

ADDRESS: 500 N CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BLVD

Proposal: Construct five-story rooftop addition on piers, cut windows

Review Requested: Review In Concept

Owner: 500 NCCB FEE LLC

Applicant: Jerry Roller, JKRP Architects

History: 1891; Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company

Individual Designation: 1/8/2021

District Designation: None

Staff Contact: Allyson Mehley, allyson.mehley@phila.gov

BACKGROUND:

This in-concept review proposes constructing a rooftop addition at 500 N. Christopher Columbus Boulevard. This complex of buildings, historically known as the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company, was constructed between 1891 and 1910. When the property was designated in 2021, the eight-story building known as “Building B” was deemed contributing. This project would convert Building B from its original use as a storage warehouse to residential use.

The proposed five-story rooftop addition would be constructed on piers at the top of the historic building. The addition would add 65 feet of height, for a total height of 169 feet when complete. The proposed cladding is glass and metal arranged in a grid pattern. Windows would be inserted on three elevations of the historic building. Currently, the building has a small number of windows but adaptive use to residential space requires the addition of a significant number of new window openings.

As part of the conversion to the new use, the existing mural is proposed to be moved to the west elevation of “Building C.” The applicant is working with Mural Arts on this element of the project.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Construct five-story addition.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

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

- *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 proposed rooftop addition is not compatible with the historic building as it is currently presented. Although the precedent of the Wythe Hotel is an excellent example of compatibility between old and new, in this proposal the addition of the piers and exaggerated grid pattern creates too much physical and visual separation between the historic building and addition. In terms of hierarchy, the addition does not complement the historic building but rather draws attention away from it; therefore, the proposal does not meet Standard 9. The overall massing of the proposed addition could meet Standard 9. In order to create compatibility, the placement of the addition should be reconsidered, eliminating the separation from the historic roof, and developing a more subtle grid pattern.
 - The proposed insertion of the windows could meet Standard 9. Currently there are two main issues with cutting of new openings and insertion of windows. The first is

- the proposed vertical line within the window openings on the south elevation. Although there is an attempt to connect the vertical lines of the rooftop addition to the vertical line in these window openings, this strong element makes the windows appear out of place on the historic façade. Second, the insertion of windows at the top of the building suggests the removal of the historic ghost sign. The insertion and window configuration should be revisited. As proposed, the proposed windows do not meet Standard 9
- The entrances proposed on the east and west elevations take advantage of the tall historic openings that currently exist. The entrances as proposed meet Standard 9.
 - *Standard 10: New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment will be unimpaired.*
 - The overall form and massing of historic “Building B” will retain its essential form and massing once this project is complete. Both the roof addition and window openings could be infilled if a future owner wished to return it to its original appearance as a storage warehouse; therefore, the proposal meets Standard 10.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standard 9.

500 NCCB Fee LLC
500 N. Columbus Boulevard
Philadelphia, PA 19123

December 7, 2023

Dr. Jon Farnham
Executive Director
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch St., 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

RE: 500 N. Columbus Blvd

Dear Dr. Farnham:

I am one of the owners of 500 N. Columbus Boulevard in Philadelphia. As you may recall, we purchased the entire 2+ acre property in 2019 with the intent of redeveloping the former cold storage warehouse facility into a mix of uses, including modern self-storage, multifamily and retail.

The property was nominated for inclusion for listing in the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 2020. Instead of fighting the proposed designation, we worked closely with the nominator, Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society of Philadelphia, Paul Steinke, Executive Director of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, and PHC staff to create a plan for designation that would preserve the property, allow our development plan to proceed and which we could support as the owners. To that end, we submitted a joint letter from Mr. Beisert, Mr. Steinke and myself to PHC recommending certain changes to the designated area, and those changes were largely accepted when the property was designated in January 2021.

The property consists of some vacant land, which was largely excluded from the designated area, as well as four existing major buildings on the site, Warehouses A, B, C and the Machine Shop/Ice Machine House. In addition to those structures, there is also a Boiler House, determined to be non-contributing, and the Stack. Warehouses A, B, C have very few windows or window openings, and are very hard to convert to uses other than storage.

Thus far, we completed a major renovation in Warehouse C, the largest building on the site, and converted that building to modern self storage. We are currently in the middle of renovating Warehouse A, the oldest structure on the site, and will also convert that building into self-storage. We've also received approval for new multifamily buildings on the north and south ends of the site.

At this time, we are submitting a proposed conceptual design for Warehouse B, the most challenging of the four major buildings on the site. Warehouse B is an 8-story former cold storage building in extremely poor condition, and with few windows. It has been largely vacant for two decades. The building also hosts the important mural by Meg Saligman, “Our Flag Unfurled”. The mural is an important part of Philadelphia, but also presents a redevelopment challenge.

At this point, I will quote from the joint stakeholder letter from Oscar Beisert of the Keeping Society of Philadelphia, Paul Steinke, Executive Director of the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia and myself, signed November 16, 2020 and submitted to PHC:

“Most significant to the stakeholder discussions of site reuse are the challenges associated with Warehouse B, the smallest of the warehouses, located at the southeast corner of the site. Warehouse B occupies a narrow, long footprint with three exposed facades. As it was historically utilized for cold storage, it has limited fenestration on the upper floors. This section of the complex has not been utilized as cold storage for a significant period of time, though the adjacent Warehouse A continued to be utilized as cold storage. This disparity in temperature led to significant condensation within Warehouse B and has caused significant, advanced structural steel deterioration. Combined, the lack of fenestration as well as the advanced structural deterioration presents significant challenges for the reuse of Warehouse B. It is likely that significant economic return, beyond reuse as storage, would be necessary to make repair of the warehouse viable. Due to significant expanse of exposed elevations and prominent views of the Delaware River and Center City, as well as its limited floor plate, Warehouse B is well-positioned for reuse as residential or office space. Both uses require the addition of windows on all three facades to make Warehouse B habitable. Understanding the challenges of reusing Warehouse B, and the potential for financial hardship, the undersigned stakeholders agree that insertion of additional windows as necessary for these new potential uses would be an appropriate alteration that will help enable the preservation of the historic resource.”

Warehouse B, as discussed above, has experienced severe deterioration to structural steel columns and beams, particularly on the north side of the building where it adjoins Warehouse A. Example photos of this damage have been included in the proposal from JKRP. The extensive damage can possibly be repaired at substantial cost, but not without a strong economic basis for the building – significantly stronger than storage, which has low rents per square foot. Considering the state of the office market, multifamily is the only option that remains that could help support the extensive repairs necessary to save the building. There is no economic basis for additional self-storage on the site.

Although the Warehouse B floorplate allows for multifamily, the building has hardly any window openings. Over 100 new window openings would need to be cut into the existing façade to allow for multifamily use of the existing structure. We are also proposing an overbuild on top of the existing structure. We believe this overbuild will activate the building from a

design perspective, add an interesting counterpoint to the new building previously approved for the southwest corner of the site, and strengthen the economic return of the building. The overbuild will cost less per square foot than the renovation of the existing structure with its major façade changes, and is essential to making the project work economically.

In addition to the development plans, we have been working closely with Mural Arts Philadelphia and Meg Saligman, creator of the “Our Flag Unfurled” mural on the south façade of Warehouse B. We believe we have a realistic plan to re-paint this mural on a similarly sized prominent west façade of Warehouse C on our site that is highly visible from I-95. Mural Arts’ letter of non-opposition is included in our submission.

We hope you will appreciate our efforts to create a plan for saving this very challenging but important building. Due to the advanced deterioration, there is an urgent need to find a solution soon for the redevelopment of this historic structure.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Seth Brown', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Seth Brown
Manager
500 NCCB Fee LLC



Construction Permit Application

Use this application to obtain permits for a residential or commercial construction proposal and/or excavation projects.
Mechanical / Fuel Gas, Electrical, Plumbing, and Fire Suppression trade details are found on page 2.

Property Information

Identify the location of work for the permit(s).

1

If the activity will take place in a specific building, tenant space, floor level, or suite, note that detail in the 'Specific Location' field. If applicable, list PR#.

Parcel Address: 500 N CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BLVD PHILADELPHIA, PA 19123

Specific Location: BUILDING B

Check box if this application is part of a project and provide the project number: PR-20 -

Applicant Information

Identify how you are associated with the property.

2

Licensed professionals include design professionals, attorneys, and expeditors. A tradesperson must have an active Philadelphia license for their trade or hold a PA Home Improvement Contractor Registration.

I am the: Property Owner Tenant Equitable Owner Licensed Professional or Tradesperson

Name: JERRY ROLLER Company: JKRP ARCHITECTS

Address: 100 EAST PENN SQUARE SUITE 1080 PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107

Email: JROLLER@JKRPARCHITECTS.COM Phone No.: 215-928-9331

Property owner Information

Identify the deeded property owner.

If there was a recent change of ownership, documentation such as a deed or settlement sheet is required.

*If the property owner is a 'company', identify the contact information for any natural person with more than 49% equity interest in the property. If no individual has such an interest, provide contact information of at least two (2) natural persons with the largest equity interest in the property.

3

The property owner is a/an: Individual Company*

Owner (1)

Name: 500 NCCB FEE LLC

Check box if new owner is being listed

Address: 500 N COLUMBUS BLVD PHILADELPHIA PA 19123

Owner (2)

Name: SETH BROWN

Address: 500 N COLUMBUS BLVD PHILADELPHIA PA 19123

Design Professional in Responsible Charge

Identify the PA-licensed design professional who is legally responsible.

4

Name: JERRY ROLLER Firm: JKRP ARCHITECTS

PA License No.: Phila. Commercial Activity License No.:

Email: JROLLER@JKRPARCHITECTS.COM Phone No.: 215-928-9331

Project Scope

Use this section to provide project details; all fields are mandatory.

(a) Choose the proposed occupancy of the entire building. If not one-or-two-family, provide a description of group(s) per code.

(b) Identify if the project will be new construction, an addition, interior/exterior alterations, excavation or shell.

(c) List the site area that will be disturbed by construction, if any. Enter 'zero' if no disturbance.

(d) Note the new floor area created, including basements, cellars, and occupiable roofs. Where existing areas will be altered, list those areas separately.

(e) State the number of new or affected stories.

(f) Provide a detailed description of the work proposed (use separate sheet if needed).

(g) Select all conditions that apply to this project (if any).

* Provide the associated Streets Review number if "Project Impacts Streets / Right-of-Way" is selected.

** If 'Yes' is selected, an Owners' Acknowledgement of Receipt form must be provided for each affected property.

5

(a) Occupancy Single-Family Two-Family Other, please describe: MIXED USE RESIDENTIAL

(b) Scope of Work New Construction Excavation Addition / Alteration Shell (No Fit Out) - Option for Commercial Permits Only

(c) Earth Disturbance Area of Earth Disturbance: 0 (Sq. Ft.)

(d) Building Floor Areas New Floor Area: 38,603 (Sq. Ft.) Existing Altered Area: 72,000 (Sq. Ft.)

(e) Number of Stories 14

(f) Description of Work SEEKING IN-CONCEPT PHC APPROVAL FOR AN ALTERATION OF AN EXISTING 8-STORY WAREHOUSE TO RESIDENTIAL AND THE ADDITION OF (5) FLOORS OF NEW CONSTRUCTION RESIDENTIAL ABOVE THE EXISTING STRUCTURE.

(g) Project Conditions

- New High Rise Green Roof Included Initial Fit-out of Newly Constructed Space
 Modular Construction Façade Work Project Impacts Streets/Right-of-Way*
 Project Impacts Adjacent Property**

* Provide the associated Streets Review number for this project, if applicable: SR-20

** This project includes work described below: Yes No

- Excavation work more than 5 feet below adjacent grade and within 10 feet of an adjacent building or structure.
- Excavation or construction work where historic structure is within 90 feet on the same or adjacent parcel.
- Structural alterations of a historic structure (excluding one-or-two family dwelling).
- Modifications to a party wall, including joist replacement, and additions.
- Severing of structural roof or wall covering spanning properties.



Department of Licenses and Inspections

CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

Job Number: (for office use only)

Project Details, Other Permits & Contractor Information

Use this section to provide project details, pre-requisite approvals and applicable contractor information.

- (a) Choose all disciplines of work for which permits are being requested.
 - If 'Building' is not requested, provide the number of the associated permit that was previously issued (where applicable).
 - If a Zoning Permit was issued for this work, provide the related Zoning Permit number.
- (b) Identify the general contractor and estimated cost of building construction.
- (c) Identify the licensed excavation contractor and estimated cost of excavation work.
- (d) Identify the mechanical contractor, estimated cost of mechanical work, equipment type, and quantity as:
 - Number of registers/diffusers (separate new / relocated)
 - Number of appliances
 - Number of Type I / Type II kitchen hoods

Where fuel gas work is included, note the estimated cost of fuel gas work.
- (e) Identify the licensed electrical contractor, estimated cost of electrical work, and a registered third-party electrical inspection agency.
- (f) Identify the registered master plumber, estimated cost of plumbing work, number of fixtures, and check location of work as:
 - Interior
 - Exterior Drainage and/or Water Distribution
- (g) Identify the licensed fire suppression contractor, estimated cost of fire suppression work, and number of devices:
 - Sprinkler Heads (separate new / relocated quantities)
 - Standpipes
 - Fire Pumps
 - Stand-alone Backflow Prevention Devices
 - Kitchen Extinguishing Systems
 - Hydrants

***ROUGH-IN NOTICE:** If you are seeking a rough-in permit, an application for plan review must be submitted already.

- (h) Provide the total improvement cost for residential (including multi-family) alterations and additions. Check the box if your project is excluded from real estate tax exemption and exempt from Development Impact Tax.

(a) Check all that apply:

- Building Excavation Mechanical & Fuel Gas Electrical Plumbing Fire Suppression

Provide the associated Construction Permit number, if applicable: **RP or CP – 20** _____ - _____

Provide the associated Zoning Permit number for this construction, if applicable: **ZP – 20** _____ - _____

Note: Trades listed below (d, e, f, and g) are mandatory for all residential new construction jobs.

(b) General Building Construction Contractor Information

Name: _____ Cost of Building Work: \$ _____

License Number: _____ Phone: _____

(c) Excavation Work & Contractor Information

Name: _____ Cost of Excavation Work: \$ _____

License Number: _____ Phone: _____

(d) Mechanical / Fuel Gas Work & Contractor Information

Name: _____ Cost of Mechanical Work: \$ _____

License Number: _____ Cost of Fuel Gas Work: \$ _____

Equipment Types: Registers / Diffusers Appliances Hoods Phone: _____

Equipment Details & Quantities: _____

(e) Electrical Work & Contractor Information New Installation Alteration *Rough-In

Name: _____ Cost of Electrical Work: \$ _____

License Number: _____ Phone: _____

Third Party Inspection Agency Name: _____

(f) Plumbing Work & Contractor Information New Installation Alteration *Rough-In

Name: _____ Cost of Plumbing Work: \$ _____

License Number: _____ Phone: _____

Number of Fixtures: _____

Check one: Interior Work Exterior Building Drainage Exterior Water Distribution:
line size: _____ (in.)

(g) Fire Suppression Work & Contractor Information New Installation Alteration *Rough-In

Name: _____ Cost of Fire Supp. Work: \$ _____

License Number: _____ Phone: _____

Sprinkler Heads: _____ Standpipes: _____ Fire Pumps: _____

Commercial Kitchen Systems: _____ Backflow Devices: _____ Hydrants: _____

(h) Total Improvement Cost: \$ _____ (The total improvement cost must also include the cost of all electrical, plumbing, mechanical, fire suppression systems work, and interior finishes)

Check box if your project is excluded from real estate tax exemption and exempt from Development Impact Tax (Review OPA's website for tax abatement information at: <https://www.phila.gov/services/property-lots-housing/property-taxes/get-real-estate-tax-relief/get-a-property-tax-abatement/>)

Declaration & Signature

All provisions of the Philadelphia Code and other City ordinances will be complied with, whether specified herein or not. Plans approved by the Department form a part of this application. I hereby certify that the statements contained herein are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. I further certify that I am authorized by the owner to make the foregoing application, and that, before I accept my permit for which this application is made, the owner shall be made aware of all conditions of the permit. I understand that if I knowingly make any false statements herein, I am subject to such penalties as may be prescribed by law or ordinance, inclusive of the penalties contained in 18 Pa. C.S. § 4904.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: 12 / 05 / 2023

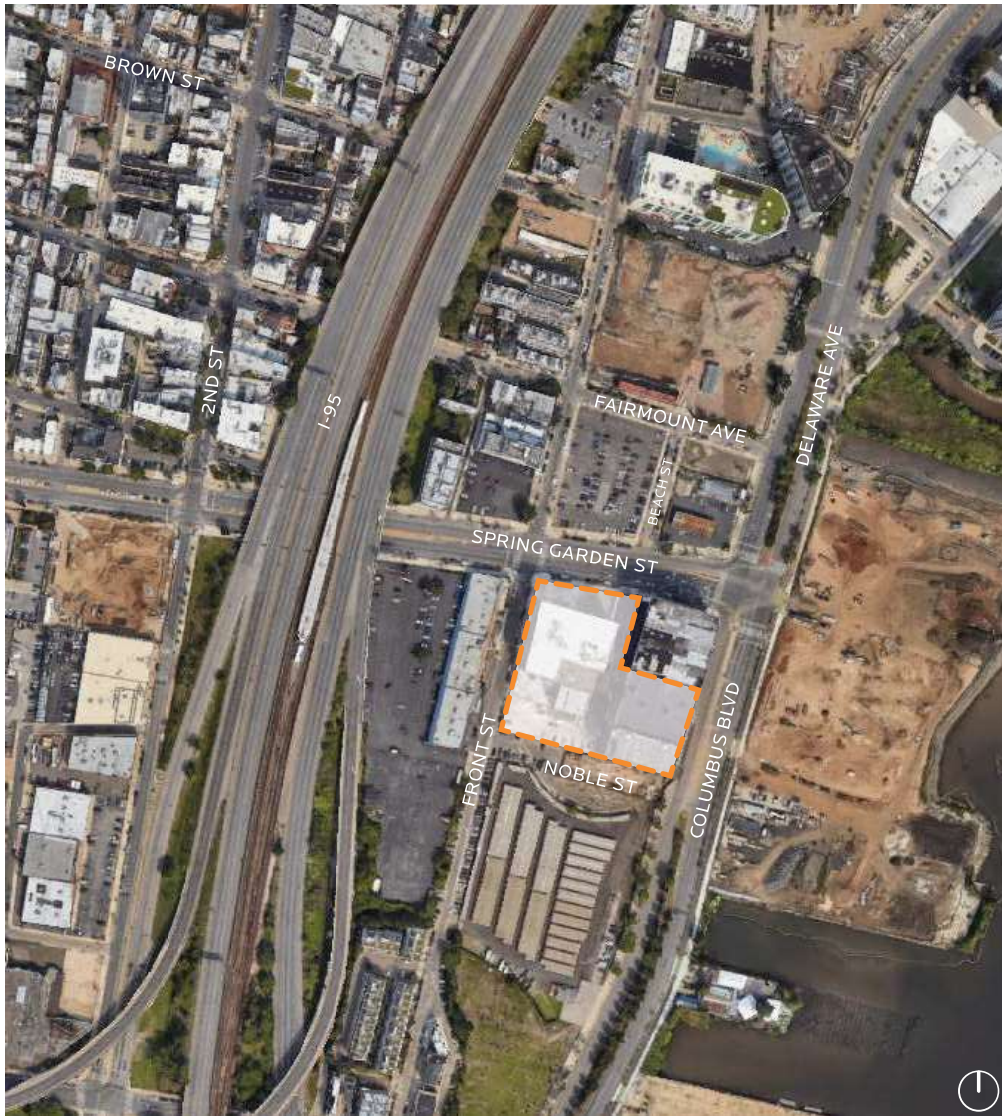
December 19, 2023 | Philadelphia Historic Commission - Conceptual Approval

BUILDING B

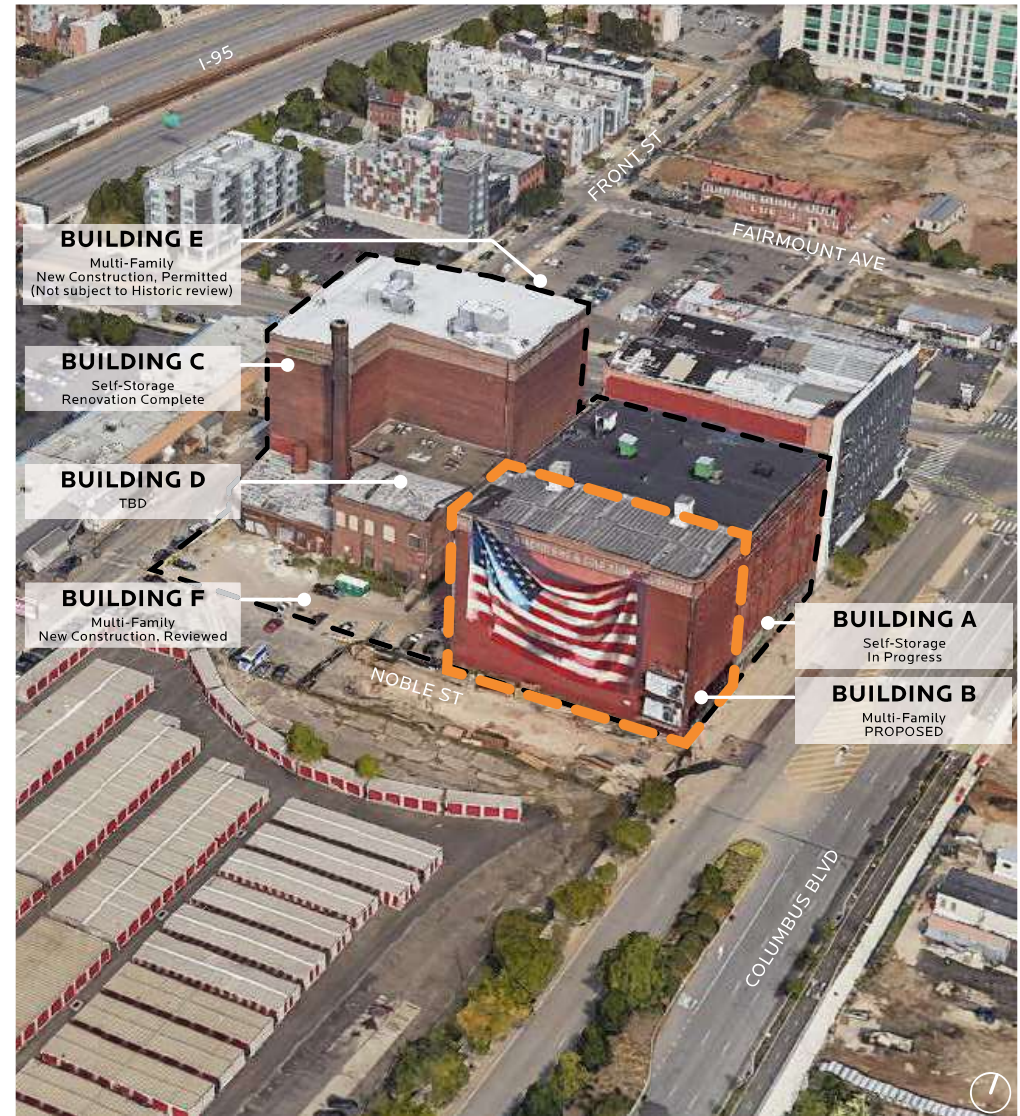
500 N COLUMBUS BLVD

Mixed-Use Redevelopment





AERIAL VIEW



AERIAL PERSPECTIVE



FRONT ST + NOBLE ST



EAST ON NOBLE ST

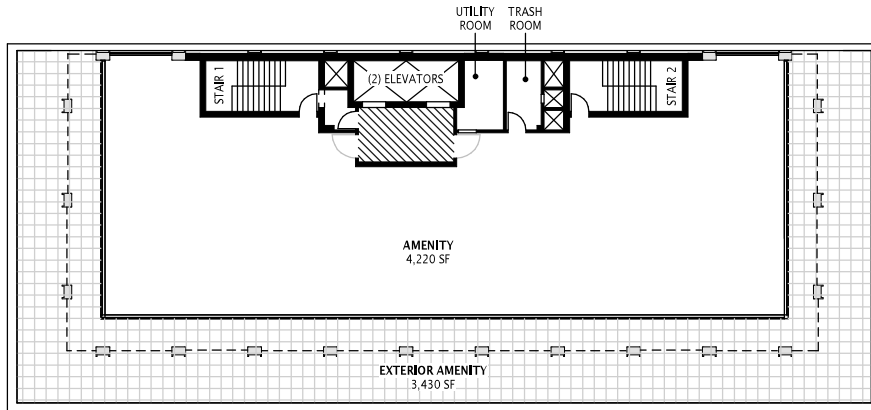


NORTH ON COLUMBUS BLVD

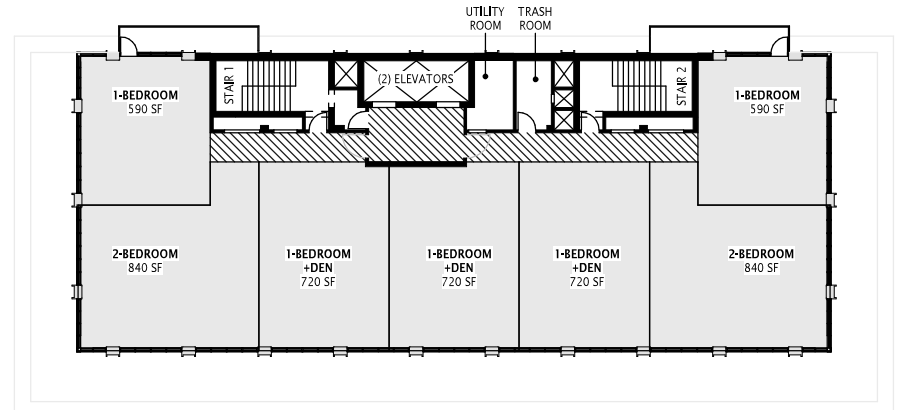


FLOOR-AREA-RATIO	
ADDITIONAL FAR PERMITTED	46,076 SF
LEVEL 9	5,418 SF
LEVELS 10-14	33,185 SF (6,637 SF/FLOOR)
TOTAL	38,603 SF

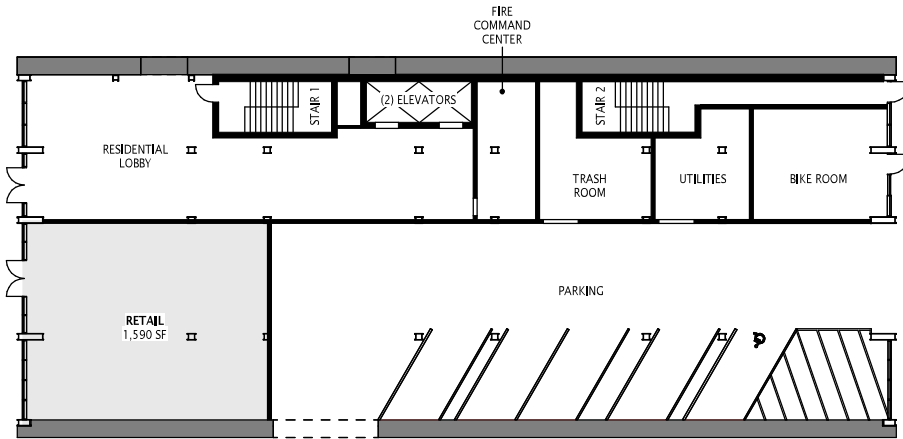
	EXISTING PER FLOOR		NEW CONSTR. PER FLOOR		TOTAL
		SUBTOTAL		SUBTOTAL	
1-BED BL	5	35	0	0	35 (31%)
1-BED	4	28	2	10	38 (34%)
1-BED+DEN	0	0	3	15	15 (13%)
2-BED	2	14	2	10	24 (22%)
TOTAL	11	14	7	35	112



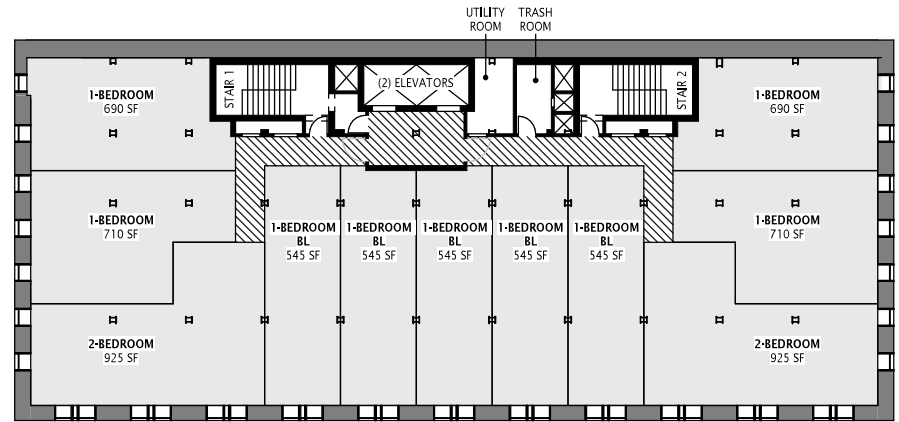
FLOOR 9 PLAN
NEW CONSTRUCTION



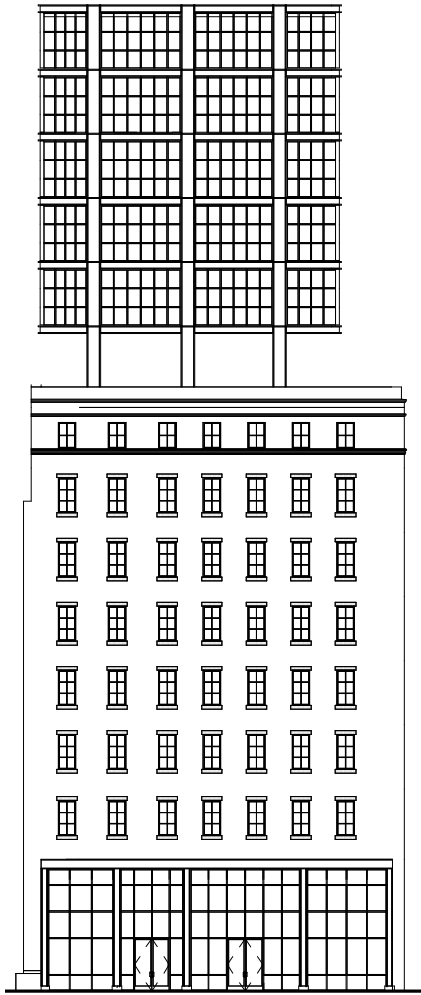
FLOORS 10-14 PLAN
NEW CONSTRUCTION



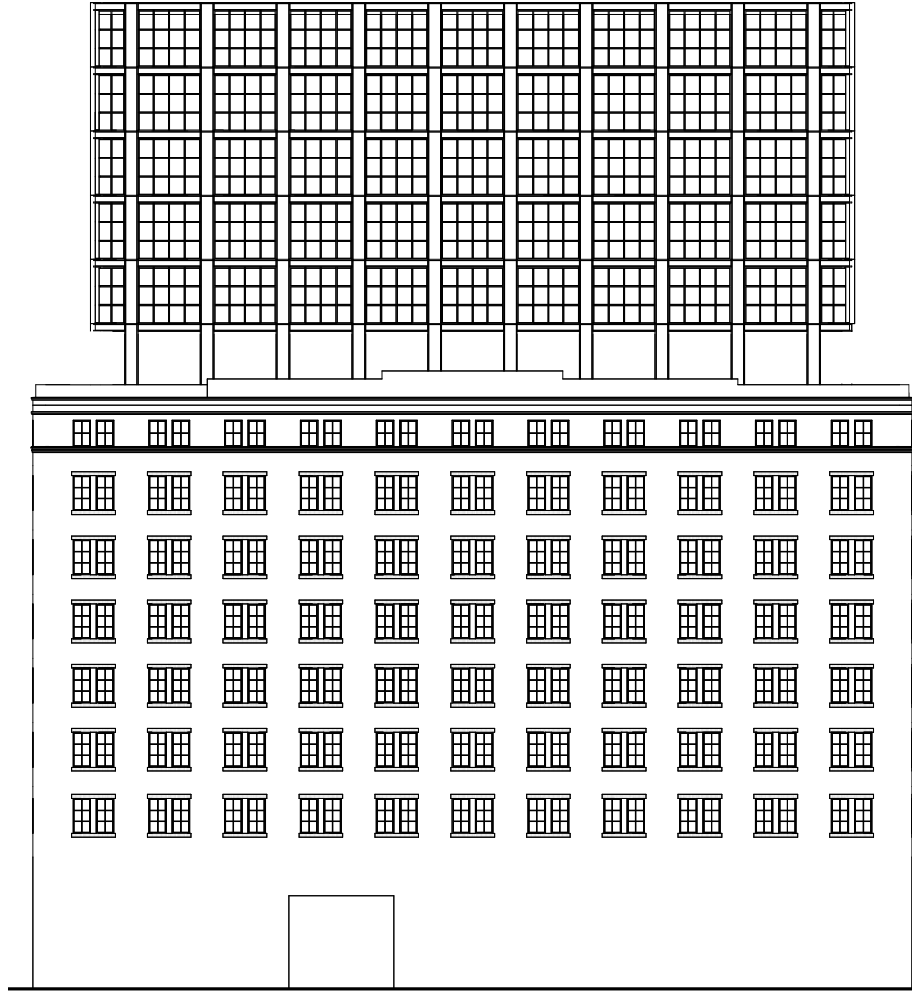
GROUND FLOOR PLAN
EXISTING BUILDING



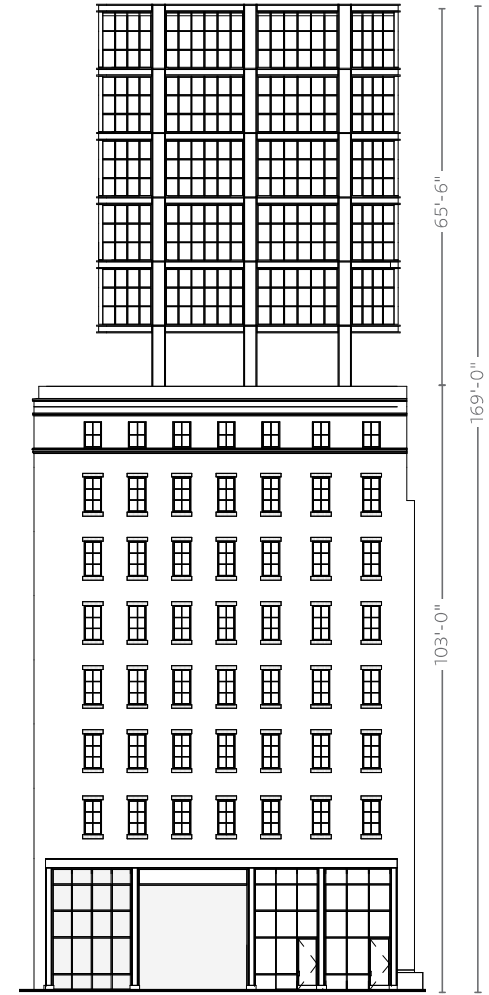
FLOORS 2-8 PLAN
EXISTING BUILDING



WEST ELEVATION



SOUTH ELEVATION



EAST ELEVATION



WYTHE HOTEL | BROOKLYN, NY







Jon Farnham, Executive Director
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch St., 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

**RE: LETTER OF NON-OPPOSITION
(500 North Christopher Columbus Blvd.)**

Dear Dr. Farnham:

On behalf of Philadelphia Mural Arts Advocates (“MAA”), and in conjunction with the owner of the above property, 500 NCCB FEE, LLC (the “Owner”), we write to express our non-opposition to this In-Concept application that includes, among other things, the removal and relocation of the existing mural and the adaptive residential reuse of the former warehousing and cold storage building (the “Building”).

By way of background, the approximately 8,000 square foot image of the American flag depicted in the mural entitled “Our Flag Unfurled” was painted on the south facing wall of the Building by artist Meg Saligman in the fall of 2001, in the wake of the 9/11 attacks against our country. Over the ensuing years the Mural has become an iconic part of the Philadelphia skyline.

Over the past months, MAA has met with the Owner and its consultants concerning Owners’ desire to make investments in the Building as part of an adaptive residential reuse. We very much appreciate that the Owner initiated these conversations and indicated a strong desire from the outset to work with us to amicably chart a path forward. Over the course of these discussions, we have come to understand that for the Owner to achieve its proposed adaptive use, it will be necessary to remove the current “Our Flag Unfurled” mural, which will in turn allow the creation of numerous window openings in the Building’s south facing wall. Mural Arts does not have an interest in the existing mural (although iconic and much celebrated) preventing the reuse of the building, and in conjunction with the Owner is pursuing the following:

- Establishment of a process where the parties collaborate and work together on plans to relocate the mural;
- Specifically, MAA will not oppose this In-Concept application with the understanding that ultimately (i) a new version of the Mural will receive all necessary governmental approvals and be painted on the highly visible west façade of the existing complex that is owned by a related party and is located as depicted in the attached Exhibit A, and (ii) the parties reach agreement on a procedure and financial contribution model for the relocation and repainting of the mural;
- Execution of a satisfactory agreement between the parties concerning all relevant items is to occur no later than the time Owner returns to the Historical Commission for Final Approval of its application, and MAA will not support the application until such an agreement is reached; and
- In the event that the redevelopment project does not proceed or cannot obtain all necessary land use and zoning approvals, the mural will remain at its current location.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



David Gest, Chief Operating Officer
Mural Arts Advocates

EXHIBIT A

