

ADDRESS: 257 S 4TH ST

Proposal: Remove addition, roof, and dormer; construct roof over parking pad; add windows

Review Requested: Review In Concept

Owner: M Dwell Two, LLC

Applicant: Jane Ahn

History: 1810; Three-story rear addition in 1981

Individual Designation: 4/30/1957

District Designation: Society Hill Historic District, Significant, 3/10/1999

Staff Contact: Alex Till, alexander.till@phila.gov

BACKGROUND:

This in-concept application proposes to remove a non-historic three-story rear addition on a Federal rowhouse that is both individually designated and listed as a significant resource in the Society Hill Historic District. It also proposed to remove a portion of the rear slope of the roof of the main block of the house along with the rear dormer and construct an inset roof deck with rear railing in its place. It further proposes to construct a live roof and door structure around a portion of a concrete parking area at the rear of the property and to add two windows to the exposed north side façade of the house, which currently contains five windows. The building was constructed c. 1810 and is three-and-a-half stories tall with a gable roof and brick façade. The three-story addition proposed for removal is located behind the main block of the building and dates to 1981. The current front façade, north façade and roof were reconstructed to their current forms in 1963. Prior to 1963, the front façade had a first-floor storefront and the north wall of the building was covered by a neighboring garage. Upon removal of that garage, the owner, in consultation with the Historical Commission and Redevelopment Authority, reconstructed that façade with a new brick veneer, added the current windows with shutters, and rebuilt the chimneys and side roofline to match the rest of the row. The new proposed roof deck will be at least partially visible from some surrounding public pedestrian walkways including St. James Place and St. Joseph's Way.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Remove a three-story non-historic rear addition
- Remove a portion of the rear roof slope and dormer and construct an inset roof deck
- Construct a live roof and door structure around the rear parking pad
- Add two windows to the north facade

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 roof deck does not satisfy Standard 9. Its construction requires the removal of the historic rear slope of the roof and rear dormer of the house.
 - The proposed live roof and door structure for the rear parking pad satisfies Standard 9. It does not affect any historic materials and is compatible with the massing, size, and scale of the historic building.
 - The proposed addition of two windows to the north wall is compatible with Standard 9. While an end wall like this one would likely not have had any windows in it if it were original, the wall as it currently stands with existing windows was reconstructed

- in 1963 with the approval of the Historical Commission. The addition of two more windows does not further impair the architectural features of this property.
- *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 would be unimpaired.*
 - The removal of the 1981 rear addition satisfies standard 10. It is itself a non-historic addition that was reviewed and approved by the Historical Commission in 1981. Its removal will not impair the essential form or integrity of the historic building.
 - *Roofs Guideline | Recommended: Designing rooftop additions, elevator or stair towers, decks or terraces, dormers, or skylights when required by a new or continuing use so that they are inconspicuous and minimally visible on the site and from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining historic features.*
 - The proposed roof deck does not satisfy the Roofs Guideline. Its construction requires the removal of the historic rear slope of the roof and rear dormer of the house and will be visible from surrounding public rights-of-way.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval of the removal of the 1981 addition, pursuant to Standard 10. Approval of the live roof and door structure for the parking pad, pursuant to Standard 9. Approval of the addition of two windows to the north wall, pursuant to Standard 9. Denial of the roof deck, pursuant to Standard 9 and the Roofs Guideline.

IMAGES:

Figure 1: 1895, G. W. Bromley Atlas. Property outlined in red.

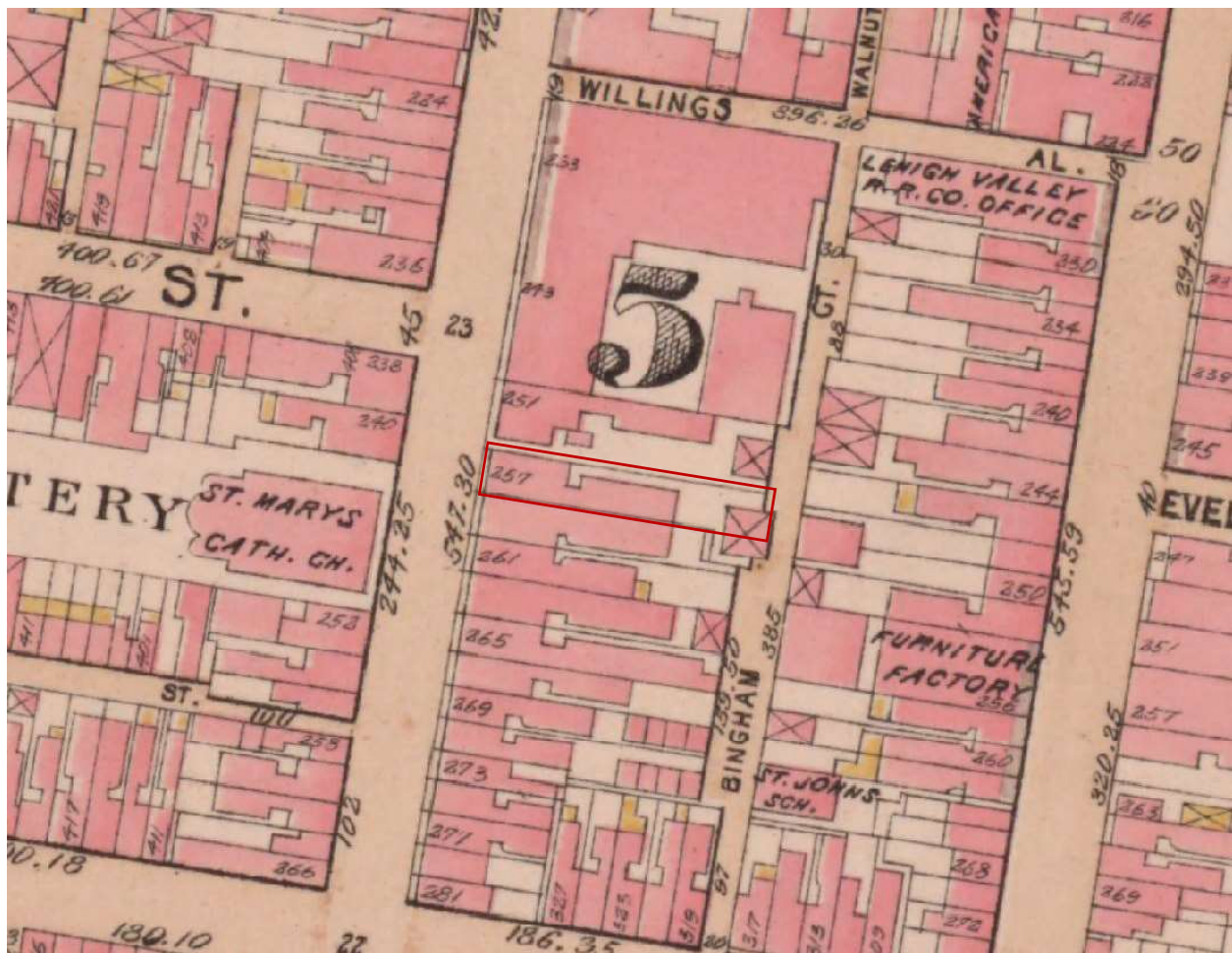


Figure 2: 1962 WPA Land Use map. Location of property outlined in red. Note the attached neighboring garage.

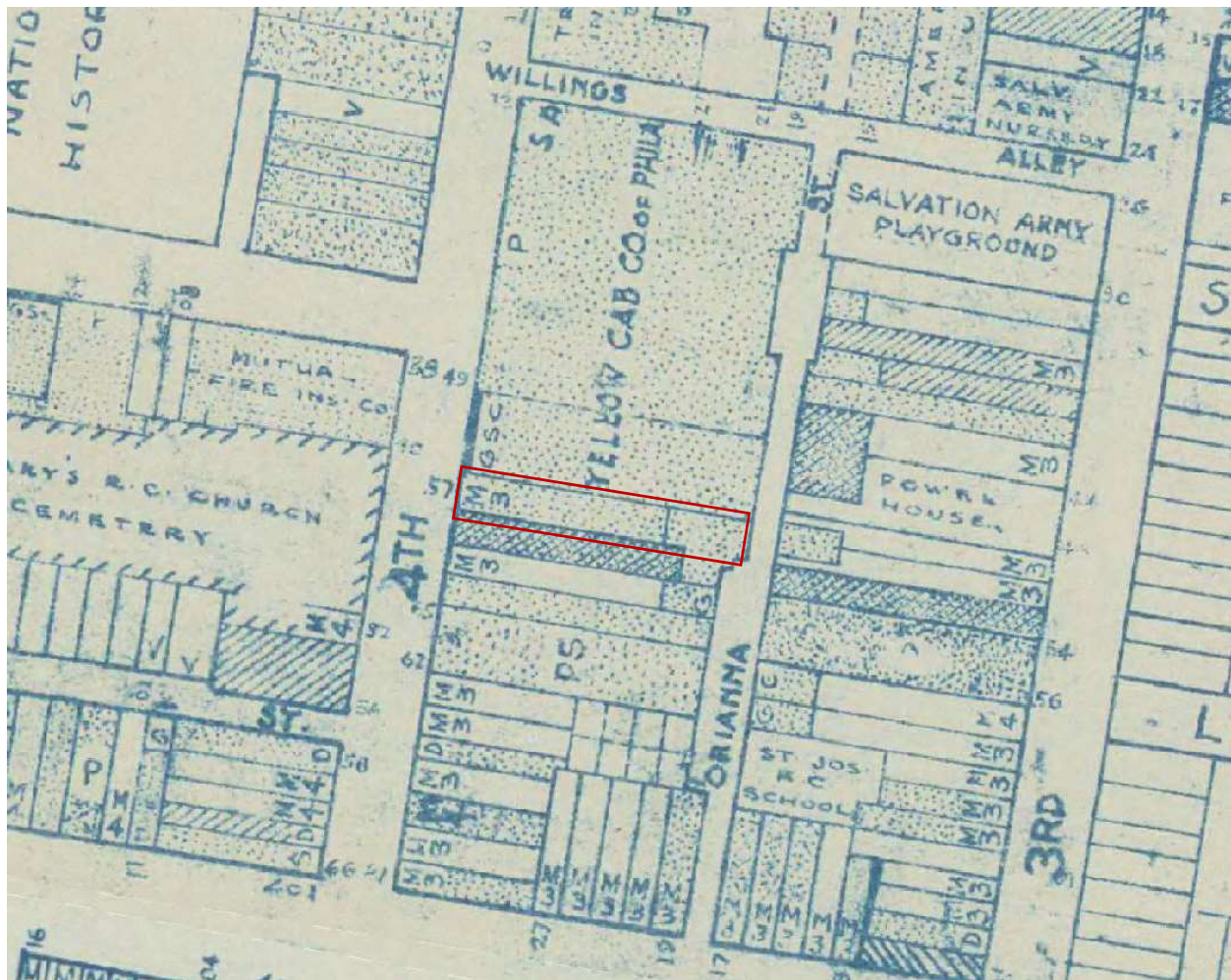


Figure 3: View of front of 257 S 4th St looking down the side of its north façade from 4th St:



Figure 4: View of the side wall and rear dormer of 257 S 4th St looking south from St. James Place:



Figure 5: View of the of 257 S 4th St looking west from St. Joseph's Way:



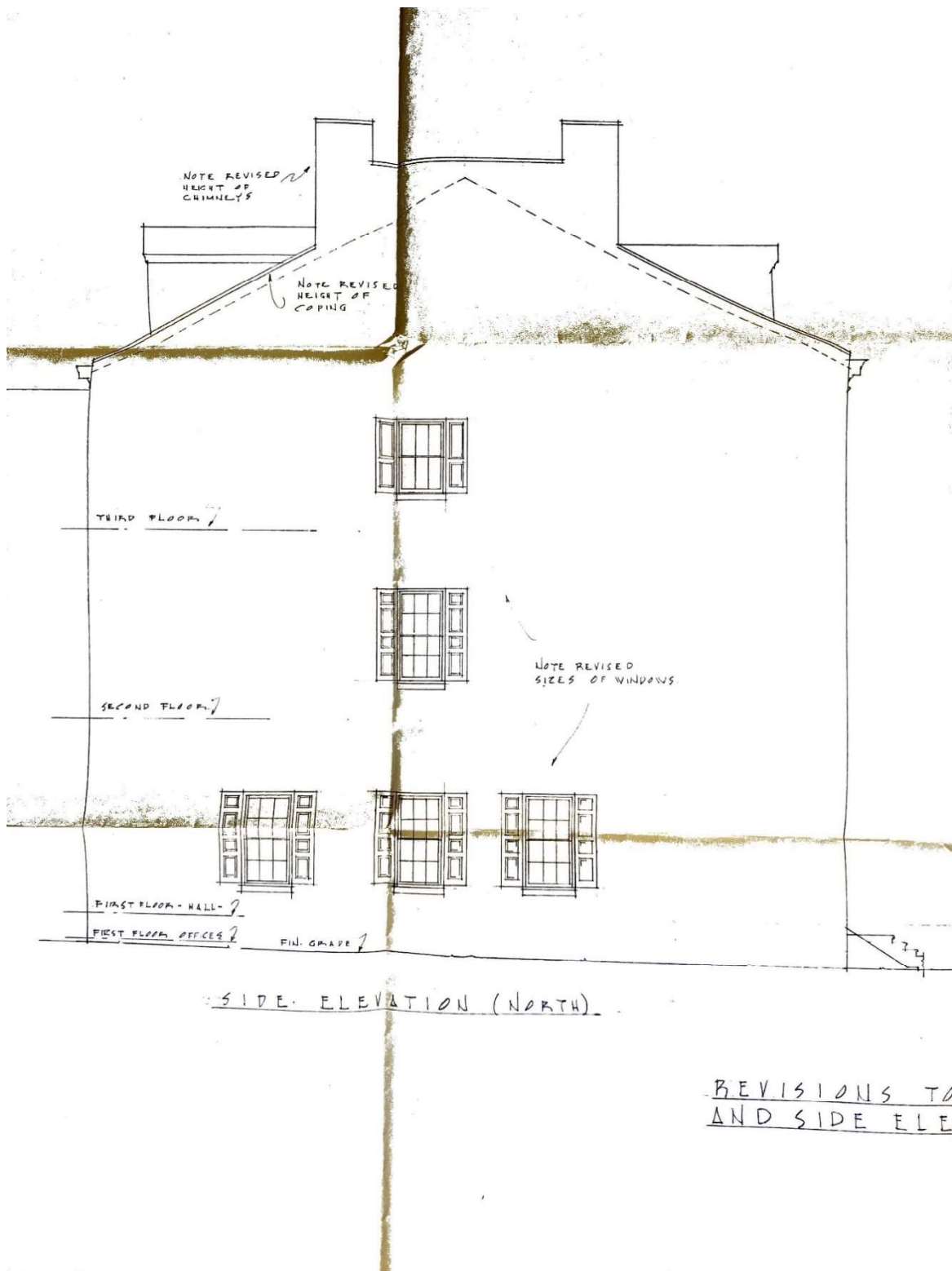
Figure 6: Aerial view of 257 S 4th St, looking southwest:



Figure 7: 1957 Photo of 257 S 4th St showing condition before 1963 restoration work. Note first floor storefront and abutting garage building.



Figure 8: 1963 Architectural drawing showing proposed north façade approved by Historical Commission at that time:



Jane Ahn

257 S 4th Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106
267-243-7147
ahn@mdescollaborative.com

April 8, 2025

Dear PHC Architectural Committee Members:

As the new owner of 257 S 4th Street, I am applying for an in-concept review of my proposed rehab work on the property.

According to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places, this property is described as follows:

Built c. 1810 by Jacob Vogaes, house carpenter. Alterations: c. 1890 storefront added; 1963 by Joseph Praissman, architect, new door, windows, restored to residence; 1981, 3-story addition built.
Significant.

Most recently, the property had been used as an oral surgery clinic on the ground floor with two separate apartments above.

My overarching goal of the planned rehab work is to return the property to a single-family residence with increased green space both around and within the structure while respecting its historic context. With that in mind, I am proposing the following modifications:

1. Remove the rear 1981 three-story addition and convert the resulting space into a garden
2. Cover a portion of the existing concrete parking area with a live roof
3. Add two new windows on the north façade facing the driveway
4. Create for a rooftop garden by removing a portion of the existing roof facing the rear

I would appreciate your feedback especially on creating a rooftop garden that is sensitive to the historic fabric of the site.

When I submitted the zoning application (dated 2.20.25), my intent was to remove a uniform depth of the rear roof (about 15' 8" while the total roof reaches 55' in depth). This proposal would necessitate removing the rear dormer in order to make room for a rooftop garden that spans the full width of the house.

Following a conversation with Alex Hill at PHC about the approvability of that design, I began to explore a more nuanced option that preserves the dormer structure while still allowing for some green space on the rooftop. Please see the alternate design drawings (dated 4.2.25).

In the alternate design, the rear dormer is preserved while some portions of the main rear roof are removed at its base to create a garden space. Openings in the side walls of the dormer are located

to minimize their visibility from the pedestrian sightlines around the property. Because the masonry north party wall that traces the slope of the existing roof is maintained in its entirety, views of the rooftop garden from the pedestrian level is shielded by the party wall to a significant degree.

I am including with this cover letter the following materials:

- Photos documenting the current conditions of the property and views of the property from surrounding pedestrian walkways
- Zoning application drawings (2.20.25) showing a roof top garden at full property width, including the removal of the existing rear dormer
- Alternate design drawings (4.2.25) for the rooftop garden that preserves the rear dormer

Thank you for considering this proposal and I look forward to hearing your comments and ideas.

Sincerely,

Jane Ahn



REAR OF PROPERTY LOOKING TOWARD 4TH STREET



REAR FACADE SHOWING THE 1981 3-STORY ADDITION (PROPOSED FOR REMOVAL)



GROUND FLOOR SHOWING THE INTERIOR OF THE 1981 ADDITION (PROPOSED TO BECOME A GARDEN)



ARCHED OPENING INTO THE INTERIOR OF THE 1981 ADDITION (OPENING TO BE PRESERVED)



LOFT FLOOR SHOWING EXISTING REAR DORMER AND CHIMNEY (LOCATION FOR ROOFTOP GARDEN)

NORTH WALL AND FRONT FACADE ALONG 4TH STREET

PROPERTY SURROUNDINGS AND INTERIOR CONDITIONS

PEDESTRIAN VIEWS OF THE PROPERTY IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD



VIEW FROM THE EAST SIDE OF 4TH STREET

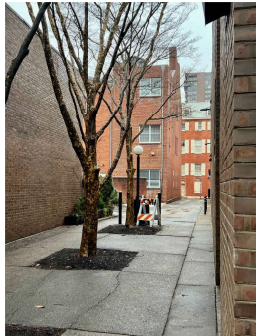


VIEW FROM THE WEST SIDE OF 4TH STREET

VIEW FROM THE MAIN BINGHAM COURT WALKWAY



VIEW FROM A SIDE BINGHAM COURT WALKWAY



ROOFTOP GARDEN INSPIRATIONS FROM WASHINGTON SQUARE



M Design Collaborative

ARCHITECT:

ASSOCIATED ARCHITECT:

CIVIL ENGINEER:

MEP ENGINEER:

STRUCTURAL ENGINEER:

ISSUES:
NUMBER DATE DESCRIPTION

REVISIONS:
NUMBER DATE DESCRIPTION

IN-CONCEPT REVIEW

KEY PLAN:



CLIENT NAME / PROJECT NAME & ADDRESS

JANE AHN
257 S 4TH STREET

DRAWING TITLE:

SCALE:

PROJECT NO.:

ISSUE DATE: 4.8.25

DRAWN BY: Author

CHECKED BY: Checker

DRAWING NUMBER:

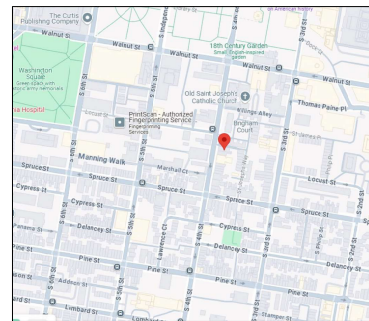
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n.a.

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1 SITE PLAN
Z1.1 SCALE: $\frac{3}{16}'' = 1'-0''$

ZONING REQUIREMENTS - 257 S 4th Street			
CLASSIFICATION: RES-5			
USE: SINGLE FAMILY RESIDENCE			
DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK: REMOVAL OF EXISTING 3-STORY ADDITION AND PORTION OF REAR ROOF TO CREATE A ROOF DECK ON THE ROOF OVER THE FIRST FLOOR; PROPOSED CREATION OF A REAR YARD			
	ALLOWED/REQ'D	EXISTING	PROPOSED
Minimum Lot Width	15 ft	37'-4"	no change
Minimum Lot Area	365 ft ²	2,475 ft ²	no change
Minimum Occupied Area	65 ft ²	975 (2018) ft ²	785 (1920) ft ²
Minimum Rear Yard Depth	9 ft	20'-4"	13'-4" 20'-4"
Minimum Side Yard Width	5 ft (1 ft Guard)	N/A	N/A
Maximum Height	38 ft	≤ 46'-0"	no change



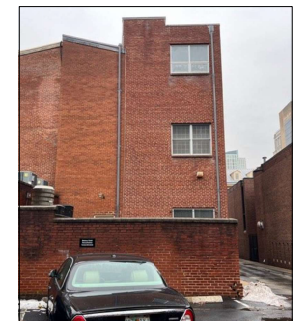
2 LOCATION MAP
Z1.1 SCALE: NTS



3 EXISTING BUILDING PHOTO- FRONT
21.1 SCALE: NTS



4 EXISTING BUILDING PHOTO- SIDE
21.1 SCALE: NTS



5 EXISTING BUILDING PHOTO- REAR
21.1 SCALE: NTS



Owner:
M Dwell Two, LLC
401 Cypress Street
Philadelphia, PA
19106

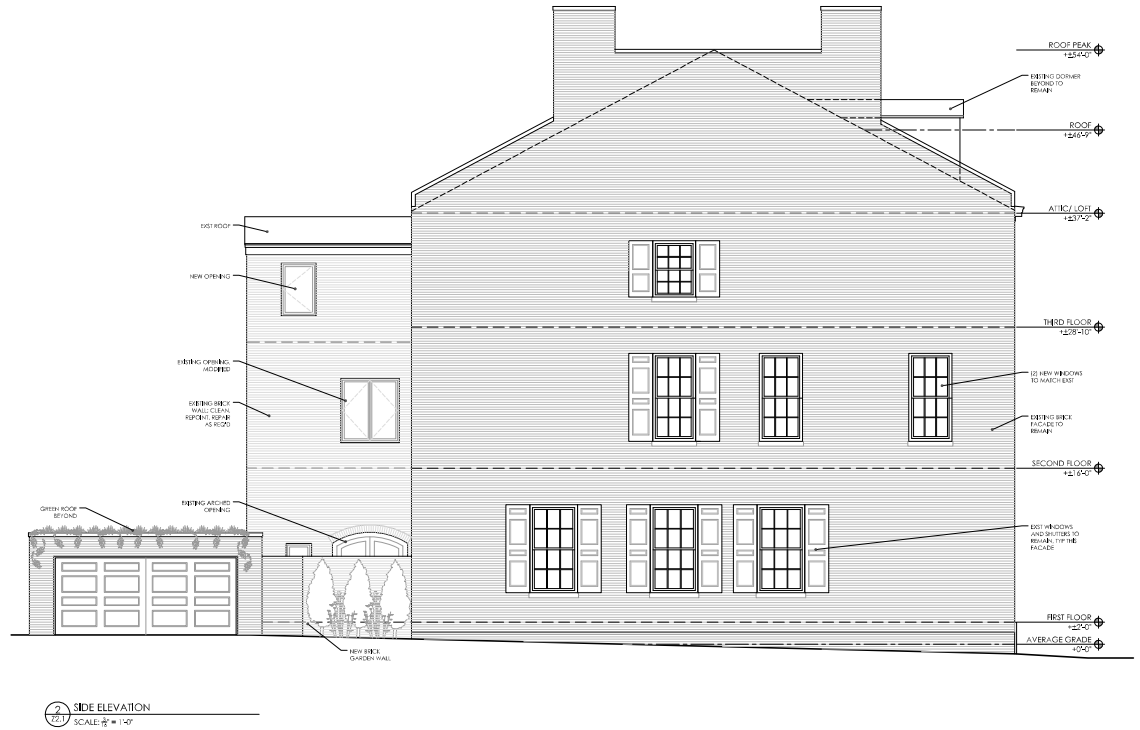
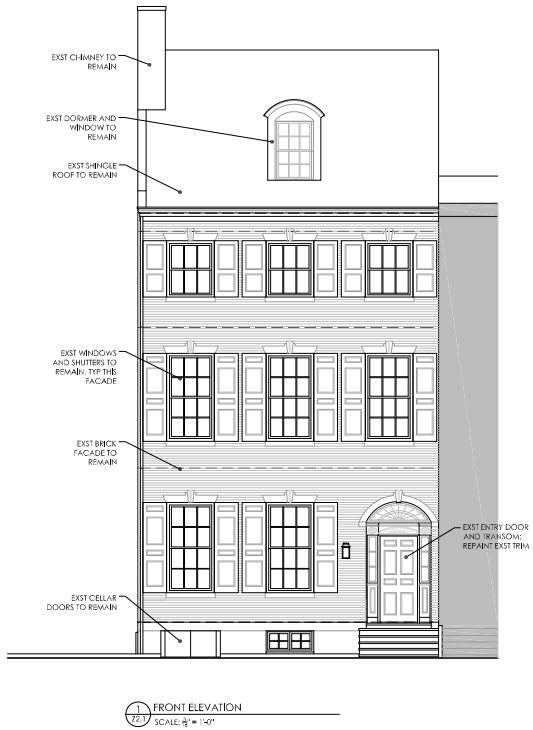
Project Name & Location:	Existing Single Family Home Remodel 257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120
Drawing Title:	ZONING SITE PLAN



ISSUED FOR
ZONING
PERMIT
02-20-25

Z1.1

Primary deck design



Approval Stamps:



Owner:

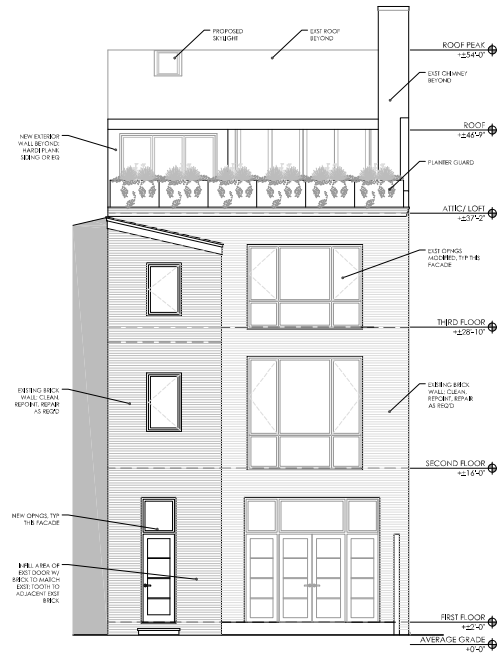
M Dwell Two, LLC
401 Cypress Street
Philadelphia, PA
19106

Project Name & Location: Existing Single Family Home Remodel 257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120
Drawing Title: EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

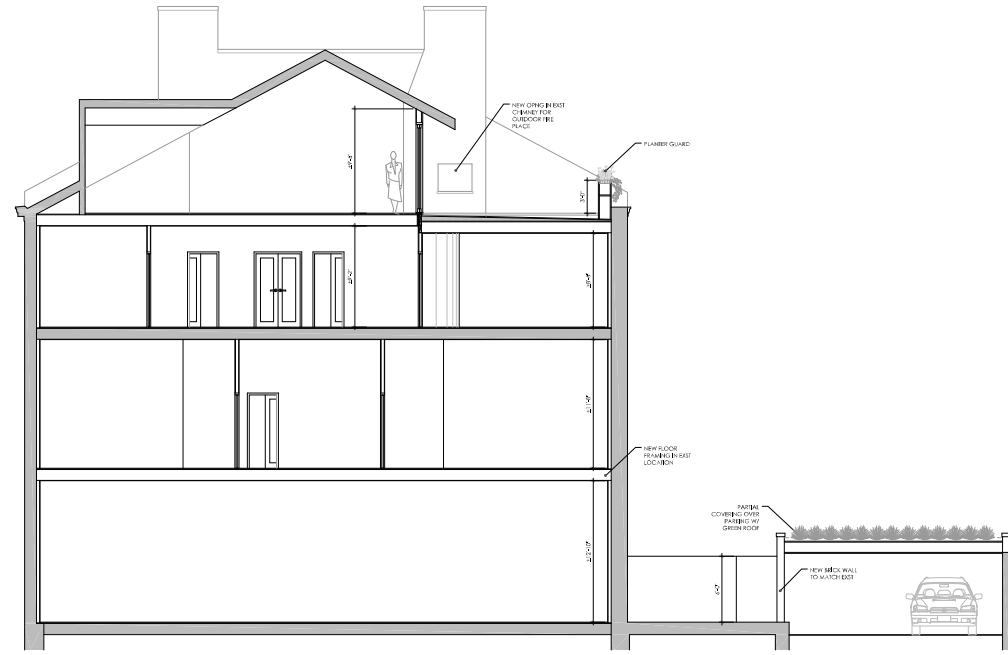
ISSUED FOR
ZONING
PERMIT
02-20-25

Z2.1

Primary deck design



1 REAR ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



2 DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION LOOKING NORTH
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Approval Stamps:



Continuum
ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN, INC.
635 Addison Street - Philadelphia, PA 19147
267.253.6174 - J@continuumarchitecture.com

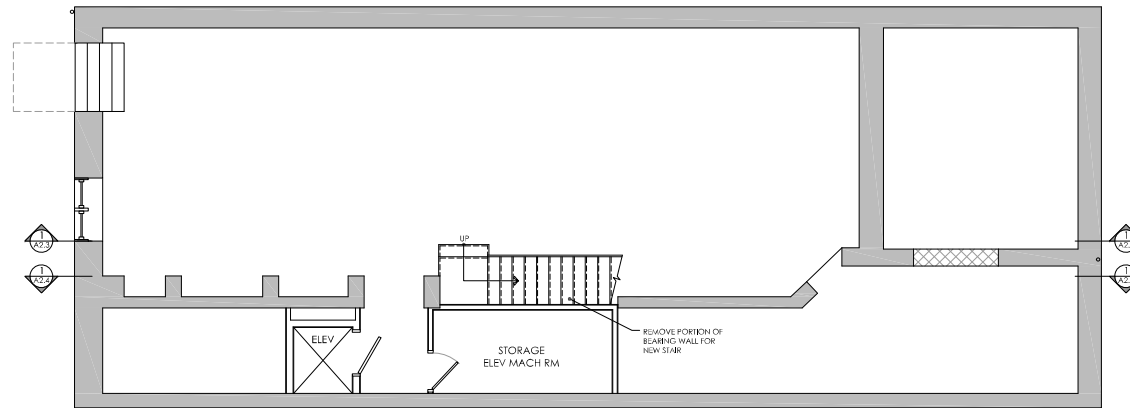
Owner:
M Dwell Two, LLC
401 Cypress Street
Philadelphia, PA
19106

Project Name & Location:
Existing Single Family Home Remodel
257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120
Drawing Title:
EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS and DIAGRAMMATIC SECTION

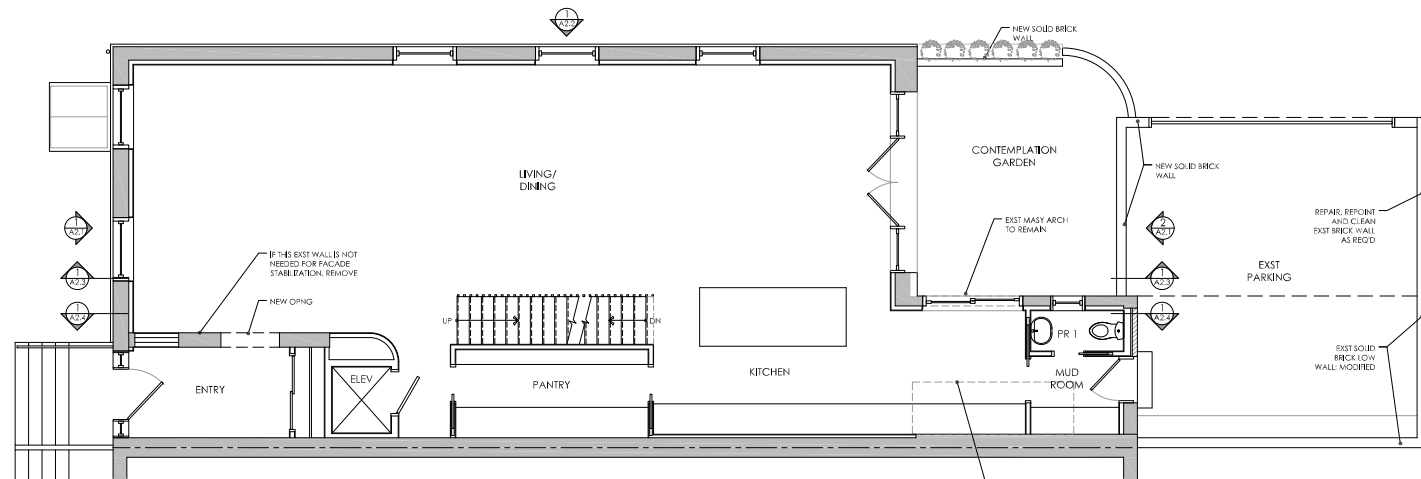
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PERMIT
02-20-25

72.2



Alternate deck design



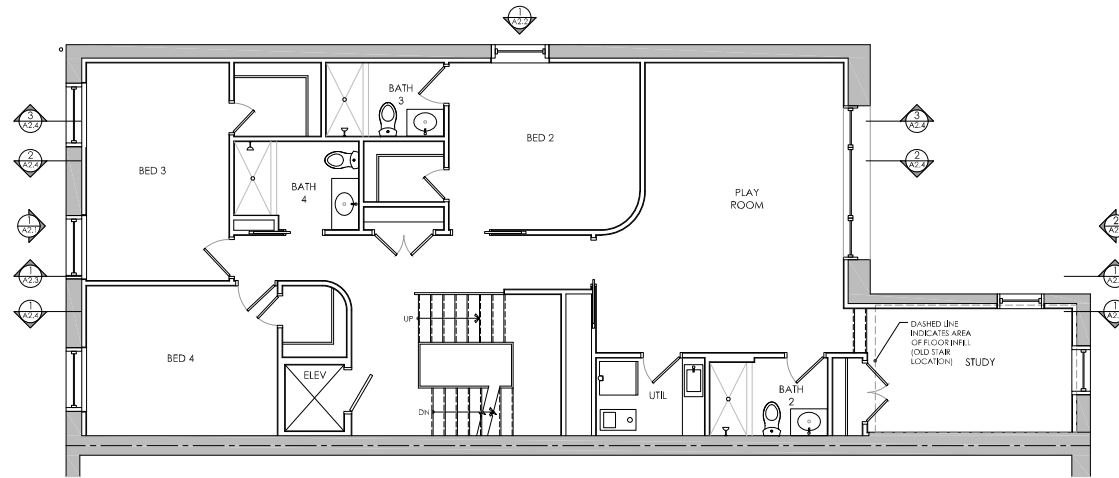
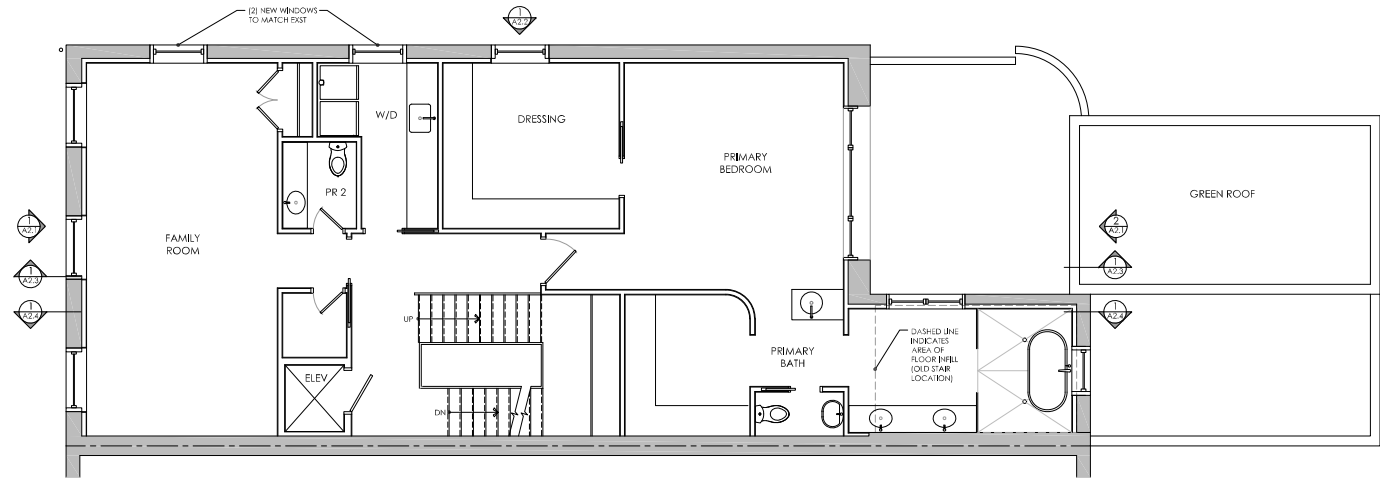
BASEMENT PLAN
SCALE: $\frac{1}{4}" = 1'-0"$



2 FIRST FLOOR PLAN
A1.1 SCALE: $\frac{1}{4}" = 1'-0"$

 <p>635 Addison Street • Philadelphia, PA 19147 267.253.6174 • info@continuum-architecture.com</p>	<p>Owner:</p> <p>M Dwell Two, LLC 401 Cypress Street Philadelphia, PA 19106</p>	<p>Project Name & Location: Existing Single Family Home Remodel 257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120</p> <hr/> <p>Drawing Title: FLOOR PLANS</p>		<p>ISSUED FOR REVIEW 04-02-25</p>	<p>A1.1</p>
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Alternate deck design



Owner:
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401 Cypress Street
Philadelphia, PA
19106

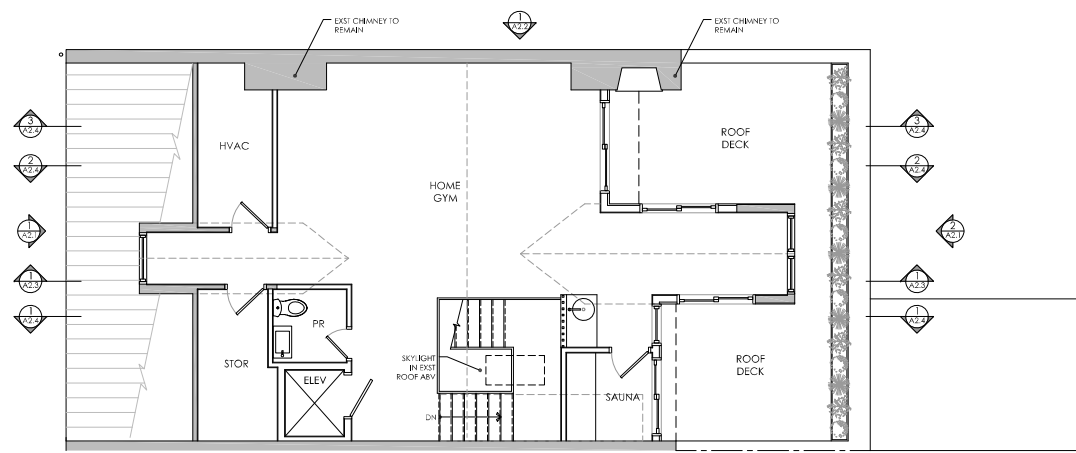
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257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120
Drawing Title:
FLOOR PLANS



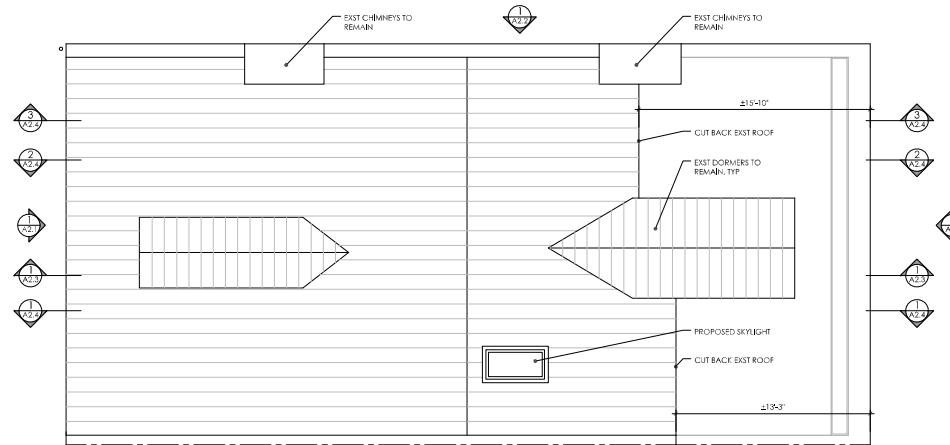
ISSUED FOR
REVIEW
04-02-25

A1.2

Alternate deck design

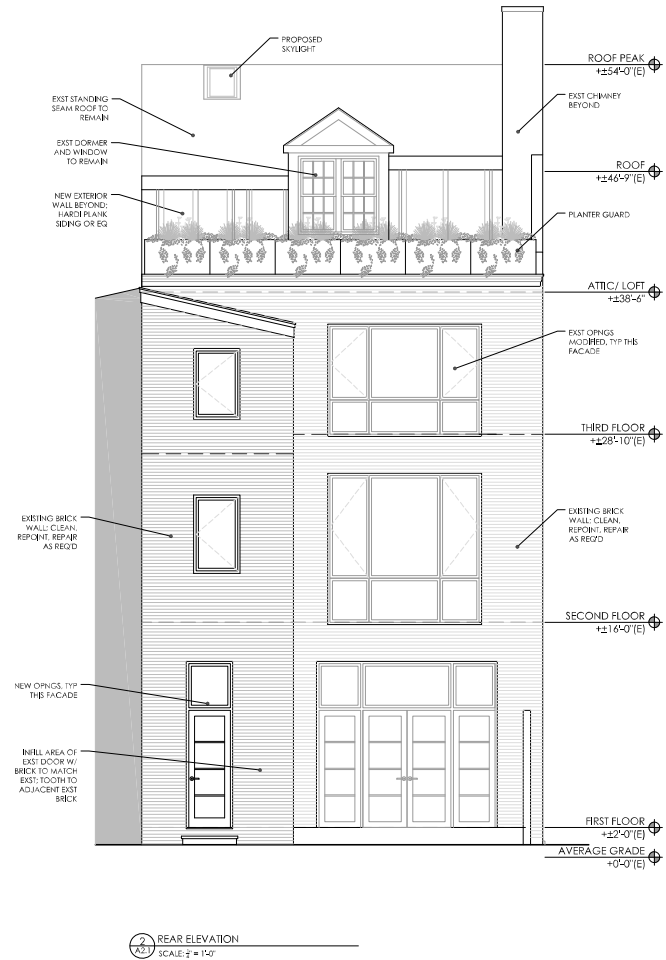
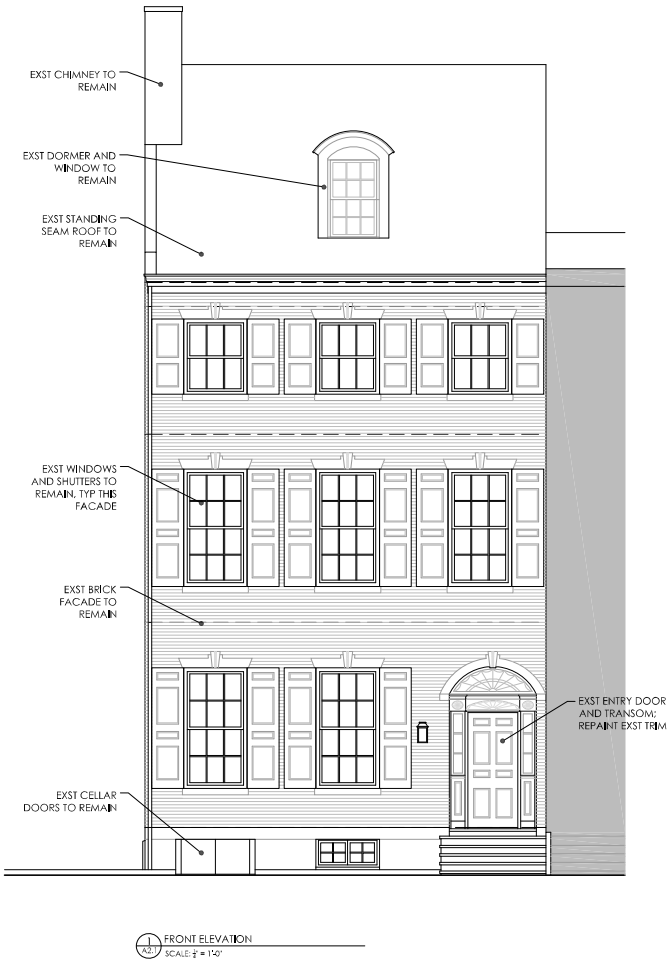



1 ATTIC/LOFT PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



2 ROOF PLAN
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"


Alternate deck design



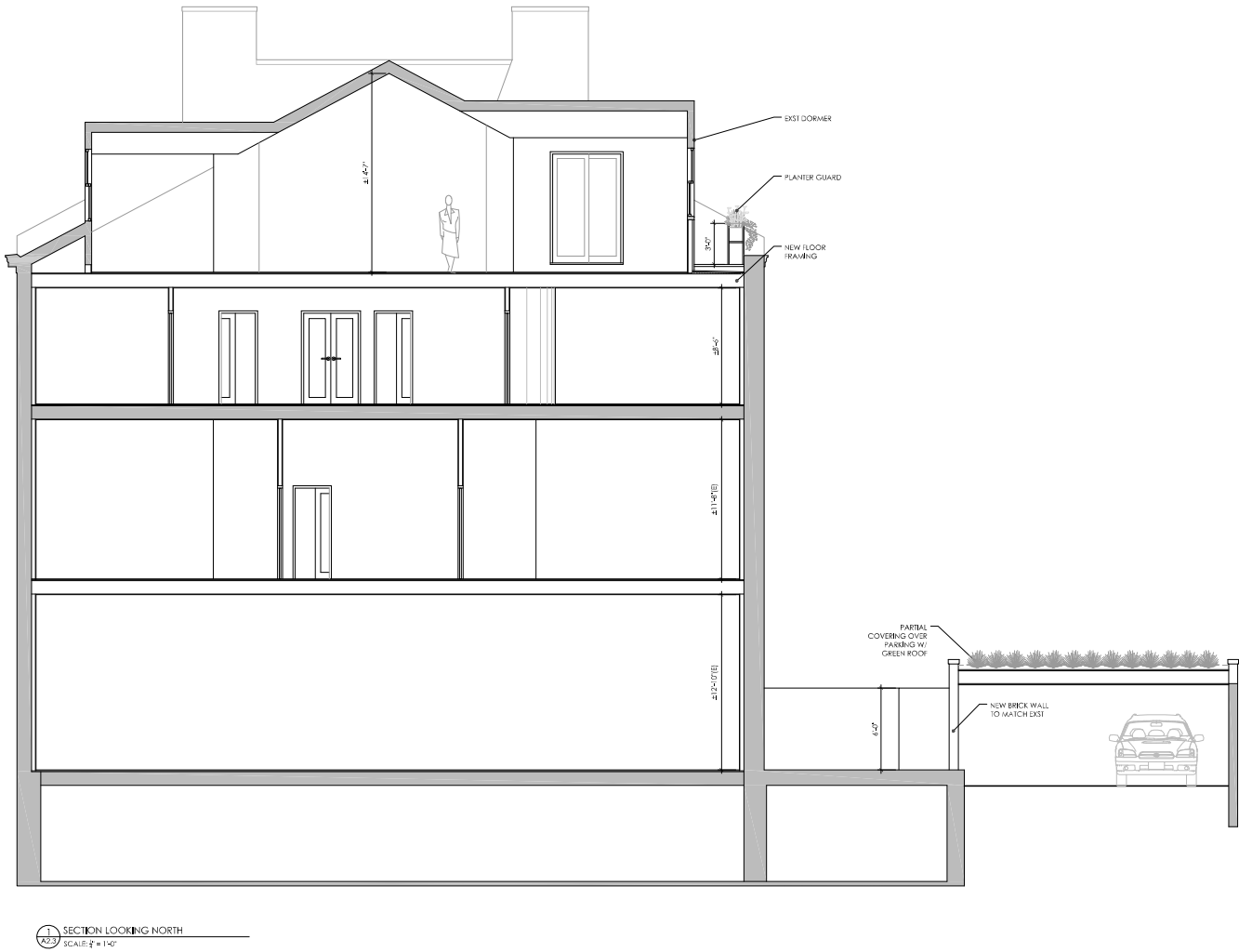
 <p>635 Addison Street - Philadelphia, PA 19147 267.253.6174 - info@continuumarchitecture.com</p>	<p>Owner:</p> <p>M Dwell Two, LLC 401 Cypress Street Philadelphia, PA 19106</p>	<p>Project Name & Location:</p> <p>Existing Single Family Home Remodel 257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120</p> <p>Drawing Title:</p> <p>EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS</p>		<p>ISSUED FOR REVIEW 04-02-25</p>	<p>A2.1</p>
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Alternate deck design



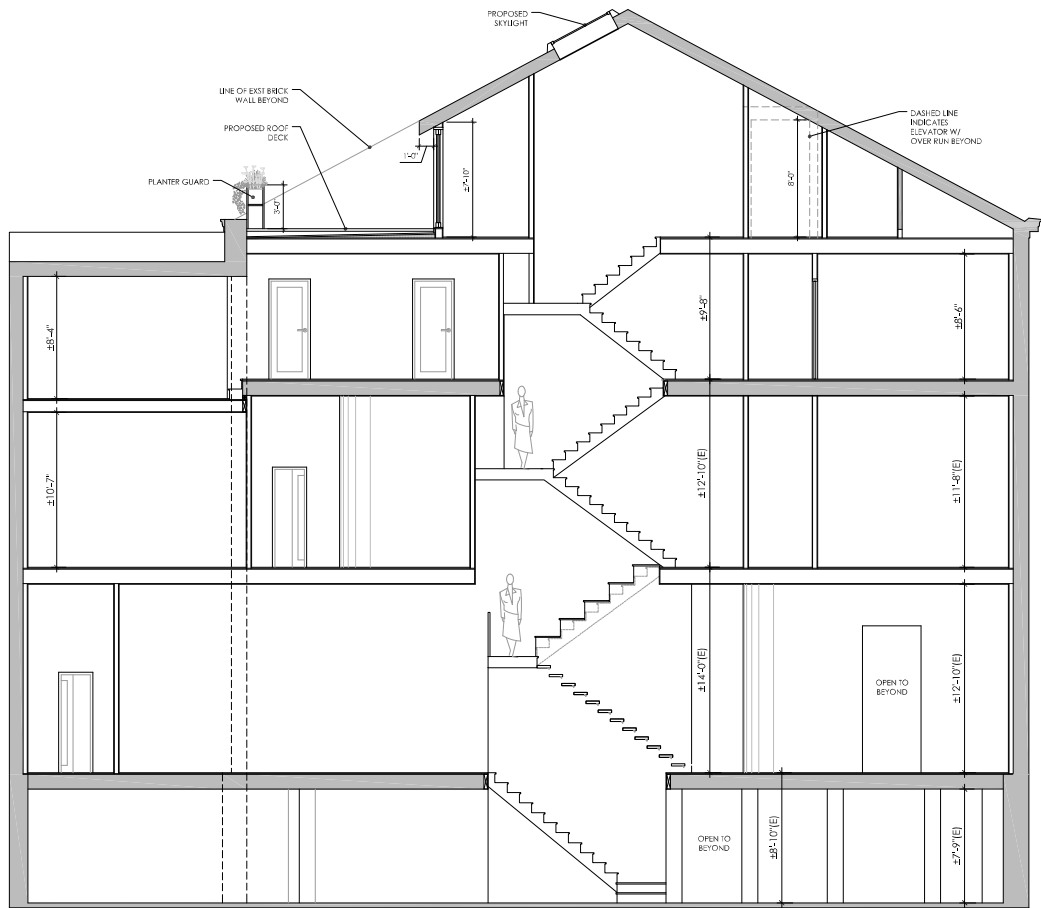
 <p>635 Addition Street - Philadelphia, PA 19147 267.253.6174 - J@continuumarchitecture.com</p>	<p>Owner:</p> <p>M Dwell Two, LLC 401 Cypress Street Philadelphia, PA 19106</p>	<p>Project Name & Location:</p> <p>Existing Single Family Home Remodel 257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120</p> <p>Drawing Title:</p> <p>EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS</p>		<p>ISSUED FOR REVIEW 04-02-25</p>	<p>A2.2</p>
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Alternate deck design

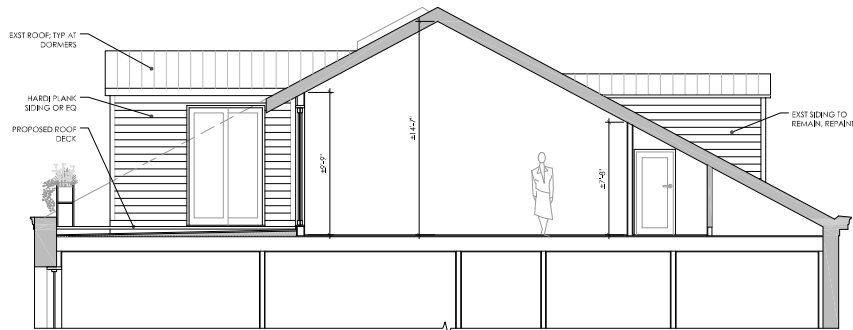


 635 Addison Street - Philadelphia, PA 19147 267.253.6174 - @continuum-architecture.com	Owner: M Dwell Two, LLC 401 Cypress Street Philadelphia, PA 19106	Project Name & Location: Existing Single Family Home Remodel 257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA # 871508120 Drawing Title: BUILDING SECTIONS		ISSUED FOR REVIEW 04-02-25	A2.3

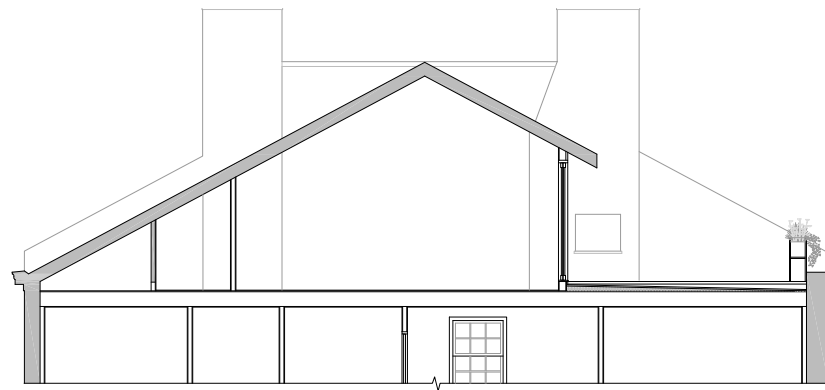
Alternate deck design




1 SECTION LOOKING SOUTH - THRU STAIR
SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$



2 PARTIAL SECTION LOOKING SOUTH
SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$



3 PARTIAL SECTION LOOKING NORTH
SCALE: $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$

 <p>635 Addition Street - Philadelphia, PA 19147 267.253.6174 - info@continuum-architecture.com</p>	<p>Owner:</p> <p>M Dwell Two, LLC 401 Cypress Street Philadelphia, PA 19106</p>	<p>Project Name & Location:</p> <p>Existing Single Family Home Remodel 257 S 4th Street, Philadelphia PA 19106 - OPA# 871508120</p> <p>Drawing Title:</p> <p>BUILDING SECTIONS</p>		<p>ISSUED FOR REVIEW 04-02-25</p>	<p>A2.4</p>
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