

PHILADELPHIA ART COMMISSION

HOTEL AKA | **stanev potts architects**

135 South 18th St
Philadelphia, PA | April 17, 2024

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Philadelphia Art Commission

1515 Arch St., 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

April 18, 2024

To the Philadelphia Art Commission:

The following pages detail signage improvements for the AKA Rittenhouse Square Hotel located at 135 S 18th Street. The proposal updates a prior Art Commission-approved approach to new hotel signage to the building on the Walnut Street and 18th Street facade of the building. The overall objective of this addition is to bring a stronger presence of identity to the building and to help with pedestrian level way-finding. We are requesting final approval for two street-level backlit building identification signs.

BACKGROUND

Originally designed as an apartment building by architects McIlvain and Roberts in 1913, the building currently houses a hotel on the upper floors, with existing retail tenants on Walnut Street, a bar at the corner, and a restaurant on 18th Street at the intersection with Moravian Street. Korman Communities purchased the building in 2006, when it underwent a conversion from traditional multifamily to long-term stay. In 2016, the building was converted to a hotel through extensive improvements of life safety systems. The building is now fully sprinklered and is an approved R1 building which has been a further investment in the quality, safety and longevity of this centenarian structure. In 2019, exterior work was completed that removed architectural interventions from past renovations that were not contextual with the building. This included removing existing cloth banners, installing historically appropriate windows above the entrance, and installing a new PHC and Art Commission-approved canopy at the entrance and new entry doors on 18th Street.

NEW SIGNAGE

Since there is heavy vehicular traffic (which includes several bus routes stopping on Walnut Street at the corner, as well as delivery trucks parked in the loading zone on 18th Street) the visibility, from the pedestrian perspective, of the existing hotel signage is limited from the four corners of 18th and Walnut Street. At times, it is completely blocked from view. Hotel guests have complained that it is difficult to locate the building as one approaches from either Walnut or 18th Street.

While the recently added canopy over the entry helps identify the front door of the hotel, the building itself lacks fundamental brand identity similarly found on hotels such as the W Hotel and others. The proposed sign is intended to help with the identity of the building and way-finding, when approaching from street level. The finishes on the sign will match the existing blackened steel effect in place at the building entrance. The letters will be pin mounted at grout lines with low voltage wiring to backlight the letters with a soft glow.

This proposal is an update to the previous Art Commission-approved proposal for signage in 2020 which was never implemented due to zoning complications. At this time, we are seeking final approval of the proposed signage at street level signage as outlined in this proposal, which we believe satisfies the parameters and mandates of the Art Commission's purview. We hope you will agree this will be a welcome improvement to the building, one that will be in keeping with similar signage installed on hotels and other buildings from the same time period throughout Center City Philadelphia.

Thank you for your consideration of this signage application,



Stephan Potts, AIA
Stanev Potts Architects



18th street and Walnut street, looking north, February 2020



18th street, looking north, February 2020



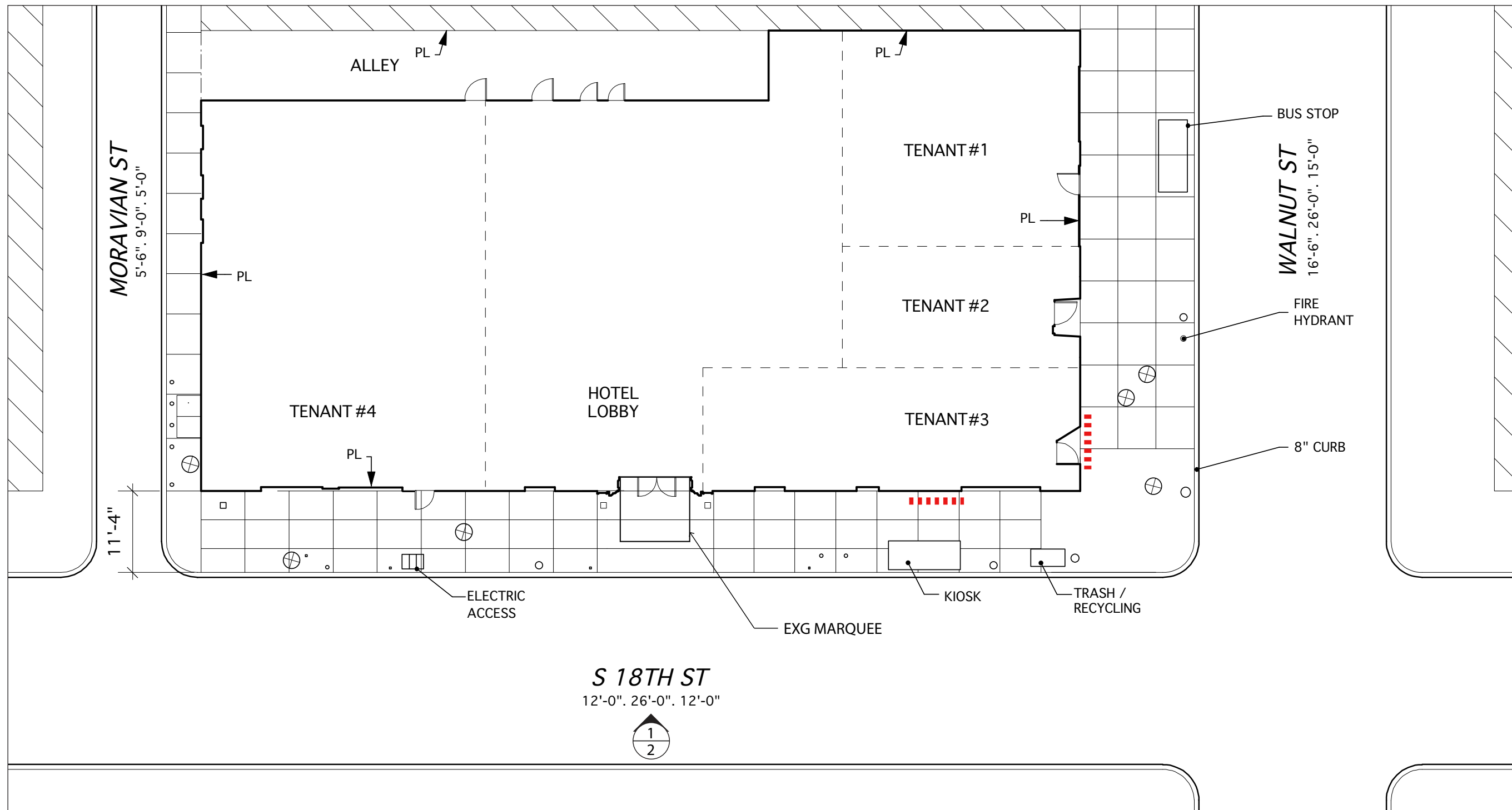
Existing 18th st entry, looking south, February 2020



Looking northeast, February 2020

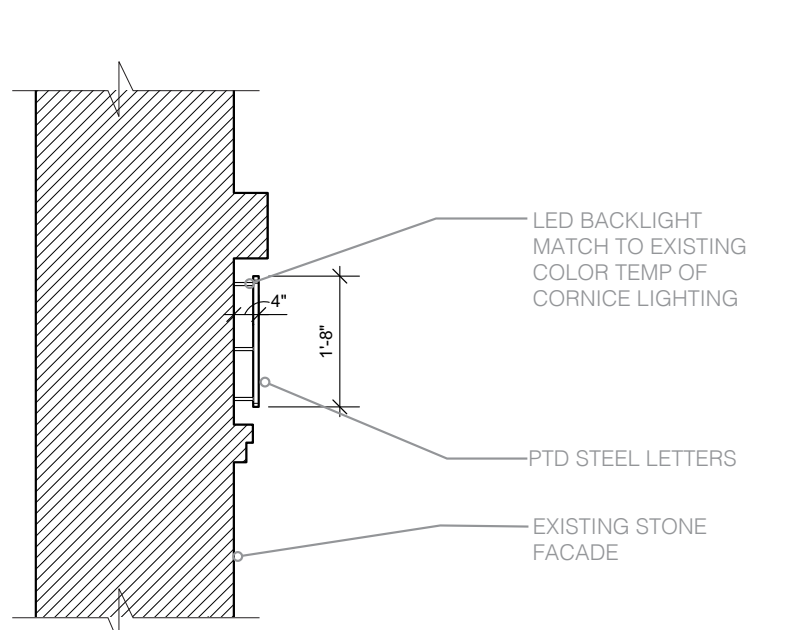


Looking northeast, February 2020



KEY

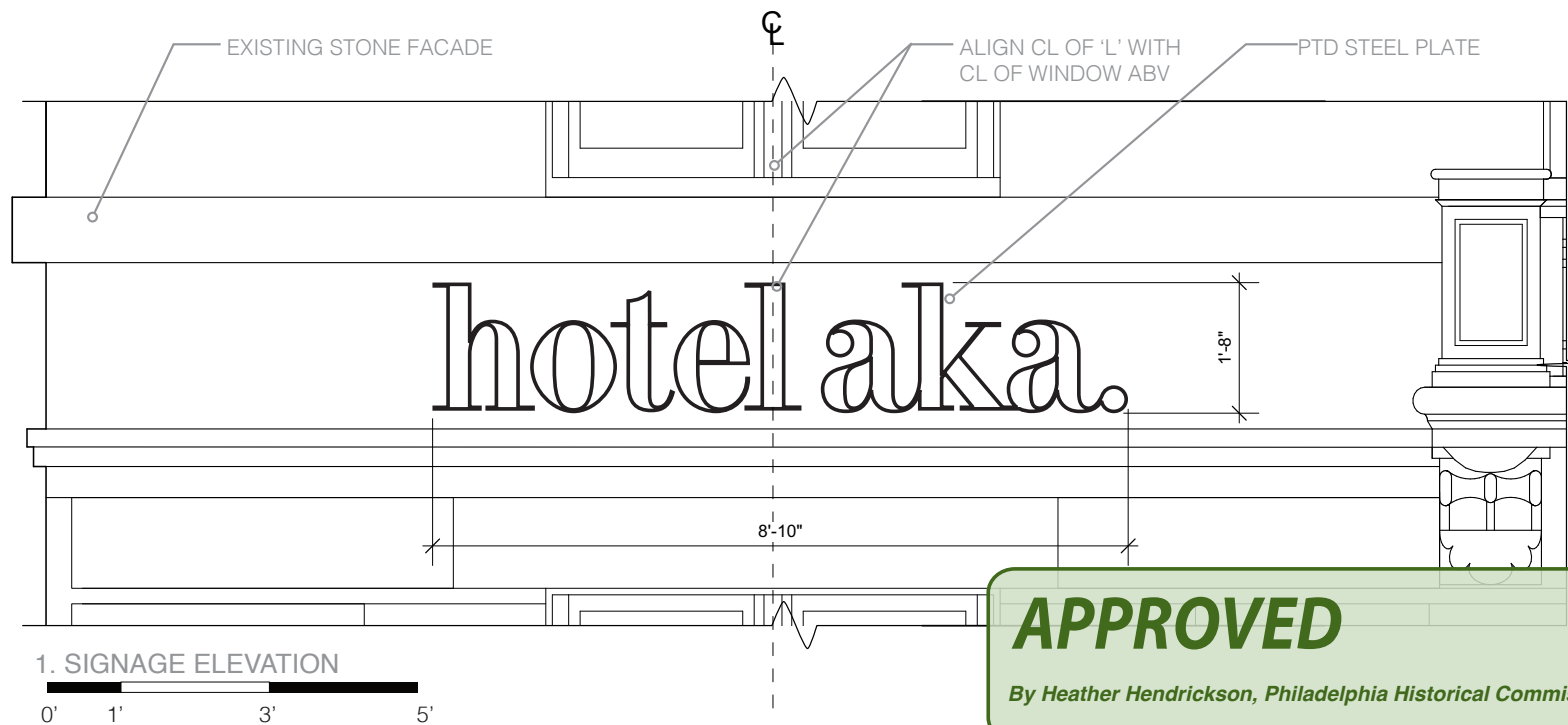
- ⊗ EXISTING MANHOLE
- EXISTING PARKING SIGN
- EXISTING LAMP POST
- EXISTING FLUSH LIGHT
- EXISTING TRAFFIC LIGHT POLE
- PROPOSED AKA SIGNAGE AT SECOND STORY (PHC APPROVED)



2. SIGNAGE SECTION

Note:

ALL CONNECTIONS TO BE AT EXISTING GROUT JOINTS IN MASONRY



APPROVED

By Heather Hendrickson, Philadelphia Historical Commission at 1:00 pm, Mar 22, 2024



ALIGN CL OF LETTER 'L' W/ CL OF WINDOW
SEE DTL 1/5 & 2/5

UPDATE 'aka' LETTERING WITH 'abar' SAME FONT, AREA, LOCATION

APPROVED
135 SOUTH STREET
By Heather Hendrickson, Philadelphia Historical Commission at 1:00 pm, Mar 22, 2024



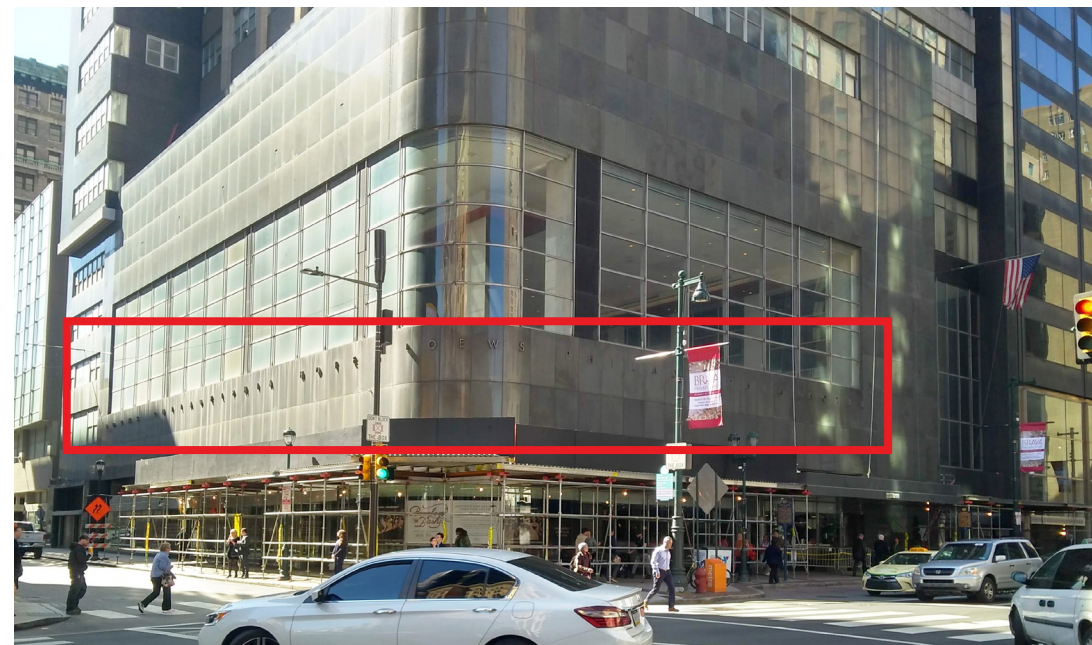
Rittenhouse Square View



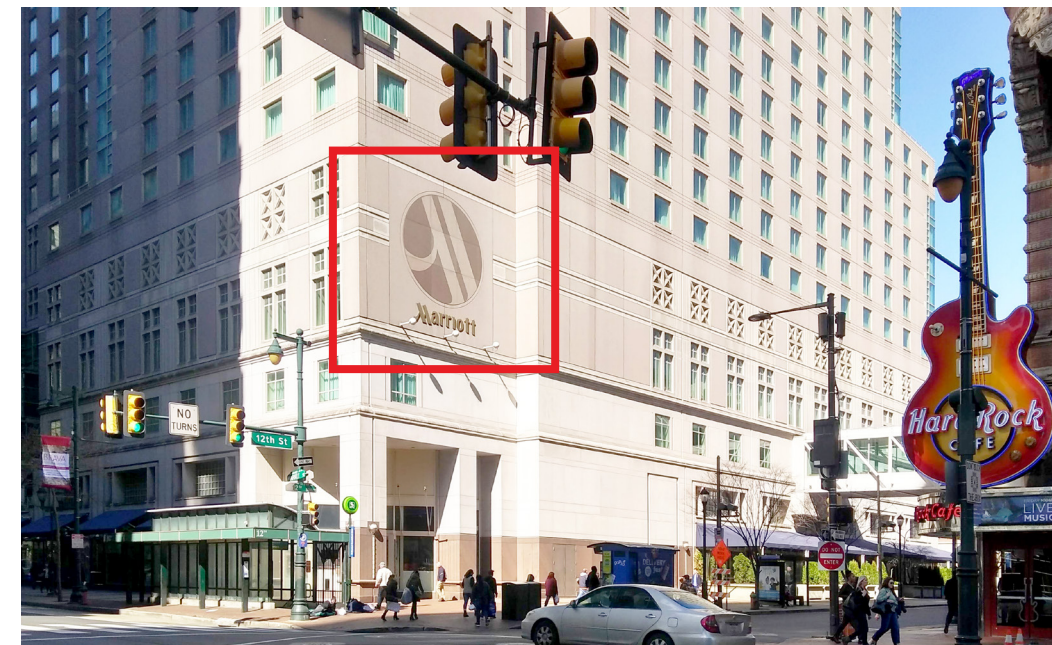
APPROVED
By Heather Hendrickson, Philadelphia Historical Commission at 12:59 pm, Mar 22, 2024



Sofitel Hotel - 17th and Sansom Street (Foreground)
W Hotel - 15th and Chestnut Street (Background)



Lowes Hotel - 12th and Market Street



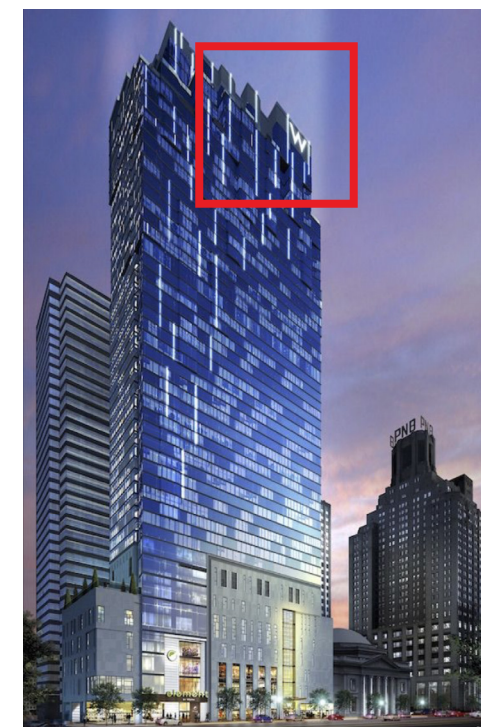
Marriott Hotel - 12th and Market Street



Marriott Hotel - 12th and Filbert Street



The Notary Hotel - 13th and Filbert Street



W Hotel - 15th and Chestnut Street



Embassy Suites - 18th and Benjamin Franklin Parkway



Aldine Hotel - 19th and Chestnut Street - 1890s - 1920s



Hotel - 17th and Walnut Street - Photo Date: 1928



Aldine Hotel - Photo Date: 1920s



Hotel - 1200 Block of Locust Street - Photo Date: 1960



Hotel - Between 1200 Block of Walnut Street - Photo Date: 1931



Hotel - 1200 Block of Sansom Street - Photo Date: 1959



Hotel York - 1215 Walnut Street - Photo Date: 1921