

Public Comment for
627 N 16th St

From: [preservation](#)
To: [Alexander Till](#)
Subject: Fw: Planned revision to 627 N. 16th St.
Date: Friday, May 24, 2024 10:22:26 AM

From: Andrew Wasserman <awassermanphilly@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, May 24, 2024 10:25 AM
To: preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>
Subject: Planned revision to 627 N. 16th St.

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Dear Sirs,

Thanks to this committee once again for allowing the near neighbors to voice our concerns regarding the planned addition to 627 N. 16th Street. I would also like to thank the developers for agreeing to the alterations they have made thus far. I believe the addition they are currently proposing is more in keeping with the size and scale of the other properties on the block. While improved, I believe there are two elements which still require further adjustment. Our block is made up of pairs of homes in a traditional Philadelphia style with wider front sections and narrower rear sections facing what would be their “pair” and providing for a side yard between the paired narrowed rear sections. The advantage of this is that both houses in the paired configuration have side windows facing the paired side yards allowing for light and air for both. The current plans address the concerns regarding the view of the addition from the south (Wallace Street) point of view and place the windows on this side of the addition and a blank wall facing the paired house at 629. I am concerned that while not previously mentioned to the committee or the developer, the owner of the property at 625 (corner of Wallace and 16th) has a similar plan to build an extension on the back of his property which is an end-property and as such has no “pair”. I would suggest that if the developer at 627 were to “flip” the orientation of his addition there would be benefit to all three properties (625, 627, and 629). The property at 627 could enjoy the light and air benefit of windows facing 629 and not install windows which at some point may face an addition at 625. The property at 629 would not have their side windows facing a large blank wall closer than normal for the block and the property at 625 would be able to focus any future addition on the view facing Wallace Street. My second area of concern remains the façade material of the addition which would ideally be brick to match the front section and the rear sections of the immediate neighbors. Thank you for your time and consideration,

Andrew Wasserman
633 N. 16th Street, Philadelphia, Pa.

May 24, 2024

Comments RE: 627 N 16th St

For the Philadelphia Historical Commission Architectural Committee meeting 5/28/2024

Thank you to this committee in advance for considering my concerns.

I am encouraged to note that after 3 ½ months of unpermitted construction on this property, earlier this month, the owners finally applied for and were issued a Zoning Permit.

This project still fails to meet a number of the standards for treatment of historic properties which firstly, requires minimal change to features, spaces and spatial relationships. A number of proposed design elements do not meet this minimum standard.

The density of population resulting from this design will strain resources on the block – particularly parking and trash, but also impact its cohesive nature. It is incompatible with a requirement for minimal change in an historic district.

While the latest revision reduces the originally proposed size and scale, the proportions, massing and spatial relationships of the historic original are not respected. Specifically, the positioning of the rear addition to be against the north side of the property line is contrary to the historic design of back to back rear els on Philadelphia row houses. That typical historic design allows for increased open space between adjacent row houses. This revision is contrary to that design. It also severely impacts our enjoyment of this space by presenting a 3 story blank wall against our common property line. It also will likely kill a beautiful 50 year old ornamental cherry tree in our rear yard.

I understand this revision is responding to a suggestion made by the PHC Architectural Committee to put windows on the south side of the addition to address the massing visible from Wallace St. This suggestion made some sense if a larger addition was ever to be a reality. This is no longer the case since it now extends only 16+ feet beyond the rear wall of the current el and is comparable to the size of other houses on the block. The massing viewed from Wallace St is significantly reduced. This revision calls for a single window on each of the 2nd & 3rd floor but is now of insignificant benefit to the design.

It is also important to note that the owner of the adjoining property at 625 would like in the future to expand his rear el to the same depth as the revised design for 627. This would allow for a traditional back to back el and provide windows on the south side immediately overlooking Wallace St.

Finally, since it is now reduced in size, the back of rear addition will be more visible from Wallace St. If the south side is to be clad in brick, the rear side should be as well. In fact, a brick exterior covering on all sides would be preferable.

Andrew Biggin

629 N 16th St



601 N. 17th St., 1st Floor, Phila PA 19130
215-806-8613

Architectural Committee Members
and Mr. Jonathan Farnham
Philadelphia Historical Commission
1515 Arch St., 13th Floor
Philadelphia, PA 19102

May 24, 2024

Dear Architectural Committee
Members and Mr. Farnham:

Re: 627 N. 16th St., Revised May 2024
Plans, "a Square Peg in a Round Hole"

Spring Garden Civic Association ("SGCA") and Spring Garden Community Development Corporation ("SGCDC") continue to strongly oppose the proposed incompatible 3-story addition to the rear of the historic property at 627 N. 16th St., as depicted in the May 2024 revised plans - - the 3rd set of plans presented to the Commission.

The proposed rear addition extends less into the back yard of the property than in previous plans. However, it continues to compromise the character-defining features and historic relationships that currently exist between the property's main portion of the building and its rear yard. open space, and Victorian garden areas, and the historic structures north and south of the proposed addition.

The addition consists of an odd looking off-center "box" affixed to the rear of the historic property, which also usurps a portion of the property's historic EII separating it from the next door property at 629 N. 16th St.

The reason for the unusual lopsided design is to enable the developer to have windows on the Wallace St. side, but still have a wide enough addition to add a large

new bedroom and bathroom on each of the 3 above-ground floors. The result is an awkward and incompatible addition not in keeping with the historic structure itself, its rear Ell, the neighboring historic structures, and the District.

It is a square peg in a round hole - - an effort to accommodate a predetermined result - - 6 units in a former single-family Victorian home - - that is simply not workable within the design of the historic property at issue and the controlling Standards for the Historic District.

Standard #9, the "Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings" recommends against *"Introducing new construction into historic districts that is visually incompatible or that destroys historic relationships within the district or neighborhood."*

The proposed off-center box addition destroys the relationship of the addition with the existing historic structure, the property's rear Ell, and the neighboring historic properties.

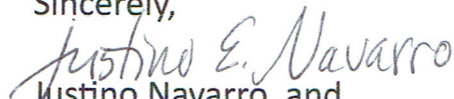
The next door neighbors at 629 N. 16th St. - - who bought and improved their single family home in reliance on the what they believed would be a protected historic district - - should be entitled to be free of an unsightly and imposing encroachment into the rear Ell that abuts their property, especially one comprised of a blank wall with no windows, looming over their property at the property line.

To allow this project to go forward would also set a precedent for other developers to propose similar bizarre-looking rear additions on other historic properties, usurping historic rear Ells, rear yards, and Victorian garden spaces, and adversely affecting the District and the abutting historic homes and homeowners.

We urge the Committee to deny the application.

Thank you.

Sincerely,


Justino Navarro, and



Patricia L. Freeland
SGCA, SGCDC

cc: Mayor Cherelle Parker
Councilmember Jeffery Young, Jr., c/o Conlan Crosley
Alexander Till, Historic Preservation Planner II

