

**MEETING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE  
OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**TUESDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2019  
1515 ARCH STREET, ROOM 18-031  
DAN MCCOUBREY, CHAIR**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**START TIME IN AUDIO RECORDING: 00:00:00**

The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. The following Committee members joined him:

<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Dan McCoubrey, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, Chair	X		
John Cluver, AIA, LEED AP	X		Arrived 9:08
Rudy D'Alessandro	X		
Justin Detwiler	X		
Nan Gutterman, FAIA	X		
Suzanne Pentz	X		
Amy Stein, AIA, LEED AP	X		

The following staff members were present:

- Jon Farnham, Executive Director
- Randal Baron, Historic Preservation Planner III
- Laura DiPasquale, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Meredith Keller, Historic Preservation Planner II
- Allyson Mehley, Historic Preservation Planner I

The following persons were present:

- Patrick Grossi, Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
- Jane Yu, University of Pennsylvania
- Kathy Yuan, University of Pennsylvania
- Henry Zeng, University of Pennsylvania
- Kevin J. O'Neill, KJO Architecture
- Christopher Stromberg, S2 Design
- William Vessal
- Colin Goan, Streamline
- R. Xu, University of Pennsylvania
- Paul Boni, Society Hill Civic Association
- Rustin Ohler, Harman Deutsch Ohler Architecture
- Brandon Lutz, Harman Deutsch Ohler Architecture
- Jessie Lawrence, Streamline
- C. Gao, University of Pennsylvania
- Juliet Whalen
- Gary Murray

## **AGENDA**

### **ADDRESS: 25 S VAN PELT ST**

Proposal: Alter facades; construct fourth-floor addition

Review Requested: Review In Concept

Owner: 25 Van Pelt Real Estate Advisors, LLC

Applicant: Christopher Stromberg, S2 Design

History: 1894, Evening Home & Library Association, Westray Ladd, architect; 1939 addition, Big Brothers Association, Magaziner & Eberhard, architects

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, Contributing, 2/8/1995

Staff Contact: Laura DiPasquale, laura.dipasquale@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

### **BACKGROUND:**

Located between Ludlow and Chestnut Streets in the Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, the property at 25 S. Van Pelt Street features two notable building campaigns: a Renaissance Revival portion to the south, designed by Westray Ladd and constructed in 1894 as the headquarters of the Evening Home & Library Association, a charity for “wayward” boys; and a modern section, designed by Magaziner & Eberhard and constructed in 1939 for the Big Brothers Association of Philadelphia (the local precursor to Big Brothers Big Sisters). The 1939 project entailed the rehabilitation of the entire complex, including exterior modifications to and partial demolition of the 1884 building, which was originally twice as wide, and the incorporation of the interiors of the old and new buildings. The 1939 addition included a large gymnasium, lecture rooms, basement workshops, and a caged-in roof court. The Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District inventory classifies the entire property as contributing and does not explicitly identify portions of the property as historic or non-historic. Moreover, the historic district does not include a period of significance, so alterations and additions of any date may be considered historically significant.

This in-concept application proposes to make substantial alterations to the 1939 portion of the property to separate it from the 1884 portion of the building and convert it into three residential units. At the first floor of the primary (west) facade, the application proposes to cut new window, door, and garage openings. At the second floor, the application proposes to cut recessed balconies. A new third floor would be inserted within the existing 25-foot tall second floor, across the bottom row of the existing upper-floor windows. As a result, the application proposes to alter the window configuration to install a series of metal panels. The existing window configuration would also be altered in the north bay of the building to make the openings consistent with those of the two bays to the south. The application also proposes a fourth-floor rooftop addition, set back approximately five feet from the front façade. The addition would feature a parapet, implying a roof deck, but does not show any access structures on the roof.

On the rear (east) elevation, which currently faces a parking lot not associated with the building, the application proposes to cut new three new rows of windows at the second floor, a full column of windows in the northernmost bay of the second and third floors, and to install new windows in original openings at the first-floor level.

### **SCOPE OF WORK:**

- Cut down/enlarge existing window openings to create garage and pedestrian entrances
- Remove existing brick to create new second-floor balconies at front
- Remove existing brick to create new second-floor windows at rear

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE, 24 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**PHILADELPHIA’S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**

- Install spandrel panels in place of glazing between second and third floors
- Construct fourth-floor addition

**STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:**

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 2: The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
  - The application proposes to remove substantial portions of existing brick and significantly alter the materials and features that characterize the property.
  - The application does not comply with this standard.
- *Windows Guideline | Not Recommended: Changing the number, location, size, or glazing pattern of windows on primary or highly-visible elevations which will alter the historic character of the building; Cutting new openings on character-defining elevations or cutting new openings that damage or destroy significant features; Adding balconies at existing window openings or new window openings on primary or other highly-visible elevations where balconies never existed and, therefore, would be incompatible with the historic character of the building.*
  - This application proposes to substantially alter the number, location, and size of windows on the primary elevation of the building, to cut new window and balcony openings on the primary façade.
  - The staff suggests that it may be possible to cut minimal new openings to provide code-required egress, but does not recommend approval of the installation of garage entrances or balconies on the primary elevation.
  - The application does not comply with this guideline.
- *Roofs Guideline | Recommended: Designing rooftop additions, elevator or stair towers, decks or terraces, dormers, or skylights when required by a new or continuing use so that they are inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining historic features.*
  - The current height and position of the proposed rooftop addition would render it highly visible from the public right-of-way.
  - The staff notes that this building may be able to accommodate a one-story rooftop addition, set in from all sides, but that, at 14 feet in height, the proposed addition is unnecessarily tall and would be conspicuous from the public right-of-way.
  - The application does not comply with this standard.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Denial, pursuant to Standard 2 and the Windows and Roofs Guidelines.

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN AUDIO RECORDING:** 00:00:00

**PRESENTERS:**

- Ms. DiPasquale presented the application to the Architectural Committee.
- Architect Christopher Stromberg and developer William Vessal represented the application.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- Ms. Gutterman questioned whether there are any proposed changes to the 1894 part of the building.
  - The applicant responded that this is an in-concept application to determine whether the 1939 addition can be altered and added to as proposed. No changes are proposed to the 1894 part of the building as part of this application. The applicant noted that they intend to rehabilitate the 1894 portion of the property as well and remove any extraneous elements.
- Ms. Gutterman asked whether they propose to replace the windows of the 1894 portion.
  - The applicant again noted that this is an in-concept application regarding the 1939 addition, not the 1894 original building. He noted that, while this application has nothing to do with the 1894 portion of the building, they do intend to replace those windows and will work with the staff on those details under a separate application.
- The Committee questioned whether the applicants had looked into creating more loft-like spaces in the former gymnasium to limit the extent of exterior modifications required to the 1939 portion of the property.
  - The applicant responded that they looked at several different uses to try to get a single use for the site, but were unable to do so owing to its size. He noted that the biggest challenge is that the second-floor level does not have any windows.
  - The Committee asked whether there are currently two or three floors in the building.
  - The applicant responded that there are currently two floors; the second floor is a double-height space that was built as a gymnasium.
- The Committee questioned whether the property includes any of the surrounding parking lots.
  - The applicant responded that no, the property only includes a four-foot easement at the parking lots. The parking lots are owned by others.
  - The Committee bemoaned the lack of a site plan in the application to help them understand the layout of the property. They also suggested that floor plans would be helpful to better understand the proposal.
- The Committee questioned the size and number of garage entrances proposed on the front elevation, and whether there are existing curb cuts.
  - The applicant responded that the property is not accessible from the rear and does not have any existing curb cuts. He noted that they tried to limit the vehicular access, but are restricted by the size of the site and a half-demolished swimming pool in the basement that prevents underground parking.
  - The applicant acknowledged that front-loading garage doors are not ideal, but opined that this stretch of Van Pelt Street is not a primary or pedestrian-friendly street. It is an alley.
- The Committee opined that the loss of brick on the Van Pelt elevation significantly changes the character of the building. Ms. Stein noted that part of the reason for that loss is owing to the applicants' decision to use this portion of the property as three single-family homes. Ms. Stein questioned whether the applicants explored a more cohesive use across the property, with multiple units accessed from an entry in the 1894 portion of the property.

- The Committee noted that, if the 1894 portion of the building is part of the larger development project, it would be helpful to see how the applicants envision using it.
- Mr. McCoubrey noted that the 1939 addition is a larger-span, big-volume structure with loft building characteristics now being converted to a rowhouse building, but it is fundamentally not a rowhouse building. He suggested that it may lend itself better to a different concept.
- Mr. Stromberg responded that they intend to convert the 1894 portion to a low-density residential use, taking advantage of the existing entrance. He opined that, regardless of use, they would still encounter the same challenge with the lack of windows at the second floor and the lack of doors at the ground floor.
- Ms. Stein asked whether the interior of the 1894 portion connects to the 1939 addition. Mr. Stromberg responded affirmatively.
- Ms. Gutterman opined that some loss of brick to install a band of metal windows in keeping with the character of the building at the second-floor level would be tolerable, but the balconies and garages and the amount of loss in masonry radically changes the character of the building. She suggested that new industrial-type windows could be punched at the second floor, but not balconies and not garages. She noted that it is more acceptable to have additional windows on the rear, east elevation.
- Mr. Vessal opined that the original 1894 building is historic but that the 1939 addition is not.
  - Ms. DiPasquale responded that that is really the question for the Historical Commission: Is the 1939 addition to be considered a historic component of this property? Have the changes made to the entire property during the 1939 renovation acquired their own significance?
  - Ms. Gutterman responded that she believes the architectural firm, Magaziner & Eberhard, is significant and that this is a distinctive piece of architecture in the city. As such, she believes that the design of any alterations should take the character of the original design into account. She noted that this does not mean there can be no modifications, but opined that the proposed design alters the existing building too much.
  - Mr. Stromberg acknowledged that there are any number of buildings constructed in 1939 that are worthy of preservation and that should not be altered at all. This particular building, he argued, was built as a pragmatic support space for the 1894 building and the architecture does not lend itself to easy reuse.
  - The Committee members reiterated that some modifications to this structure would be acceptable, but the proposal would alter the building too greatly.
  - Mr. D'Alessandro explained that there is a process for re-classifying a property as non-contributing to the district. However, in these circumstances, the 1939 section must be considered a historic structure.
  - Mr. Vessal responded that he does not believe the building is historic.
- Mr. Detwiler summarized the Committee's opinion, noting that they view this addition as historic owing to its age and the fact that an architect of note designed it. He explained that the ribbon windows are the primary character-defining feature of this portion of the building. He noted that, if the applicants need to add other openings on the façade, they should preserve the original openings and pattern by leaving a horizontal band of brick underneath the windows. He noted that the material of the

- windows or brick should not be changed to an alternative material and suggested eliminating the balconies on this façade and limiting the new penetrations to a band of windows. He noted that it is a simple façade, and maintaining massing and materiality with as much brick as possible is critical.
- Mr. Stromberg noted that the reasoning behind the balconies being located on the Van Pelt elevation is that the east façade faces the parking lot, where a large development project will take place. He opined that any outdoor space would need to be located on Van Pelt Street. He noted that they have explored the idea of rooftop outdoor space but have not yet fleshed that out. He opined that the recessed balconies were intended to defer to the ribbon windows. However, he acknowledged that they could retain more brick.
  - The Committee questioned the height of the fourth-floor addition and noted that a roof deck and access structures would add even more height. They noted that the proposed fourth floor is taller than any of the floors below.
    - Mr. Stromberg responded that the floor level is below the parapet of the existing building and that the 14-foot height shown is to the top of the proposed addition's parapet.
    - The Committee responded that the drawings show an interior 14-foot ceiling height, not to the top of the parapet. They suggested reducing the height of addition, increasing setbacks, and utilizing more of the existing roof for the outdoor space. They stated that the top of the addition should be lower than the ridge of the 1894 roof.
    - The Committee noted that there are no renderings to show whether the addition will be inconspicuous from the public right-of-way.
    - Mr. Vessal asserted that the 1939 addition was intended to be a five-story structure but they stopped building at the third floor.
    - Mr. McCoubrey responded that Magaziner's original drawings of the building are at the Athenaeum, and, if that is their argument, they should include those drawings in their submission.
  - Mr. Stromberg noted that they had a structural analysis of the building, which contains massive beams, and it could support an additional four floors on top of the existing building without going down to the ground.
  - The Committee opined that the outdoor space should go on the roof of the third floor, and the addition be set back significantly.
  - The Committee asked to see better photographs showing the building's context.
  - Mr. McCoubrey questioned the garage doors and whether the proposal includes any habitable first-floor space.
    - Mr. Stromberg responded that there will be living space at the rear of the first floor. He noted that they are not able to utilize most of the basement owing to massive mechanical and swimming pool areas.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- None.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:**

The Architectural Committee found that:

- The application should be supplemented with site and floor plans, more legible context photographs, and renderings showing the visibility of the proposed addition in order to help the Committee better evaluate the project.

- The 1939 portion of the property is historically significant in its own right as the work of an important architectural firm, Magaziner & Eberhard, and should be treated along with the 1894 portion of the property as contributing to the historic district.
- The 1939 addition is characterized by its utilitarian nature, simple design with industrial ribbon windows and brick façade.
- The cutting of some doors and windows would be acceptable, but the current proposal removes too much of the brick façade and permanently alters the character of the building.
- The number and size of the garage openings, and amount of material removed for their installation, is inappropriate.
- The proposed balconies should be eliminated and a band of brick be retained between the existing upper-floor windows and a new row of ribbon windows at the second-floor level.
- Existing windows and brick should not be replaced with metal panels or other alternative materials.
- The addition, currently shown with a 14-foot ceiling height and set back five feet from the front façade, should be reduced in height and set back to the point that it is inconspicuous. The height of the addition should not exceed the peak of the 1894 roof.
- The roof of the third floor, between the parapet and a fourth-floor addition with greater setbacks, would be a more appropriate location for outdoor space on this property.

The Architectural Committee concluded that:

- The proposed project removes substantial portions of existing brick and significantly alters the materials and features that characterize the property, failing to satisfy Standard 2.
- The application proposes to change the number, location, size, and glazing pattern of windows and adds balconies on the primary elevation in ways that alter the historic character of the building, failing to satisfy the Windows Guideline.
- The proposed rooftop addition is taller than the other floor levels, is minimally set back from the main façade, and would be conspicuous from the public right-of-way, failing to satisfy the Roofs Guideline.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** The Architectural Committee voted to recommend denial, pursuant to Standard 2 and the Windows and Roofs Guidelines.

<b>ITEM: 25 S Van Pelt Street</b>					
<b>MOTION: Denial</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: Gutterman</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: D'Alessandro</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Recuse</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Dan McCoubrey	x				
John Cluver	x				
Rudy D'Alessandro	x				
Justin Detwiler	x				
Nan Gutterman	x				
Suzanne Pentz	x				
Amy Stein	x				
Total	7				

**ADDRESS: 239 CHESTNUT ST**

Proposal: Construct seven-story building  
 Review Requested: Review In Concept  
 Owner: Mazal Tov Development LLC  
 Applicant: Kevin O'Neill, KJO Architecture LLC  
 History: 1852; Lewis Building; Stephen D. Button, architect; destroyed by fire in 2018  
 Individual Designation: 11/4/1976  
 District Designation: Old City Historic District, Significant, 12/12/2003  
 Staff Contact: Randal Baron, randal.baron@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

**BACKGROUND:** Significant architect Stephen Button constructed the two buildings at 239 and 241 Chestnut Street as a pair in 1852; the Historical Commission individually designated the pair together as one entity, 239-41 Chestnut Street, in 1976. The building at 239 Chestnut Street was destroyed by fire and the ruins were demolished in 2018. The building at 241 Chestnut Street was damaged but repaired. Before 239 Chestnut was demolished, the Department of Licenses & Inspections laser scanned the front façade and salvaged the cast-iron first floor by Daniel Badger so that the building could be reconstructed. The applicant, who is considering purchasing the lot, proposes to construct a building that does not reuse the historic fabric or reproduce the historic façade. While the front façade would be rebuilt to the height of the historic façade, an additional two stories would be constructed set back from the new façade. Because the site is close to the corner and the building across the street is notched to create a pocket park, these additional two floors would be quite visible from the street. The standards suggest that the front façade should be reconstructed to its historic appearance because it is a component of a larger ensemble. Extensive documentation and fabric exists to promote an accurate reproduction of the front facade. A rooftop addition that was set back from the front façade to be inconspicuous from the public right-of-way would comply with the standards.

**SCOPE OF WORK:**

- Construct new seven-story building.

**STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:**

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 6: Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and where possible materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*
  - The front façade of the proposed building would not match its twin to the west at 241 Chestnut Street, even though very complete documentary evidence exists for the reconstruction. The project does not comply with this standard.
- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall ... be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
  - The architectural features of the proposed front façade will not be compatible with the environment, especially the adjacent twin building at 241 Chestnut Street. The project does not comply with this standard.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Denial, pursuant to Standards 6 and 9.

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN AUDIO RECORDING:** 00:30:09

**PRESENTERS:**

- Mr. Baron presented the application to the Architectural Committee.
- Architect Kevin O'Neill and developer Gary Murray represented the application.

**DISCUSSION:**

- The Committee questioned why the applicant is not reusing the salvaged cast iron façade. The Committee said that great lengths had been taken to salvage the material and the application includes no information that demonstrates that the salvaged historic fabric is unusable.
  - The applicant responded that it was determined to be too expensive to reuse.
- The Committee opined that the façade should be reconstructed as it is a piece of a larger structure and complete documentation exists to aid in reconstruction. In addition it was noted that the similarity in the placement of fenestration shows that the applicant's program is compatible with reconstruction.
  - The applicant responded that the original architect Stephen Button had created a simple vertical façade and they were continuing in his tradition.
- The Committee asked about materials.
  - The applicant responded that they are proposing steel and glass.
- The Committee responded that those materials would not be appropriate in this situation. The façade could be constructed in cast stone.
- The Committee questioned whether the overlays along Independence National Historic Park allow for this height.
  - The applicants responded that they will have to seek a height variance in any case. Mr. Murray pointed out that the long-demolished Jayne Building that once existed across the street had been quite tall.
- The Committee recommended that, if the front façade was reconstructed, some additional floors might be acceptable, as long as they were designed with more sensitivity to minimize visibility. The Committee had concerns with the penthouses for the elevator, two stairhouses, and the front deck and its railings. The Committee opined that the front deck should be removed entirely.
  - The applicant responded that they could potentially combine the stairhouses into one mass.

- The Committee responded that they do not wish to see the width of the penthouse expanded.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- Patrick Grossi opposed the project and spoke in favor of the reconstruction of the historic façade and the construction of some additional floors if they were designed to be more inconspicuous.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:**

The Architectural Committee found that:

- The structure at 239-241 Chestnut Street was constructed and designated as a single structure.
- The streetscape is highly intact.
- The structure that was lost was highly significant because its architect Stephen Button developed a version of the Italianate style with vertical piers which may well have influenced the development of skyscraper design.
- The salvaged ironwork is by Stephen Badger, who was also important in the development of cast iron architecture for which Old City is famous.
- The Department of Licenses & Inspections salvaged the cast-iron façade and made a laser scan of the façade to allow for its reconstruction after the fire.
- The façade should be reconstructed with the ironwork.
- The proposed additional two floors and penthouses would be too conspicuous and take the building too far from its original intent. They can be designed with greater sensitivity to minimize their conspicuousness.

The Architectural Committee concluded that:

- The proposed project does not meet Standard 6 because it does not reuse the existing preserved historic cast-iron fabric and does not match the historic façade known from photographs and the laser scan.
- The proposed project does not meet Standard 9 because the additional floors and penthouses will be highly conspicuous from the south and west.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** The Architectural Committee voted to recommend denial, pursuant to Standards 6 and 9.

<b>ITEM: 239 Chestnut Street</b>					
<b>MOTION: Denial, pursuant to Standard 6 and 9.</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: Jon Cluver</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: Nan Gutterman</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Recuse</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Dan McCoubrey	x				
John Cluver	x				
Rudy D'Alessandro	x				
Justin Detwiler	x				
Nan Gutterman	x				
Suzanne Pentz	x				
Amy Stein	x				
Total	7				

**ADDRESS: 432 CATHARINE ST**

Proposal: Demolish rear roof slope; construct third-floor addition

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Helena Tsourous

Applicant: Zach Ogden, Hivemind Construction

History: 1830; Front façade replaced

Individual Designation: 12/31/1984

District Designation: None

Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

**BACKGROUND:**

This 2-1/2 story brick row house was constructed circa 1830 and is part of a cohesive group of row houses along the 400 block of Catharine Street. The original main block has a single dormer on the front roof and another single dormer on the rear roof. The application proposes to demolish the building's rear roof and dormer and build an addition from the ridge over the rear second story to create a third floor. No work to the front façade is included in this application.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

- Demolish existing rear roof of main block.
- Demolish rear dormer.
- Construct third floor over rear of building.
- Interior renovations but no work to front facade.

**STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:**

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 2: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.*
  - The demolition of the rear roof and dormer will result in the removal of distinctive materials and the alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. This demolition will diminish the historic character of the property.
- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*
  - The construction of the rear roof and dormer will destroy historic features which characterizes the property. The proposal will not protect the historic integrity of the property.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Denial, pursuant to Standards 2 and 9.

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN AUDIO RECORDING:** 00:57:45

**PRESENTERS:**

- Ms. Mehley presented the application to the Architectural Committee.
- Architect Juliet Whalen represented the application.

## DISCUSSION:

- The Committee questioned if other design options were considered rather than one that included the full demolition of the rear roof.
  - The applicant responded that there did not appear to be another way to expand the livable space.
  - Ms. Stein pointed out that the Committee has approved taller additions, but such approvals have been contingent on leaving the rear roof and dormer intact. She explained that this would be done by creating a door through the dormer to access the new third floor addition.
  - Mr. McCoubrey stated that the gable roofs are considered character-defining features of this row of small houses and removal of the rear roof would run counter to preservation standards.
  - Mr. Cluver added that the rear addition being shorter than the main block of the building is also a long-standing tradition.
- The Committee inquired about the expansion of the house and pointed out that the building will be a 3-bedroom house even after the renovation with a new third-floor addition.
  - The applicant responded that it is currently a 3-bedroom, one-bath house and that the existing third floor area is quirky. She explained the third-floor addition and expansion will add a master bedroom and bath.
  - Ms. Gutterman noted that the front roof is not changing, so that part of the third floor master bedroom will remain the same.
- The Committee inquired about the dormers being previously altered.
  - Ms. Mehley responded that it is the front dormer appears different than the dormers on adjacent row houses. She explained that the pitch of the dormer's gable appears slightly different. Ms. Mehley noted that it is difficult to tell if the rear dormer had been altered since it is currently covered in asphalt shingles.
- The Committee inquired about the location where the rear wall is located is in relationship to the slope of the rear roof onto the second floor.
  - The applicant responded that A2.1 provides the information.
  - Mr. McCoubrey remarked that the rear wall stops at the floor level of the third floor.
  - The applicant stated that, if adding a third floor and maintaining the rear roof is something that could be considered, the applicant would be interested in exploring this option. She commented on the challenge this design may create in terms of water runoff.
- Mr. Cluver stated that he would take a slightly contrary position. He pointed out that the character of these row houses derives from their front facades along the main street and their collective composition together. He acknowledged that, in general, there are some buildings where the rear of a property makes a strong contribution and some where the contribution is much smaller. He stated that the Committee has approved mid-block additions in the past because they are not visible from the public right-of-way. Mr. Cluver stated that the rear of this property is somewhat visible but the contributing dormer and rear slope are not visible in this building's case. He continued that part of the history of these buildings is the evolution they have gone through over time. He noted that the rear of this property has changed since it was first constructed. Mr. Cluver contended that some latitude regarding what happens at the back of this property is appropriate. He continued that a third-story, rear addition could be done in a way that does not detract from the historic character. Mr. Cluver noted that he appreciated that the back edge of the addition is set back from the

property line and this helps with the historical narrative. He opined that there is a time and a place to very strong about the additions to the rear building, for example if this was the corner property or the next one in, but some more latitude is appropriate in this case.

- Mr. Detweiler stated that he agreed in concept with Mr. Cluver but the flat roof nature of the proposed design and how far back it extends negates this. He continued that, if the proposed addition sloped even slightly more, maybe even aligned with the original back wall of the house and made a large shed dormer that might be more palatable, but he thinks the overall maximizing the space on the third floor is excessive.
- Mr. McCoubrey stated that he is going to push back against his colleagues, Mr. Cluver and Mr. Detweiler, on this point because the Committee has consistently maintained the rear slopes of these houses whether or not they are visible as character-defining features. He added that to allow the rear roofs to start exploding upwards does fundamentally change the form of the building; the fundamental form is a gable with two dormers.
- Ms. Pentz and Mr. McCoubrey both pointed out this row of homes has gable roofs and dormers that are very much historically intact. Mr. D'Alessandro also agreed with this.
- The architect stated that, from an architectural perspective, the rear of interior blocks in Philadelphia are a mess of stucco and additions. She added that the front of this house was significantly altered in the 1980s and restoring the character of the front façade would contribute more. She explained that she lives in this neighborhood and would like to see the front of the house restored as the brick is not original and the stoop is not original.
- Mr. Detweiler commented that ultimately it comes down to trying to make too much out of this small house. He noted that this house has its limitations and the proposed design exceeds the limitations. Mr. D'Alessandro added he agreed.
- Mr. McCoubrey concluded that there is a possibility that there could be an addition at the rear, but an acceptable design would need to maintain the gable and dormer forms.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- None

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:**

The Architectural Committee found that:

- The application proposes to completely demolish the building's historic rear roof and dormer and build an addition from the ridge over the rear second story to create a third floor.
- The proposed addition would be visible from S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street.
- Historic gable roofs and their rear slopes, whether or not they are visible, are character-defining features.
- The proposed design fundamentally changes the historic form of the building.
- The historic roofs and dormers are largely intact on the south side of the 400 block of Catharine Street.

The Architectural Committee concluded that:

- The proposed project does not meet Standard 2 because the demolition of the rear roof and dormer will result in the removal of distinctive materials and the alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. This demolition will diminish the historic character of the property.
- The proposed project does not meet Standard 9 as the construction of the rear roof and dormer will destroy historic features that characterize the property. The proposal will not protect the historic integrity of the property.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** The Architectural Committee voted to recommend denial, pursuant to Standards 2 and 9.

<b>ITEM: 432 Catharine Street</b>					
<b>MOTION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 2 and 9</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: Gutterman</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: D'Alessandro</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Recuse</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Dan McCoubrey	x				
John Cluver	x				
Rudy D'Alessandro	x				
Justin Detwiler	x				
Nan Gutterman	x				
Suzanne Pentz	x				
Amy Stein	x				
Total	7				

**ADDRESS: 516 S 4TH ST**

Proposal: Construct two, four-story buildings

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Wood Capital Investments 2, LLC

Applicant: Rotciver Lebron, Harman Deutsch

History: Archaeological potential

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Society Hill Historic District, Contributing, 3/10/1999

Staff Contact: Meredith Keller, meredith.keller@phila.gov, 215-686-7660

**BACKGROUND:**

In October 2018, a proposal for new construction at 516 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street was reviewed by the Historical Commission. At the time, the Historical Commission found that it held review-and-comment jurisdiction over the property, because the Society Hill Historic District inventory classified the property as a non-contributing vacant lot with archaeological potential. Since then, the Historical Commission has amended the Society Hill Historic District and reclassified non-contributing properties listed with archaeological potential as contributing properties. The property at 516 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street is now contributing to the district, owing to the archaeological potential of the site, and the Commission holds full jurisdiction.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

- Construct two, four-story residential buildings with rear yard.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE, 24 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**PHILADELPHIA'S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC STEWARD OF HISTORIC RESOURCES**

**STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:**

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 8: Archaeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*
  - The proposed plans include creating an open space at the rear, undisturbed portion of the property where archaeological potential exists and constructing two new buildings. The new construction would largely be limited to the boundary of the previous building, which was a four-story structure demolished in the mid-1960s. If the open area is not disturbed during construction, the work would comply with this standard. However, if construction would impact the previously undisturbed ground, the staff recommends retaining an archaeologist to ensure that archaeological resources are protected during any ground disturbance.
- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new works shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
  - The proposed new buildings include a red brick veneer, fiber cement lap siding, vinyl windows at the street-facing facades, and fiberglass doors. Though the buildings are compatible with the district in size and scale, the proportions created by the application of different cladding materials detracts from the streetscape. Similarly, the proportions, placement, and materials of the windows are inappropriate for the district. The proposed work does not comply with this standard.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Denial, pursuant to Standards 8 and 9.

**START TIME OF DISCUSSION IN AUDIO RECORDING:** 01:18:36

**PRESENTERS:**

- Ms. Keller presented the application to the Architectural Committee.
- Architect Rustin Ohler and developers Colin Goan and Jessie Lawrence represented the application.

**DISCUSSION:**

- Mr. McCoubrey questioned whether any construction was proposed in the area of archaeological potential.
  - Ms. Keller confirmed that there was no construction proposed in that area.
  - Mr. Ohler stated that there had been a building on the site previously and sometime between 1961 and 1967, the building was demolished. The site was then converted to a parking lot, and in 1981, the parking lot was changed to a 10-car condominium. Mr. Ohler commented that his client purchased six of the lots closest to S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The remaining four lots behind those, he continued, would have comprised the rear yard of the previous building and will remain four parking spaces, which are not owned by his client. He stated that the proposal is to build only where the previous building stood.
- Ms. Pentz asked for clarification on where the open space is located.
  - Mr. Ohler referred the Committee to the plans, explaining that there will be a 12'-4" rear yard incorporated in the applicant's property. He further clarified that behind the open space are the four parking spaces which extend another

40 feet. In total, the building will be approximately 52 feet from the original rear property line, and the proposed building will occupy the 48 feet closest to S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street.

- Mr. McCoubrey questioned the incorporation of the large bay and quasi-industrial scale in an area characterized by more traditional punched opening rowhouses.
  - Mr. Ohler replied that it is the aesthetic his clients requested. He noted that there is a large warehouse across the street. He contended that the district is comprised of various styles, as noted in the district nomination, and it includes older factory buildings and warehouses, such as the one across the street from 516 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street at the southeast corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Gaskill Streets.
  - The Committee asked for clarification on the building Mr. Ohler referenced and asked whether it was shown in the context photographs in the application.
  - Mr. Ohler affirmed, adding that it is a two- and four-story building.
  - Ms. Gutterman observed that the building has more punched openings, asserting that Mr. Ohler designed a very streamlined building with no character-defining features in a neighborhood that has many character-defining features.
  - Mr. Ohler countered that he tried to design a contemporary warehouse-style building.
- Mr. McCoubrey argued against using the two different materials for cladding rather than having a continuous masonry façade.
- Mr. D'Alessandro questioned the placement of the door openings within the metal band.
- Mr. Cluver opined that one of the characteristic features of historic districts is the regularity and rhythm of the openings. This design, he continued, introduces a staggered fenestration pattern within the major ribbons. He observed that the top two levels of windows at the rear elevation are offset from the windows below. He contended that it lacks the strength of rhythm that is typical. At the 4<sup>th</sup> Street façade, he added, the location of the entryway within the gray panel creates a narrower feel of the bay, which contrasts the street rhythm. He then questioned the size of the roof deck, noting that it extends to the front of the building.
  - Mr. Ohler responded that there are roof decks proposed and that they would be set back five feet from the street-facing facades. He claimed the decks would not be visible from a public right-of-way. He then noted that there would be no pilot house on the building and that the roof decks would be concealed behind an 18-inch parapet wall and black painted metal railings to minimize its visibility.
- Ms. Gutterman asked about the placement of the mechanical equipment.
  - Mr. Ohler answered that condensers would be placed on the roof but would not be visible from the public way.
  - Mr. Cluver noted that the units are shown in plan.
- Mr. McCoubrey suggested that a typical element would be a taller first floor and observed that the drawings show the first floor height as the same as other floors.
  - Mr. Ohler replied that the zoning of the site limits the height to 38 feet, which eliminates the ability to increase the first-floor height.
- Mr. Detwiler inquired about the floor heights.
  - Mr. Ohler noted that they would each be 8'-1".
- Mr. Detwiler asked whether the egress grates are flush with the sidewalk.
  - Mr. Ohler answered that they need to be in order to meet code.

- Ms. Gutterman questioned whether there was any consideration given to designing a modern version of the building that was demolished at the site.
  - Mr. Ohler stated that he has not found photographic documentation of the building.
  - Ms. Gutterman showed a photograph of the building that was provided by the staff in the application.
  - Mr. Cluver noted that the historic building was four stories and that though the proposed building is also four stories, the historic building had greater floor height. The historic building, he observed, was much taller. He commented that it looked nice with the height. Others agreed.
  - Ms. Gutterman suggested producing a contemporary version of the historic building.
- Mr. McCoubrey asked whether adding several feet to the proposed building would require a zoning variance.
  - Mr. Ohler affirmed, stating that they are currently using all of the height limit at 38 feet.
- Mr. Cluver noted that black vinyl windows were proposed, stating that the Committee typically does not approve vinyl windows, especially along the public façade. He then asked whether the windows are full vinyl or vinyl clad.
  - Mr. Ohler answered that they are full vinyl.
  - Mr. Cluver commented that an issue with vinyl windows, aside from durability, is that they look very flat even compared to vinyl clad windows, which has some sense of depth. He encouraged the use of a different material.
- Ms. Stein observed that, in looking at the contextual photographs, most buildings have a base. She added that the industrial building referenced earlier by the applicant has a base. She questioned whether that architectural device could hide the fact that the first floor is low and could provide a grander scale off the sidewalk.
- Mr. Cluver questioned whether the archaeological component needed to be discussed, noting that the area of potential would not be disturbed. He noted that it is not his area of expertise so he did not know if it needed further discussion.
- Ms. Gutterman asked whether the open area would be used as a staging area.
  - Mr. Ohler replied that it would not, because his client does not own that portion of the property. He clarified that even the proposed open area encompasses a portion of the property where the previous building existed.
- Mr. Detwiler inquired whether the archaeological potential applies to the entire property.
  - Ms. Keller answered that the classification applies to the entire property but that the concern is over what archaeological potential remains. She added that there would likely not be potential where the previous building existed. Assuming that building had a basement, she continued, any resources would have been disturbed.
- Mr. Cluver clarified that, according to the applicant, the open area within the property is also not part of the archaeological potential.
  - Ms. Keller stated that she did not understand from the site plan that the four parking spaces at the rear were not part of the proposed project.
  - Mr. Ohler responded that he would provide more clarity on the extent of the property before the Commission meeting. He added that the archaeological potential lies under the back four parking spaces, which his client does not own and does not have rights to.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

- Paul Boni, chair of the zoning and historic preservation committee for the Society Hill Civic Association, opposed the project. He explained that several of the contextual photographs provided by the applicant show buildings not within the Society Hill Historic District, including the industrial building that the architect referenced earlier. He noted that both street frontages on Gaskill Street fall within the district boundary, but neither is provided in the context photographs. He argued that it would be helpful, in discussing how the proposed building relates to the district, to have additional photographs of the district.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:**

The Architectural Committee found that:

- The site is comprised of ten parking spaces, and the applicant owns the six spaces closest to S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The remaining four spaces are under separate ownership and will remain parking spaces.
- The overall building height and individual floor heights are dictated by the 38-foot zoning height limit.
- A taller building historically stood on the site and was demolished in the 1960s.

The Architectural Committee concluded that:

- The proposed project would likely satisfy Standard 8, because the portion of the property that retains archaeological potential would not be impacted.
- The proposed building does not reflect the design, materials, or character-defining features of other buildings within the district and, therefore, does not satisfy Standard 9.

**ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** The Architectural Committee voted to recommend denial, pursuant to Standards 8 and 9.

<b>ITEM: 516 S 4th Street</b>					
<b>MOTION: Denial</b>					
<b>MOVED BY: D'Alessandro</b>					
<b>SECONDED BY: Cluver</b>					
<b>VOTE</b>					
<b>Committee Member</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Abstain</b>	<b>Recuse</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Dan McCoubrey	x				
John Cluver	x				
Rudy D'Alessandro	x				
Justin Detwiler	x				
Nan Gutterman	x				
Suzanne Pentz	x				
Amy Stein	x				
Total	7				

**ADJOURNMENT**

The Architectural Committee adjourned at 10:41 a.m.

**PLEASE NOTE:**

- Minutes of the Architectural Committee are presented in action format. Additional information is available in the audio recording for this meeting. The start time for each agenda item in the recording is noted.
- Application materials and staff overviews are available on the Historical Commission's website, [www.phila.gov/historical](http://www.phila.gov/historical).

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