the UED at Broad and Locust.

Jeff Braff, president of the Center City Residents' Association would like Johnson to go further.

"We are pleased, and it's a step in the right direction," Braff said yesterday.

But he added: "We are still asking Councilman Johnson to oppose the bill when it comes up for a vote.

"Although it's good that it won't be in our district, it's still in Center City. Our residents move all over the city, walk all over the city. We still believe it's not in the best interest of the city."

Braff said he hoped that all of Council would take ownership of Center City and no longer go along with the age-old custom of having just one Council member decide the legislation for his or her district.

"When you talk about Center City, it is used by many more people," Braff said.

The bill was introduced in November and went before the Rules Committee on Feb. 24.

Braff said that although the Catalyst firm discussed the bill last fall, the civic group didn't know about the public hearing before the Rules Committee until two days before it occurred.

He said Squilla was pushing the bill through without much notice.

The Inquirer reported last week that Catalyst owner Thaddeus Bartkowski has given nearly $10,000 to several Council members, including Squilla.

The bill is written so that only Catalyst would benefit from the zoning change, said Mary Tracy, president of Scenic Philadelphia, an anti-billboard group.
Bartkowski, owner of Catalyst, did not return phone calls from the Daily News yesterday.

Last month, Paul S. Beideman, president and CEO of the Avenue of the Arts, said there was nothing wrong with a community group getting funds to help maintain Broad Street.