

**PUBLIC COMMENT ON
208-12 VINE STREET**



Franklin Bridge North Neighbors, Inc.
c/o 411 Vine Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

April 20, 2023

Re: 208-12 Vine St. Philadelphia, PA 19106

We have reviewed and have attempted to understand the request for demolition of these historically designated structures. As we reside in the Federal Historic District we cherish our history and always lean, where possible, toward preservation. At the same time we understand economics drive both development and preservation and oftentimes the two drivers cannot operate in tandem. We understand these buildings have been up for sale for a very long time and some deep pocket developers have been unable to make sense of the economics. So we question whether the asking price is too high to make sense and a cleared vacant lot increases the value exponentially and/or whether this request for demo was brought on by neglect of a family unwilling to keep up the structures. On the other hand we only see Preservation value in the facade on Vine Street and, in particular, the signage, dormers, and historic elements. And so we also question whether there could be a requirement imposed of either facade preservation or facade rebuild incorporating these elements into whatever new construction ensues Ala the facade at the National on Second Street. To summarize, therefore, we would like to see progress at this site as the current state of affairs is an eyesore but we are not sure of any possible ground to meet in the so called middle. Franklin Bridge North Neighbors, Inc. takes no position on this request but hopes this email guides the Commission as to the RCO's position and feelings.

Thank you,
Robert Gurmankin, President
Chandler Brenneman, V.P.
Rick Camitta, Treasurer
Andrew Slade, Secretary
Gary Vernick, Board member
Randi Skibinski, Board Member



PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

for greater philadelphia

April 24, 2023

Members of the Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: Financial Hardship Application for 208-212 Vine Street

Dear Historical Commission members:

I am writing in reference to the above-referenced demolition permit application. The subject properties were individually designated historic by the Historical Commission in 1984 and made part of the Old City historic district enacted in 2003.

The oldest of these buildings, at 208 and 212 Vine Street, were built during the American Revolution. The building in between, 210 Vine, was built in 1870 and is distinguished by a rare, pressed metal shaped parapet that identifies the longtime owner of the property, "John Stortz & Son 201 Cutlers." This still-extant firm traces its founding to before the American Civil War.

These buildings are remarkable survivors. Together comprise an important slice of the Old City historic district. The history they represent is an example of Philadelphia's early leadership in the Industrial Revolution, which transformed the city, nation and indeed the world.

As such, extraordinary efforts should be taken to avoid the demolition of these buildings and to preserve, restore and repurpose them.

To that end, the Preservation Alliance is preparing a detailed plan that will challenge many of the assumptions made in the application that we will share with you soon. In addition, we will present an alternative approach to the redevelopment of this historic site that will refute many of the assertions of financial hardship made in the application now before you.

Sincerely,

Paul Steinke
Executive Director



PRESERVATION ALLIANCE

for greater philadelphia

April 28, 2023

Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102

Re: Financial Hardship Application for 208-212 Vine Street

Dear Members of the Historical Commission,

I am writing in reference to the above-referenced demolition permit application. The subject properties were individually designated historic by the Historical Commission in 1984 and made part of the Old City historic district enacted in 2003.

The Preservation Alliance has been working with a team including SgRA Architects; Wiss. Janey, Elstner structural engineers; and Southwood Properties, a Philadelphia-based real estate development firm whose principal, Doug Jordan, serves on our board of directors.

Our team has developed two project design alternatives that provide greater context to the 2014 SgRA plan referenced in the application and that together demonstrate an approach that would make the redevelopment of this parcel for residential use much more financially viable than is asserted in the hardship application.

SgRA has prepared an update to their 2014 scheme. The updated version partially preserves the historic buildings on Vine Street, while demolishing the rear ells (This would need Historical Commission approval). For the new construction behind the historic buildings, the updated design eliminates onsite parking and adds one floor to the proposed new addition, while remaining under the 65-foot height limit for the Old City historic district.

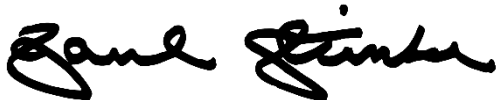
As a result, the unit count in the revised scheme is doubled to 48 from 24 in the 2014 scheme, greatly improving the project pro forma. In addition, the updated scheme has a buildable area of 40,420 sq. ft, 17% greater than the 34,434 sq. ft. in SgRA's 2014 plan. See Option 1 on page 2.

We also looked at what could be built on this lot by-right. It is crucial to note that the property is zoned CMX-3, in which intermediate lots have a maximum occupied lot area of 75%. This allows for total buildable area of 36,378 sq. ft. See Option 2 on page 3. Due to the CMX-3 zoning restrictions, partially preserving the historic buildings, which cover roughly 20% of the lot, allows for 11% density of buildable areas than could be constructed by-right on a cleared site.

These two alternatives together demonstrate that the financial viability of the redevelopment of this site *can be greatly improved by retaining the historic buildings* in large measure, and by increasing the unit count of the new construction addition. As a result, in our view, the assertions of financial hardship are greatly undermined and even negated.

Accordingly, we recommend that the Committee on Financial Hardship vote to recommend denial of this application. The property owner can then evaluate and consider our recommendations, which if implemented that would preserve these buildings in large measure and remain Contributing to the Old City district, and a monument to the Storz family's long tenure at this location.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Steinke". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial "P".

Paul Steinke
Executive Director



April 28, 2023

Paul Steinke
Executive Director
Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
1608 Walnut Street, Suite 1702
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

Review of Hardship Application for Complete Demolition

John Stortz and Son Buildings, Old City Historic District
208–12 Vine Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
WJE No. 2023.2711.0

Dear Mr. Steinke:

At your request, Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. (WJE) reviewed a hardship application for complete demolition of all buildings on the above-referenced property (Property), submitted on behalf of John C. Stortz by Michael V. Phillips, Esq., of Klehr Harrison Harvey Branzburg LLP, to the Philadelphia Historical Commission (PHC) on April 6, 2023. We also reviewed development study drawings prepared by Stuart G. Rosenberg Architects (SgRA) and dated April 27, 2023, which show an alternative adaptive reuse concept that differs from those presented in the application. The purpose of WJE's review was to evaluate the structural feasibility of alternatives to complete demolition of all buildings.

DOCUMENT REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

WJE reviewed the above-referenced application, which includes a cover letter by Mr. Phillips and the following reports prepared by O'Donnell and Naccarato Structural Engineers (O&N):

- "208-212 Vine Street Due Diligence" prepared for Goldenberg Development LP and dated November 3, 2017;
- "208-212 Vine Street (Supplemental Information)" prepared for Goldenberg Development LP and dated January 12, 2018; and
- "208-212 Vine Street—Supplemental Condition Assessment" prepared for John Stortz and Son, Inc., and dated February 27, 2023.

Summary Description

Based on drawings included in the application, the Property is a single parcel created by combining six previously separate parcels, three along Vine Street and three along New Street. The cover letter states that 208 and 212 Vine Street were constructed in the 1820s, and that 210 Vine Street was constructed in the mid-nineteenth century. These dates apply to the original front portions of the three Vine Street buildings, but at least some of their rear portions appear to have been added at later dates, based on the materials and details of their construction.

The rear portions of the Vine Street buildings are contiguous with one-story buildings at 207, 209, and 211 New Street, were constructed or created by altering previously taller buildings in the 1940s. Based on our review of the O&N reports and photographs included in the application, we understand that all six buildings are enclosed by load-bearing mass masonry walls. These walls support floors framed with wood joists in the Vine Street buildings, steeply sloped gable roofs framed with wood rafters at the original front portions of 208 and 212 Vine Street, and low-slope roofs framed with wood joists at 210 Vine Street, various rear additions, and the New Street buildings.

The application presents four adaptive reuse concepts: (1) stabilization of the existing buildings, (2) stabilization plus a “vanilla box” fit-out of the existing buildings, (3) stabilization plus a residential fit-out of the existing buildings, and (4) stabilization plus a residential fit-out of the existing buildings plus a vertical addition above the New Street buildings. All four concepts retain the Vine Street buildings in their current configuration, including rear additions. Preserving the facades of the Vine Street buildings and constructing new buildings behind them also appears to have been considered but is not among the concepts presented in the application.

Potential for Partial Demolition

The cover letter states that the 2018 O&N report “unequivocally recommended against removing any portions of the 208-12 [Vine Street] structures ... [emphasis in original].”

Discussion: In their 2018 report, O&N considers the possibility of “keeping the facades intact” at 208 through 212 Vine Street and states that “Removing the entire rear wall and parts of the side walls, may allow the structure to rack and become out of square,” but fails to acknowledge that temporary bracing could be used to prevent such movement while the structures are altered.

Additionally, the 2018 O&N report does not consider the possibility of retaining the complete front portions of 208 and 212 Vine Street, **including** their rear and side walls, which form closed, independently stable masonry boxes. At 210 Vine Street, the floor and roof framing spans from east to west, perpendicular to the side walls, which could be removed to any point along their length after introducing a new plane of lateral bracing to replace the rear wall, as shown in Figure 1. Minor structural interventions at all three buildings, such as repairing deteriorated framing members and improving diaphragm-to-wall connections, would reduce the likelihood of movement and damage during adjacent demolition, excavation, and construction. The 2023 O&N report outlines a scope of structural repair work for all six buildings, which generally encompasses the work needed to stabilize the areas highlighted in Figure 1.

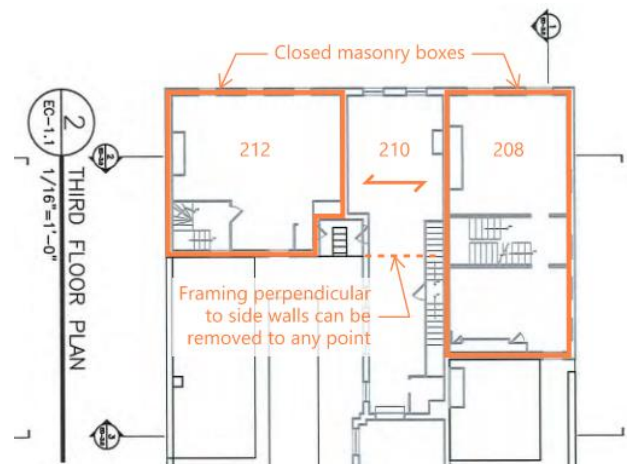


Figure 1. Excerpt from SgRA drawing sheet EC-1.1 included in application

Potential for Adaptive Reuse at Fourth-Floor Level

The cover letter states that "... O&N recommends the installation of collar ties within the fourth floor of the 208 and 212 Vine [Street] buildings, which would render those floors unusable and preclude the adaptive reuse of that portion of the Building."

Discussion: Earlier in the cover letter, 208 and 212 Vine Street are described as "3-1/2-story ... buildings," which is consistent with their having gable roofs with dormers above the third story. Adaptive reuse of areas covered by these gable roofs would be limited by headroom considerations regardless of the elevation at which collar ties were installed. We note that the floor area calculations in Option 1 of the April 27, 2023, development study prepared by SgRA do not include any contribution at the fourth-floor level within the original portions of the Vine Street buildings.

There are also inconsistencies among the O&N reports with respect to collar ties. The 2018 O&N report notes the presence of existing collar ties at No. 208 and recommends adding them at No. 212. The 2023 O&N report states "there are no collar ties" at No. 208 or 212, despite including existing framing plans that show collar ties at No. 208. Neither report is consistent with photographs included in the application, which show existing collar ties in both buildings, albeit at an elevation higher than 4 feet above the floor, where O&N recommends installing them (Figure 2 through Figure 4 below).



Figure 2. Photo included in application, with arrow added to show existing collar tie at No. 208



Figure 3. Photo included in application, with arrows added to show existing collar ties at No. 208



Figure 4. Photo included in application, with arrows added to show existing collar ties at No. 212

To the extent a structural configuration that has likely existed since the buildings were constructed two hundred years ago is no longer considered adequate, there are alternative methods for resolving the outward thrust of the rafters without collar ties, e.g., adding a ridge beam, adding kickers in low-headroom areas near the eaves to deliver the thrust at a lower elevation on the exterior walls, and tying the exterior walls through the floor diaphragm. These alternative methods could allow some area at the fourth-floor level to be used, potentially increasing the floor area calculated in Option 1 of the April 27, 2023, development study prepared by SgRA.

Alternative Adaptive Reuse Concept

The proposed alternative adaptive reuse concept in Option 1 of the April 27, 2023, development study prepared by SgRA differs from those presented in the application in that it would retain the original front portions of 208 through 212 Vine Street, roughly to the same extent shown in Figure 1, remove the rear additions, and construct a five-story vertical addition above the remainder of the Property.

Discussion: As discussed under "Potential for Partial Demolition" above, the portions of 208 through 212 Vine Street to be retained in this alternative concept would be independently stable with only minor structural interventions. Those interventions would be comparable to those outlined in the 2023 O&N report, but only for the portions that are retained.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on WJE's review of the documents identified above and our experience with the evaluation and repair of similar structures, it is WJE's opinion that there are structurally feasible alternatives to complete demolition of all buildings on the Property. These alternatives include but are not limited to retaining the original front portions of 208 through 212 Vine Street for adaptive reuse while allowing a vertical addition to be constructed above the remainder of the Property. This alternative was not considered in the application.

The findings and opinions presented in this letter are based on WJE's review of the documents identified above and our experience with the evaluation and repair of similar structures. This letter may be amended or supplemented based on additional information made available to WJE.

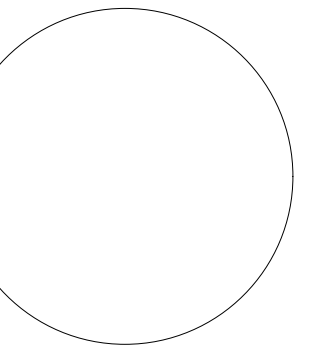
We appreciate this opportunity to provide our professional services. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

WISS, JANNEY, ELSTNER ASSOCIATES, INC.



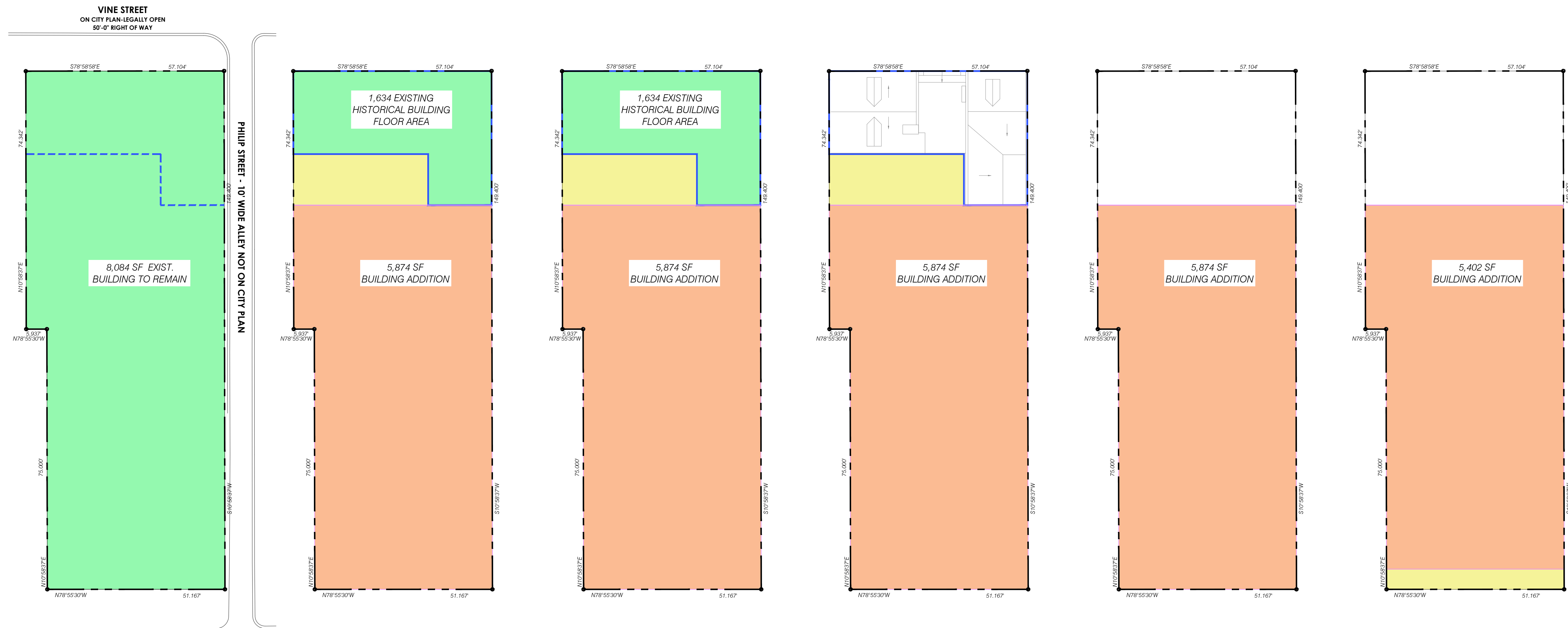
Justin M. Spivey, PE, FAPT, APT RP
Senior Associate



**PRELIMINARY
-
NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION**

Revisions:		
No.	Date	Description

Project:
**STORTZ TOOLS
210 VINE ST.
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19106**



1 PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN (SK-21.0 1/16"=1'-0")
 2 PROPOSED 2ND FLOOR PLAN (SK-21.0 1/16"=1'-0")
 3 PROPOSED 3RD FLOOR PLAN (SK-21.0 1/16"=1'-0")
 4 PROPOSED 4TH FLOOR PLAN (SK-21.0 1/16"=1'-0")
 5 PROPOSED FIFTH FLOOR PLAN (SK-21.0 1/16"=1'-0")
 6 PROPOSED SIXTH FLOOR PLAN (SK-21.0 1/16"=1'-0")

ZONING TABULATION CHART:

ITEM	REQUIRED	EXISTING	PROPOSED
PROPERTY ZONING DISTRICT	CMX-3/ OLD CITY OVERLAY	CMX-3	CMX-3
NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS	-	0	x
LOT AREA	-	8,084 SF	8,084 SF
BULK REGULATIONS	N/A	-	-
FRONT YARD	N/A	0 FT	0 FT
SIDE YARD	0 IF NOT USED	0 FT	0 FT
ROOF DECK, FRONT SETBACK	5 FT	N/A	5 FT
REAR YARD	N/A	0 FT	0 FT
MIN. BUILDING HEIGHT	N/A	4 STORY EXST. & 1 STORY EXST.	4 STORY & 6 NEW STORY
MAX. BUILDING HEIGHT	65'-0"	4 STORY EXST.	65'-0"
MIN. OPEN AREA	25% LOT AREA	0%	0% PRE-EXISTING NON-CONFORMITY TO REMAIN
MAX. BUILDING COVERAGE	75% LOT AREA	100%	100% PRE-EXISTING NON-CONFORMITY TO REMAIN
ALLOWABLE FAR	500%	17,581 SF (213%)	40,420 SF (500%)
ALLOWABLE BONUS FAR	300%	17,581 SF (213%)	24,252 SF (300%)
MIN. NUMBER OF ON-SITE PARKING SPACES	3 CARS PER 10 DWELLING UNITS	0	0 FOR 11,352 SF, AND 3/10 FOR 28,898 SF OF THE DEVELOPMENT
ACCESSIBLE PARKING SPACES	1 (6-25 SPOTS)	0	0
TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA (GFA)	N/A	17,581 GSF	40,420 SF, OR 42,434 SF USING FAR BONUS

OPTION 1 - PRESERVE EXIST. HISTORICAL BUILDINGS ON VINE ST

EXISTING BUILDING AT GRADE TO REMAIN = 8,084 SF
 MAX BUILDING COVERAGE = 100% of 8,084 SF (LOT AREA) = 8,084 SF
 EXIST. BUILDINGS TO REMAIN :
 ENTIRE 1ST FLR + HISTORICAL BUILDING ON VINE ST. = 11,352 SF
 PROPOSED BUILDING ADDITION = 28,898 SF
 MAX BUILDING HEIGHT: 65FT = 6 STORY MAX @ ±9'-3" CLG. HT
 ALLOWABLE 500% FAR: 8,084 SF (LOT AREA) X 5 = 40,420 SF
TOTAL MAX BUILDABLE AREA = 40,420 SF

ALLOW. 300% BONUS FAR: 8,084 SF (LOT AREA) 3 = 24,252 SF
 ADDITIONAL BUILDABLE AREA (OPEN AREA) = 2,014 SF
TOTAL MAX BUILDABLE AREA WITH BONUS FAR= 42,434 SF

TOTAL BUILDING FLOOR AREA TABULATION ON SITE:

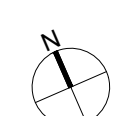
ITEM	EXISTING BUILDING	BUILDING ADDITIONS	TOTAL
BASEMENT FLOOR AREA	NIC	NIC	NIC
1ST FLOOR AREA	8,084 GSF	0 GSF	8,084 GSF
2ND FLOOR AREA	1'634 GSF	5,874 GSF	7,508 GSF
3RD FLOOR AREA	1'634 GSF	5,874 GSF	7,508 GSF
4TH FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	5,874 GSF	5,874 GSF
5TH FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	5,874 GSF	5,874 GSF
6TH FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	5,402 GSF	5,572 GSF
TOTAL BUILDING FLOOR SF ABOVE GRADE	11,352 GSF	28,898 GSF	40,420 GSF

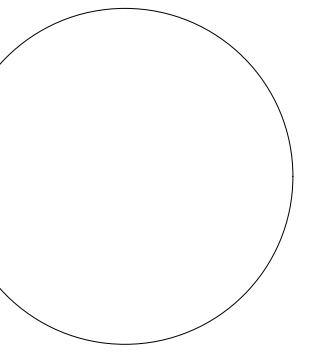
- EXISTING BUILDING TO REMAIN
- PROPOSED BUILDING ADDITION
- OPEN AREA (AVAILABLE FOR BONUS FAR)

Drawing Title:
**DEVELOPMENT STUDY
OPTION #1:
PRESERVE EXISTING
BUILDING FOOTPRINT
ALONG VINE STREET**

Date: 2023/04/27
 SGRA Project No.: 14-781
 Drawn By: EP
 Checked By: SGR
 Scale: AS NOTED

Drawing Number:
SK-Z1.0





PRELIMINARY
-
NOT FOR
CONSTRUCTION

Revisions:		
No.	Date	Description

Project:
STORTZ TOOLS
210 VINE ST.
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19106



ZONING TABULATION CHART:			
ITEM	REQUIRED	EXISTING	PROPOSED
PROPERTY ZONING DISTRICT	CMX-3/ OLD CITY OVERLAY	CMX-3	CMX-3
NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL UNITS	-	0	X
LOT AREA	-	8,084 SF	8,084 SF
BULK REGULATIONS	N/A	-	-
FRONT YARD	N/A	0 FT	0 FT
SIDE YARD	0 IF NOT USED	0 FT	0 FT
ROOF DECK, FRONT SETBACK	5 FT	N/A	5 FT
REAR YARD	N/A	0 FT	0 FT
MIN. BUILDING HEIGHT	N/A	3 STORY EXST. & 1 STORY EXST.	6 NEW STORY
MAX. BUILDING HEIGHT	65'-0"	4 STORY EXST.	65'-0"
MIN. OPEN AREA	25% LOT AREA	0%	2,021 SF
MAX. BUILDING COVERAGE	75% LOT AREA	100%	6,063SF
ALLOWABLE FAR	500%	17,581 SF (213%)	40,420 SF (500%)
ALLOWABLE BONUS FAR	300%	-	24,252 SF (300%)
MIN. NUMBER OF ON-SITE PARKING SPACES	3 CARS PER 10 DWELLING UNITS	0	3 CARS PER 10 DWELLING UNITS
TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA (GFA)	N/A	17,581 GSF	36,378 SF MAX

OPTION 2 - DEMOLISH EXIST. BUILDINGS	
DEMOLISH EXISTING HISTORICAL BUILDINGS =	0 SF
MAX BUILDING HEIGHT: 65FT = 6 STORY MAX @ ±9'-3" CLG. HT	
MAX BUILDING COVERAGE = 75% of 8,084 SF (LOT AREA)=	6,063 SF
MAX 500 FAR: 8,084 SF (LOT AREA) X 5 =	40,420 SF
TOTAL MAX. BUILDABLE AREA = 6,063 SF X 6 STORY =	36,378 SF
DEFICIT =	4,042 SF

TOTAL BUILDING FLOOR AREA TABULATION ON SITE:			
ITEM	EXISTING BUILDING	BUILDING ADDITIONS	TOTAL
BASEMENT FLOOR AREA	NIC	NIC	NIC
1ST FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	6,063 GSF	6,063 GSF
2ND FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	6,063 GSF	6,063 GSF
3RD FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	6,063 GSF	6,063 GSF
4TH FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	6,063 GSF	6,063 GSF
5TH FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	6,063 GSF	6,063 GSF
6TH FLOOR AREA	0 GSF	6,063 GSF	6,063 GSF
TOTAL BUILDING FLOOR SF ABOVE GRADE	0 GSF	36,378 GSF	36,378 GSF

PROPOSED NEW BUILDING

Drawing Title:
DEVELOPMENT STUDY
OPTION #2
DEMOLISH EXIST.
BUILDINGS

Date: 2023/04/28
SgRA Project No.: 14-781
Drawn By: MS
Checked By: SGR
Scale: AS NOTED

Drawing Number:
SK-Z2.0

