ADDRESS: 232-36 WALNUT ST  
Proposal: Demolish non-contributing building; construct eight-story building  
Review Requested: Final Approval  
Owner: Marie F. Cerone  
Applicant: Rich Villa, Ambit Architecture  
History: 2000; Martin Jay Rosenblum, architect  
Individual Designation: None  
District Designation: Society Hill Historic District Historic District, Contributing, 3/10/1999  
Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov

BACKGROUND:  
This application for final approval proposes to construct an eight-story building at the southeast corner of Walnut Street and S. 3rd Street. The existing single-family residence on the property was constructed in 1999 and is non-contributing to the Society Hill Historic District. The application proposes full demolition of the three-story brick residence and garage and construction of an eight-story, 100’ tall building. The proposed building will house a hotel and a first-floor commercial space.

An earlier version of this application was reviewed by the Architectural Committee at the 28 July 2020 meeting. The original version proposed a 15-story, 184’ tower. The Committee recommended denial of the application, pursuant to Standards 8 and 9. The applicant requested a one-month continuance to revise their proposal and the Historical Commission reviewed the updated design on 11 September 2020. The updated design is eight stories and 100 feet in height; it is seven stories and 89 feet to the cornice line, with an eighth story set back from the facades. At the conclusion of their discussion, the Historical Commission voted to remand the application to the Architectural Committee for an additional review, owing to the degree of change from the original design.

Although the existing buildings are non-contributing to the historic district, the lot is considered Contributing for archaeological potential. This application is subject to full plenary review by the Historical Commission. The property does not meet the conditions for an undeveloped site, as defined in Section 2.23 of the Historical Commission’s Rules and Regulations.

SCOPE OF WORK  
• Demolish existing building.  
• Construct 8-story, 100’ building.

The revised application reflects the following changes to the original proposal:
• Building overall height is reduced by 84’
• Upper cornice height went from 174’ to 89’
• Main exterior material is now red brick
• Top treatment of the arch is now a true half round
• Building is set farther back from Walnut Street than originally proposed
• Plan to use the existing front foundation wall and propose no new excavation north of that wall

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:  
The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:
• **Standard 8:** Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
  o The applicant should engage an archaeologist to assess property for archaeological potential in order to satisfy Standard 8. An initial assessment has not been submitted with application.

• **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.
  o The revised design is more compatible with the historic district in massing, size, scale, and materials.
  o Further reduction in height could be achieved by reducing floor height rather than reducing the number of floors.
  o The proposed cladding materials successfully differentiate the building from the Merchants Exchange building and are more harmonious with the historic district.
  o Architectural features, such as the floor to ceiling windows, could be further refined to be more appropriate within the historic district.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Approval, with modifications to height and architectural details for better compatibility with historic district, pursuant to Standards 8 and 9.
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Committee Member</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Absent</th>
<th>Comment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dan McCoubrey, FAIA, LEED AP BD+C, Chair</td>
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<td>John Cluver, AIA, LEED AP</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>Rudy D'Alessandro</td>
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<td>Justin Detwiler</td>
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<td>Nan Gutterman, FAIA</td>
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<td>Suzanne Pentz</td>
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<td>Amy Stein, AIA, LEED AP</td>
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Owing to public health concerns surrounding the COVID-19 virus, all Commissioners, staff, applicants, and public attendees participated in the meeting remotely via Zoom video and audio-conferencing software.

Meeting Minutes 28 July 2020

ADDRESS: 232-36 WALNUT ST
Proposal: Demolition non-contributing building; construct 15-story building
Review Requested: Final Approval
Owner: Marie F. Cerone
Applicant: Rich Villa, Ambit Architecture
History: 2000; Martin Jay Rosenblum, architect
Individual Designation: None
District Designation: Society Hill Historic District, Contributing, 3/10/1999
Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov

BACKGROUND:
This application for final approval proposes to construct a 15-story tower at the southeast corner of Walnut Street and S. 3rd Street. The existing single-family residence on the property was constructed in 1999 and is non-contributing to the Society Hill Historic District. The application proposes full demolition of the three-story brick residence and garage and construction of a 15-story, 184' tall building. The proposed building will house a hotel and a first-floor commercial space.

Although the existing building is non-contributing to the historic district, the lot is considered contributing for archaeological potential.
**Scope of Work**

- Demolish existing building.
- Construct 15-story, 184’ tower.

**Standards for Review:**
The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- **Standard 8:** Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.
  - The applicant should engage an archaeologist to assess property for archaeological potential in order to satisfy Standard 8. An initial assessment has not been submitted with application.

- **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 massing, size, scale, proportions, and height of the proposed tower are not compatible with the historic district. The Historical Commission rejected a tower for the adjacent site to the east recently, asserting that a tall building was not appropriate for the context, especially the Merchants Exchange building and other nearby, historically significant buildings and collections of buildings.

**Staff Recommendation:** Denial, pursuant to Standard 8 and 9.

**Start Time of Discussion in Zoom Recording:** 03:12:03

**Presenters:**

- Ms. Mehley presented the application to the Architectural Committee.
- Architect Rich Villa and property owner Anthony Cerone represented the application.

**Discussion:**

- Mr. Cluver said he does not feel the proposed design is an appropriate fit and noted at issue is the height but also the design too. He continued that the height is its own issue, but the design almost has a Louis Sullivan and reminded him of the Bayard Building in New York City along with a couple other buildings in Center City, although none in Society Hill. He concluded that the height and design make it an inappropriate fit with the historic district.
  - Mr. Villa asked if he meant the inappropriateness is within the top of the building.
  - Mr. Cluver responded that in general there are specific elements about the design such as the size of the cornice, the relationship of the top of the windows to the cornice, and the lack of articulation at the base, middle, and top which would be typical of a midsize building such as this. He added that it just does not feel like it is part of the Society Hill Historic District.
  - Mr. Villa pointed out that the building is along the upper limit of the Society Hill Historic District. He continued that as you go down the street there are different articulations in the buildings. Mr. Villa said that the top of the windows are open for interpretation; its design is to represent a curtain being pulled open which is
an homage to Charles Willson Peale’s famous painting of him revealing his museum.

- Mr. McCoubrey said that the proposed building is in a block that is largely a three-story brick block and is significantly higher than its neighbors. He noted that the height is the overwhelming issue he has with the design. Mr. McCoubrey added that he is concerned about the impact on the Merchants’ Exchange Building which would shade it fairly significantly. He continued that the Merchants’ Exchange Building is a civic, somewhat public building, that is white within a red brick context and it calls into question the palette proposed for the new building. Mr. McCoubrey stressed that his main concern is the proposed height in a mostly three-story part of the city. He recognizes that Society Hill Towers are there, but it is different as they are surrounded by lawn and green space and in a very different urban environment that this site. Mr. McCoubrey stated that he knows a 65-foot height limit is being considered for this area of the city and thinks it would include this site. He noted that City Council was supposed to be acting on this but does not believe it has happened yet. This 65-foot limit suggests a maximum height that could be considered although in this specific context even a 65-foot height could be questioned.

- Mr. Detwiler said he agreed with Mr. McCoubrey in that the 65-foot height limit was on his mind as well. He added that for him the major factor is the Merchants’ Exchange Building and the impact of putting it in shadow for much of the day. Mr. Detwiler contended that in such a context, that includes the Merchants’ Exchange Building and Independence National Historical Park, it needs a little breathing room and the proposed design does not provide it.
  - Mr. Villa pointed out that the proposed building does provide a 29-foot setback from Walnut Street as a little bit of breathing room.
  - Mr. Detwiler said he recognized the design’s setback but contended that its height will put the Merchants’ Exchange Building in a significant amount of shadow and that has a significant impact on his point of view.
  - Mr. Villa responded that the Merchants’ Exchange Building would not be in shadow all day.

- Ms. Stein pointed out that it is the fact that the height dominates the view. She said what architects and preservationists love about the Merchants’ Exchange Building is its very delicate detailing and the light well at the top. Ms. Stein stated that the proposed building would dominate over those features down Walnut Street and puts the Merchants’ Exchange Building in its shadow. She continued that the overbearing height is taking away from the Merchants’ Exchange Building and that is one of the things the Committee is trying to protect.

- Mr. D’Alessandro stated he agrees with the staff recommendation.
- Mr. Cerone stated that he owns the property, constructed the current building, and lives there. He said that he is very sensitive to the property, cityscape, and in what he has designed with Mr. Villa. Mr. Cerone continued that he understands the Merchants’ Exchange Building and that they first designed the building in red brick but changed it to the material used on the Merchants’ Exchange Building. He explained that he was born, raised, educated in Philadelphia and loves the city. Mr. Cerone said that if the Committee wants them to move the building up to the property line and bring it down a couple stories, he would be open to that. He stated that the City of Philadelphia is in a position right now which is unprecedented and added that if one were to take a forensic audit, he would find that Philadelphia is bankrupt. Mr. Cerone continued that the city needs development and jobs to bring back the image that was destroyed two months ago. He noted that it is all nice and well that those...
who have to say “oh no” to this project and that he believes this project is one that
the city needs. Mr. Cerone said he believes the design is sensitive to it and noted
again he would be open to moving the building perimeter to Walnut Street and
reducing the height a couple of stories. He addressed comments that a hotel will add
traffic congestion and crowding to this intersection, noting it already has this.

PUBLIC COMMENT:
- Mr. Farnham said that representatives of Society Hill Civic Association, Society Hill
  Towers, and Bingham Court submitted written public comments to the staff, and
  these had been distributed to the Committee members prior to the meeting. The
  National Park Service submitted a letter in opposition to the proposal. This letter and
  additional email comments were posted to the Historical Commission’s web site.
- Alex Balloon, Old City resident and preservation advocate, said that he was
  concerned about some of the opposition to the proposed building and arguments
  regarding height concerns. He added the taller heights of nearby building should be
  considered in the context of Standard 9, also noting that historically, taller buildings
  stood in the area, but were demolished years ago. Mr. Balloon agreed with the staff
  recommendation and the National Park Service letter regarding Standard 8
- Paul Steinke, Preservation Alliance of Greater Philadelphia, opposed the proposal.
  He said his organization agreed with the staff recommendation of Standards 8 and 9,
  noting the context of the proposed building to Independence National Historical Park
  and the Society Hill Historic District.
- Oscar Beisert, Keeping Society of Philadelphia, said that he liked the design but
  noted that the building’s height could be lower. He added that it should not be
  detached from the building next door and should be built out to Walnut Street,
  without a setback, and this could justify lowering the height. Mr. Beisert stated his
  opinion that earlier planning decisions were a disaster to this neighborhood and that
  the proposed building has the potential to rebuild a sense of importance that as lost
  on so many nearby parcels where buildings were demolished in the past. He
  disagreed with the argument for three-story and low-scale buildings only in this area.
- Bonnie Halda, resident of Society Hill and historical architect, opposed the proposal.
  She stated that the Merchants’ Exchange Building is a National Historical Landmark,
  and as such, it is among only 2,500 National Historical Landmarks in the nation. Ms.
  Halda said the Merchants’ Exchange Building is significant to Philadelphia but also
  part of the nation’s history.
- Jeanne Sigler, resident of Society Hill Towers, opposed the proposal. She said the
  building is out of scale with the neighborhood. Ms. Sigler pointed out that Walnut
  Street and 3rd Street is already a busy corner and the increased traffic would have a
  negative effect on the neighborhood. She added that the increased traffic around the
  clock would impact the pedestrian, tourist, and historical experience of the area.

ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE FINDINGS & CONCLUSIONS:
The Architectural Committee found that:
- The proposed tower would stand on a block composed of primarily three-story brick
  buildings.
- The building’s height would dominate over the view along Walnut Street.
- The site’s context includes the Merchants’ Exchange Building and Independence
  National Historical Park.
• The proposed height and mass would negatively impact the nearby Merchants’ Exchange Building, potentially casting an extensive shadow over the National Historic Landmark building.
• Elements of the design are incompatible with the Society Hill Historic District.

The Architectural Committee concluded that:
• The application as submitted does not meet Standards 8 and 9.
• The denial for Standard 9 is based on the design’s size, scale, proportions, height, and design elements.

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

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<tr>
<th>ITEM: 232-36 Walnut St</th>
<th>MOTION: Denial</th>
<th>MOVED BY: Cluver</th>
<th>SECONDED BY: D’Alessandro</th>
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<td><strong>VOTE</strong></td>
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<td>Committee Member</td>
<td>Yes</td>
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Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

To whom it may concern,

Please find the enclosed documents regarding the proposed new building 232-36 Walnut Street (Southeast corner of 3rd and Walnut). The owner of the property is Marie F. Cerone at the same address. The proposed project also includes the air rights to 220A-30 Walnut Street which is owned by the same owners and is listed as premise “B” on the deed.

The current single family residence on the site was built in 1999 and we are proposing its complete demolition. The proposed project encompasses 1 new 8 story, 100’ tall building that will house a hotel and include an event space on the 8th floor and hotel entry/office and a commercial space on the ground floor.

The building’s design takes cues from surrounding building on and around Walnut Street. The proposed design uses Flemish bond brick as the main exterior material. The exterior is broken up into tall sections of stacked windows that are topped with an Ogee three centered arch. Each of the window bays contains muntined windows with 8 lites each in an A/B/A pattern that is inspired by the patterning of windows across the street. The building has a 2’-6” deep stone cornice that sits at the top of the 7th floor at a height of 89’-0”. There is a second, non-protruding, cornice that sits at the top of the first floor.
The buildings mass sits 29’-6” away from the Walnut Street property line, creating a plaza at the North side public entry. The plaza is contained by new stone posts and new decorative iron fencing. The 2nd -7th floors utilize the air rights of the adjacent property at 222 Walnut.

The revisions made after the Architectural Committee meeting are:

1. Building overall height is reduced by 84’
2. The Upper cornice height went from 174’ to 89’
3. The main exterior material is now Brick
4. The top treatment of the arch is now a true half round
5. The building is set farther back from Walnut Street than originally proposed
6. We intend to use the existing front foundation wall and propose no new excavation north of that wall

This application seeks final approval.

I look forward to the Committee's interaction.

Thank You,

Rich Villa

Partner, Ambit Architecture
**Walnut Street Hotel**

Hotel and Event Space:
232-36 Walnut Street Philadelphia, PA 19125
Hotel and Event Space: 232-36 Walnut Street

# DATE
29/2/20

Historic Commission
232 Walnut Street

220 Walnut Street attached Air Rights

Existing Single Family House - Built in 1999
Photo: 5.15.20

Historic Photos - Prior to site being a parking lot in 1954
Typ. Premanufactured Panelized Wall Construction: See XXXX

Typ. Metal Panel Wall Construction: See XXXX

Hotel and Event Space: 232-36 Walnut Street

AMBIT ARCHITECTURE
Hotel and Event Space:

232-36 Walnut Street

#DATE

REVISION

29/2/20

Historic Commission

View From Dock Street Looking Southwest

View From Walnut Street Looking East
Hotel and Event Space: 232-36 Walnut Street

Sun Study on June 21st

Sun Study on December 21st
Hotel and Event Space: 232-36 Walnut Street

- Metal Panel - Color to match Sherwin Williams: Antique White
- GlenGery - Scotch Handmade Brick
- Wausau "In-Vent" Windows
- Steel and Glass Entrance Canopy
- Belgard: Madria Pavers

#DATE
2/3/20

Historic Commission
Original Submission
Walnut Street Hotel
Hotel and Event Space:
232-36 Walnut Street Philadelphia, PA 19125
Hotel and Event Space:
232-36 Walnut Street

#DATE
27/13/20

Historic Commission

232 Walnut Street

220 Walnut Street attached Air Rights

232 Walnut Street (1996)

Existing Single Family House - Built in 1999
Photo: 5.15.20

Historic Photos - Prior to site being a parking lot in 1954
Typ. Premanufactured Panelized Wall Construction: See XXXX

Typ. Metal Panel Wall Construction: See XXXX

Ground Floor Hotel Offices

Setback 15th Floor Event Space

Metal Entrance Overhang
Hotel and Event Space:
232-36 Walnut Street
#DATEREVISION
27/13/20
Historic Commission

View From Dock Street Looking Southwest

View From Walnut Street Looking East
Hotel and Event Space: 232-36 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19125

- Metal Panel - Color to match Sherwin Williams: Antique White
- Premanufactured Stone Panels
- Wausau "In-Vent" Windows
- Steel and Glass Entrance Canopy
- Belgard: Madria Pavers