

**ADDRESS: 514 S 4TH ST**

Proposed Action: Reclassify Property in Historic District Inventory

Property Owner: Sandra & Joseph Lichtman

Applicant: Sandra & Joseph Lichtman

Staff Contact: Meredith Keller, [meredith.keller@phila.gov](mailto:meredith.keller@phila.gov)

**OVERVIEW:** This application requests to reclassify the property at 514 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street from significant to non-contributing in the Society Hill Historic District. The property includes a three-story building fronting S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street and a two-story building with a half-gambrel roof at the rear of the lot. A one-story infill structure adjoins the buildings. The property is described as follows in the entry from the Society Hill Historic District inventory:

**514 A,B** 3-story, 2-bay, painted brick, vernacular building. Central shopfront with 9 large lights and flanking pedimented doorways, each with different transoms and doors; 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors have 6/6 wooden sash; storm sash; fake louvered shutters at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors; corbelled brick cornice.

North elevation: stucco.

South elevation: stucco 2 ½-story building with multiple additions at rear of lot; ½ gambrel roof; added porch and new side wall; 1/1 replacement windows; new metal overhang for wrap-around porch; stepped parapet walls; shed dormer.

Built c. 1760. Alterations: c. 1920 front section. Significant.

The application asserts that the property is unsalable due to its classification as a significant resource in the Society Hill Historic District. The applicants, in this case the property owners at the time of designation, contend that they received notice of the property's designation but not notice of the nomination, which would have provided them with information regarding public meetings and a means to participate in the process. The application argues that the Historical Commission staff has "not approached the issuance of demolition permits in a reasonable and practical way," though no demolition permits have ever been submitted.

The application fails to provide any evidence that the property lacks historic value or that the property no longer meets the criteria that caused its entry on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Instead, the application seeks to reclassify the property to allow for the demolition of its significant buildings and redevelopment of the site.

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:** Denial of the reclassification of 514 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street as non-contributing, pursuant to Section 5.14 of the Historical Commission's Rules & Regulations.



Figure 1: The property at 514 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, which includes a three-story rowhouse fronting S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street and a two-story half-gambrel building at the rear of the lot, April 2020. Source: Pictometry.



Figure 2: The property at 514 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street, 2020. Source: Cyclomedia.



Figure 3: The property at 514 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street now visible from Gaskill Street, 2020. Source: Cyclomedia.



Figure 4: Photograph of the rear two-story building with a half-gambrel roof, 2020. Source: Cyclomedia.





Figure 5: The property at 514 S. 4<sup>th</sup> Street in 1959. Source: Department of Records.

Sandra and Joe Lichtman  
1819 Fireside Ln  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08003

To: Members of the Committee on Historic Designation  
Members of the Historic Commission  
From: Sandra and Dr. Joe Lichtman  
Re: request for change from significant to non-contributing designation of 514 S 4<sup>th</sup>  
St

We are requesting that our property be changed from significant to non-contributing property within the Society Hill historic district, .

We purchased this property in 1986, and to the best of our knowledge, we were never given an opportunity to comment on the designation of Society Hill as "historic". Therefore, we were denied due process.

We received a letter in July 1999 notifying us of the Society Hill historic designation. We were given to understand that the staff of the Commission would approach issuance of demolition permits in a reasonable and practical way and also understand changes in building uses and contemporary requirements. We have not found this to be the case.

We have been trying to sell our building for a year, and we have found that the historic designation is a deterrent, and not a benefit. The only interest to date has been from developers who would like to demolish the property and combine it with one or two adjoining parcels to build new housing.

The property to the left of ours is 516 S 4<sup>th</sup> St. This is a group of 10 individually owned parking spaces. Six of these spaces have been placed under contract by a developer with the hopes of building new housing. I've recently been told that without being able to add our property to the parcel, they will not be interested in moving forward with this project.

The property to the right of ours, 512 S 4<sup>th</sup>, is a 3 story home with a garage that was built in 1980, according to tax records. The same developer has expressed interest in acquiring all three properties for their new home construct project.

Our property is a 3 story building with an office in the front, 2 apartments above that, and a trinity in the rear.

After a year of trying to sell the building, we have come to understand that the highest and best use of this property would be to demolish it and join it together with 516, or 516 plus 512. No one has expressed interest in purchasing the building for use as office/apartments.

If any developer goes ahead with plans to build at 516, our building will be sandwiched between two modern structures – certainly this is not the look of a historic district. The next 3 properties on our side of 4<sup>th</sup> St. between ours and Lombard St are modern homes with garages that were built in 1980. Removing our building from the list of historic properties will allow for continuity on the block as well as greatly increased tax revenue. This is certainly in the best interest of the city.

Another important factor to consider is tax revenue. The parking spaces at 516 S 4<sup>th</sup> St. generate minimal real estate revenue compared with that which would be derived from new housing. Our property would also be taxed at a much higher rate with new housing.

In the July 1999 letter, the Commission Chair indicates the designation would likely “enhance resale values”. This appears not to be the case in our situation.

In light of the foregoing, I would respectfully ask if the Historic Designation is fulfilling its intended result. It appears, in this situation, that it does not.

Therefore, we respectfully request a change of the classification of our property.

I can be reached at 609-922-4967 or at [doitallady@gmail.com](mailto:doitallady@gmail.com).

Thank you for considering our proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

*Sandra and Joe Lichtman*

Sandra and Dr. Joe Lichtman











view from side of building on Gaskill showing many alterations prior to our ownership[



512, 510, and 508 S 4<sup>th</sup> St.  
built



# CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

## PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

One Parkway, 13th Floor  
1515 Arch Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102  
686-4590 or Fax 686-4594

WAYNE S. SPILOVE  
Chairman

RICHARD TYLER, Ph.D.  
Historic Preservation Officer

|||||

JOSEPH M. & SANDRA S. LICHTMAN  
514 S 04TH ST  
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19147-1507

5 October 1998

RE: 514 S 04th St

Meeting Dates: 18 December 1998  
10 February 1999

Dear Owner:

As Chairman of the Philadelphia Historical Commission, I am pleased to inform you that the Commission will consider the proposed designation of the Society Hill Historic District at two public meetings pursuant to the Historic Preservation Ordinance, Section 14-2007 of the Philadelphia Code. The district's boundaries, illustrated by the enclosed map, include your property at the address above. The first public meeting will take place on 18 December 1998 at 2:00 pm, at One Parkway, 18th floor, 1515 Arch Street, followed by the Commission meeting on 10 February 1999 at 10:00 am at One Parkway, 18th Floor, 1515 Arch Street.

Under the Historic Preservation Ordinance, the Historical Commission bears the responsibility for the designation of buildings, structures, sites, objects and districts important to the historical, cultural, architectural, archeological and educational traditions and values of the City. To achieve this, the Historical Commission evaluates the historical, architectural and other attributes of properties throughout the City for possible listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Over 9,000 entries illustrative of the City's history from the earliest years to the recent past already appear on the Philadelphia Register.

Designation brings with it benefits to the owner of an historic property. There is of course, the satisfaction derived from the ownership of a recognized cultural resource and from the trusteeship for the past and future that accompanies ownership. The owner of a designated property may call upon the Commission's staff for historical and technical services and assistance. In addition, the protection against inaccurate or unsympathetic alterations and against unnecessary demolitions offers some assurance that the character of a resource and its surroundings will be preserved or improved. This assumes particular importance in the context of an historic district, for it provides another tool for a community to protect itself against inappropriate changes that can destroy the visual qualities of a neighborhood. In Philadelphia and other cities, designation has helped to foster community pride and encourage maintenance.

In addition, the Federal Tax Code permits the owner of an income producing property in an historic district created by a Certified Local Government, a status enjoyed by Philadelphia, to qualify for a twenty percent (20%) investment tax credit for restoration and rehabilitation costs. Such a district must meet the criteria for the National Register and be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer for certification. Finally, a well-maintained or accurately preserved property may also be eligible for an Historical Commission plaque.

Designation entails some restrictions. To ensure authenticity and compatibility, the Commission reviews all proposed alterations to historic resources. The Commission also has jurisdiction over the issuance of demolition permits for historic properties. You will find the Commission and its staff approach such matters in a reasonable and practical way, and understand changes in building uses and contemporary requirements. For example, the Commission exercises a jurisdiction only over the exteriors of historic buildings; the staff, upon submission, approves interior modifications that do not affect the appearance of the exterior.

We welcome your participation in our effort to recognize and preserve the City's historical and architectural heritage. We should also like to invite you to attend the scheduled public meetings and to provide us with information you may have about your property and its history to supplement our own research.

Should you have any questions about historic preservation or the work of the Commission, please do not hesitate to contact the Commission staff.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Wayne S. Spilove". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Wayne" being the most prominent.

Wayne Spilove, Chairman  
Philadelphia Historical Commission



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Dear Owner:

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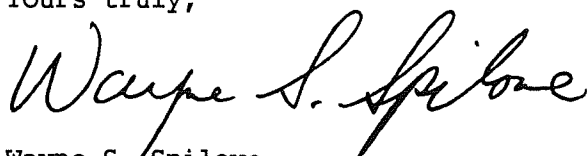
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Designation entails some restrictions. To insure authenticity and compatibility, the Commission reviews all proposed alterations to historic resources. When you apply to the Department of Licenses and Inspections for a building permit, the Department will refer you to the Historical Commission for its review. This review extends to all work that routinely requires a building permit and includes exterior cleaning, pointing, alterations to windows, door and roofs, and any other activity that changes the exterior appearance of an historic property. The staff commonly approves upon submission permit applications for alterations not visible from a public right-of-way, flat roofs and some exterior work to principal facades. The Commission does not regulate interiors. The Commission also has jurisdiction over

the issuance of demolition permits for historic properties. You will find, however, that the Commission and its staff approach such matters in a reasonable and practical way, and understand changes in building uses and contemporary requirements. The staff is available to consult with you before you make a formal application for a building permit. Enclosed, please find a brochure that explains the building permit application process.

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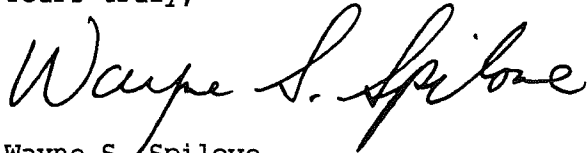
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Wayne S. Spilove  
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