

ADDRESS: 25 S VAN PELT ST

Proposal: Alter facades; construct four-story addition

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: 25 Van Pelt Real Estate Advisors, LLC

Applicant: Christopher Stromberg, S2 Design

History: 1894; Evening Home and Library Association; Westray Ladd, architect (1894);

Magaziner & Eberhard, architects (1939 addition); 1939 addition, Big Brothers Association

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, Contributing, 2/8/1995

Staff Contact: Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov

BACKGROUND:

Located between Ludlow and Chestnut Streets in the Rittenhouse Fidler Historic District, the property at 25 S. Van Pelt Street features two notable building campaigns: a Renaissance Revival portion to the south, designed by Westray Ladd and constructed in 1894; and a modern section, designed by Magaziner & Eberhard and constructed in 1939. The 1939 project entailed the rehabilitation of the entire complex, including exterior modifications to and partial demolition of the 1894 building, which was originally twice as wide, and the incorporation of the interiors of the old and new buildings. The 1939 addition included a large gymnasium, lecture rooms, basement workshops, and a caged-in roof court.

In February 2020, the Historical Commission granted final approval to the conversion of the 1939 addition into three attached townhouses. The plans did not address the 1894 building. The revised proposal is for eight apartments that incorporate the 1894 building and the 1939 gymnasium. The current proposal adds four stories above the former gymnasium, amends the fenestration pattern significantly, and calls for projecting balconies and an additional garage door on the west facade. The additional floors would be clad in metal panels, as are areas where windows are reduced in size. The rooftop would include a common penthouse space and deck. The application does not propose to alter the exterior of the 1894 building. Drawings of the gymnasium's north facade are not provided.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Cut down/enlarge existing window openings to create garages and a pedestrian entrance;
- Remove brick to create new second-floor windows at the front and rear;
- Alter banded gymnasium windows; and,
- Construct three story addition with roof deck.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

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

- *Standard 2: The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*
 - o The application proposes to remove substantial portions of existing brick and to significantly alter the materials and features that characterize the property, and therefore does not comply with Standard 2.
- *Windows Guideline | Not Recommended: Changing the number, location, size, or glazing pattern of windows on primary or highly-visible elevations which will alter the historic character of the building; Cutting new openings on character-defining elevations*

or cutting new openings that damage or destroy significant features; Adding balconies at existing window openings or new window openings on primary or other highly-visible elevations where balconies never existed and, therefore, would be incompatible with the historic character of the building.

- o This application proposes to alter the number, location, and size of windows on the primary elevation of the former gymnasium building, to cut new window openings on the primary façade. Window and balcony alterations are more extensive on the new design than were proposed on the design previously approved by the Historical Commission
 - o The staff realizes that the Historical Commission previously approved a garage opening on the primary first-floor façade; however, the additional garage opening further obscures the original design of the gymnasium addition.
 - o The application does not comply with the Windows Guideline.
- *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.*
 - o Although the proposed addition is differentiated from the historic building it is incompatible in material and scale.
 - o The application does not comply with Standard 9.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standards 2 and 9 and the Windows Guideline.

October 30, 2025

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

To whom it may concern,

The following submission is for the Administrative Review for proposed changes to the property located at **25-29 S Van Pelt St.** Specifically, our proposal involves modifications and additions to the 1939 portion (by Magaziner and Eberhard), which sits on the north end of the property. Proposed renovations and restorations to the 1894 structure (by Westray Ladd), which sits on the south end of the property, will eventually be part of the overall redevelopment effort. However, we will be seeking a review of that portion of the project at a later date.

Several years ago, our team presented a design proposal for this project to the Historical Commission. That proposal was approved on **February 14, 2020**. We are including a copy of that presentation for your reference. After receiving this approval, our team spent several years further developing those Plans and discussing the scope and viability of the project with various colleagues and agencies. In the end, we felt strongly that revisiting some of the design strategies, as well as expanding the scope, would be beneficial to the overall development without diminishing the integrity of the of the 1939 addition or the original 1894 building. Thus, we are seeking an Administrative Review of the following *amended* design proposal.

To clarify, the main differences between the 02.14.2020 proposal and the current one relate to the number stories proposed above the 1939 building: with the previous design proposing 1 additional story and the latest design proposing 3 additional stories + a “communal” space on the roof. As well, we are proposing a different type of Residential Use for the development: with the previous design proposing 3 SFDs in the 1939 building + a ‘TBD’ Use in the 1894 building and the latest design proposing a Multi-Family Use (total of 8 units) that includes the interior space in the 1894 building.

As we noted in our previous presentation, we took several cues from the 1939 Magaziner and Eberhard design to inform the proportion and detailing of our proposed modifications to the mid-century style façade. In our latest proposal, we are seeking to add some additional fenestrations to both the West and East façades of the existing structure by utilizing and extending many of the ‘lines’ that currently exist within the rhythms of the structural bays. And in regards to the window aesthetics, we are seeking to maintain the proportions of the mullion system in the large “industrial-style” windows in the 1939 building and will carry this strategy through to the windows at the proposed addition above as well. Lastly, our intention is for the footprint of the proposed 3-story addition to directly match the footprint of the 1939 building (i.e. no setbacks).

As discussed at our previous presentations, the program-driven design of the existing 1939 façade offers no exterior access along Van Pelt and presents vast expanses of window-less brick wall at the Second Floor level. Although we appreciate the proportional relationship formed between the existing areas of brick and the large ribbon window at the Third floor, it also creates many challenges in regards to a successful adaptive reuse of the structure. That said, we have continued to preserve as much of the existing façade as possible by laying out the interiors at the lower levels in a manner that utilizes existing openings and minimizes the amount of brick removed. As well, we are emphasizing the existing column lines – which break the gymnasium into 3 bays – by carrying these proportions all the way to the new roof line. This, along with the series of centrally-located balconies on floors 2-6, will tie the addition to the existing building, while complementing the existing aesthetic. Lastly, we’re planning to clad the addition in dark colored metal panels in order to distinguish it from the existing brick façade and will utilize the same metal paneling at the infill areas on existing façade, where any existing (and new) openings in the brick occur.

A basic breakdown of revised program is noted below. As such, the overall proposed redevelopment is to include:

Eight (8) Residential Units

- Three (3) units located within the 1894 building
- Two (2) units located within the 1939 building
- Three (3) units located within the proposed addition

Nine (9) Off-Street, Accessory Parking Spaces

- Seven (7) spaces located within the 1939 building (accessed via Two [2] new garage doors)
- Two (2) open-air spaces located in the “side yard” to the south of the 1894 building

Two (2) Residential Entry Points

- One (1) that shall serve the First Floor unit in the 1894 building
- One (1) that shall serve the remaining Seven (7) units

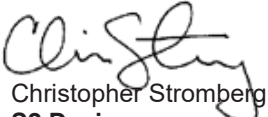
NOTE: There will also be a third access point (egress-only) on the east façade (in the alley)

One (1) Communal Penthouse space & Roof Deck (that serves all of the units)

NOTE: In a departure from the 02.14.20 proposal, in the spirit of the original relationship between the two buildings, our intention is to join the interior spaces of 1894 and the 1939 buildings so they exist as one cohesive (in this case, multi-family) development.

We look forward to the outcome of the Historical Commission's Administrative Review regarding our proposed changes to this project and we thank you, again, for considering this application.

Sincerely,


Christopher Stromberg
S2 Design



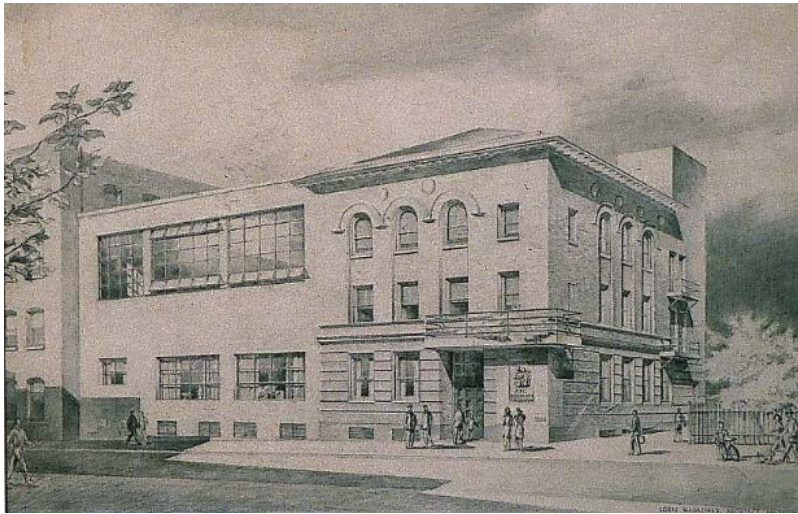
S2 DESIGN
1536 Montrose St
Phila, PA 19146
215.300.5030

25 S VAN PELT ST

(Re)Submission to the Phila
Historical Commission

Owner:
25 Van Pelt Real Estate Advisors

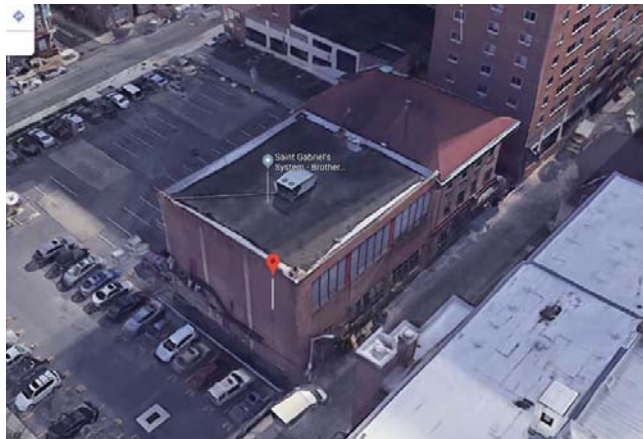
10.30.2025



Circa 1939



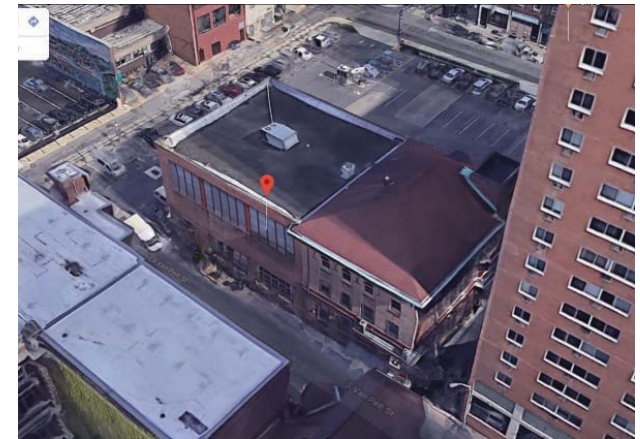
Circa 1918



Aerial View Looking SE



Aerial View Looking West



Aerial View Looking NE



Looking North - S Van Pelt St



Looking NW - First Unitarian Church



Looking NE - River West Parking Garage



Looking West - Little Miracles Childcare



Looking NW - College of Physicians



Looking SE - College of Physicians Parking



Looking SW - Van Pelt & Ludlow - College of Physicians



Looking South - Parkway Lot



Looking West - Parkway Lot and Precedent



West & South Elevation



North Elevation

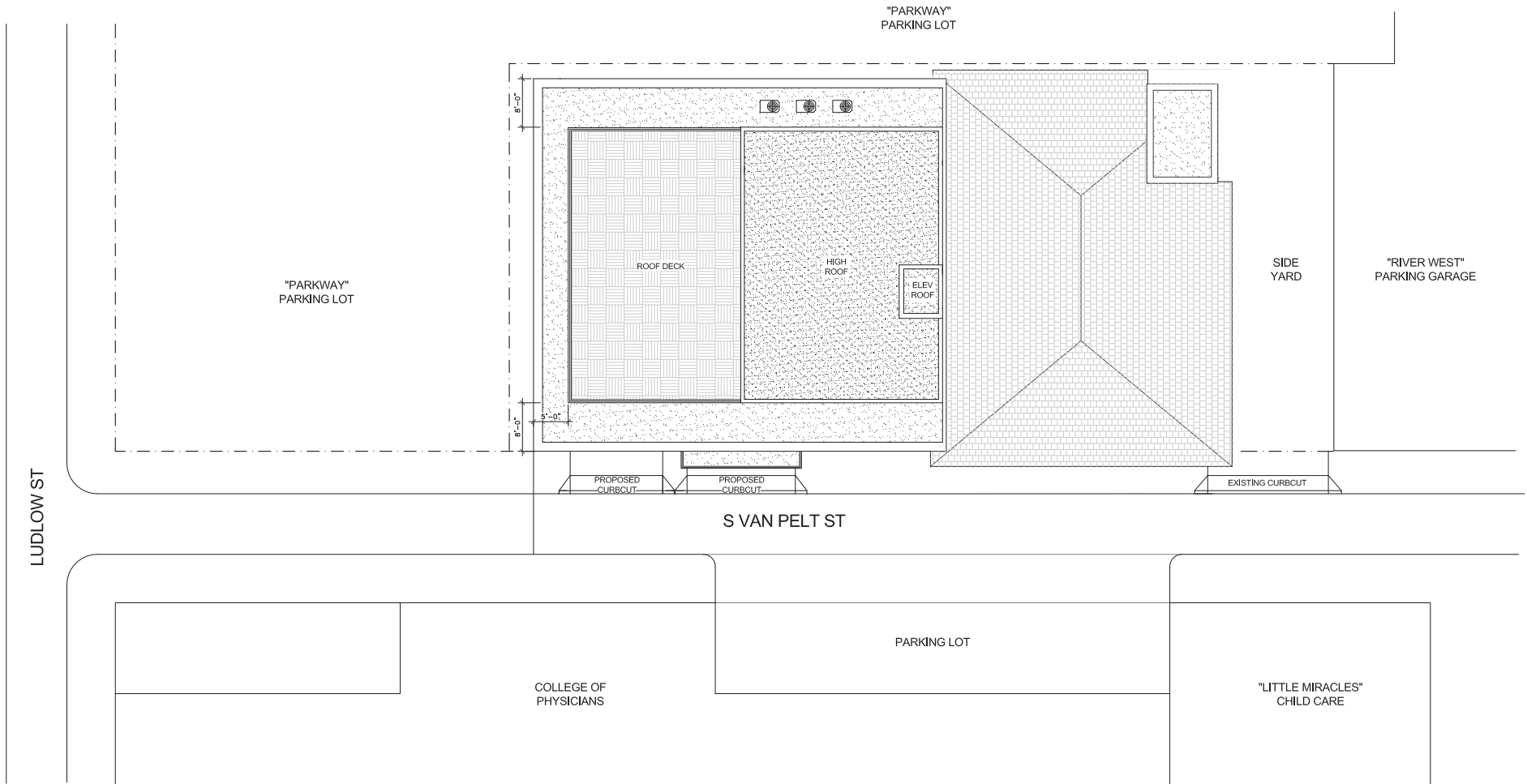


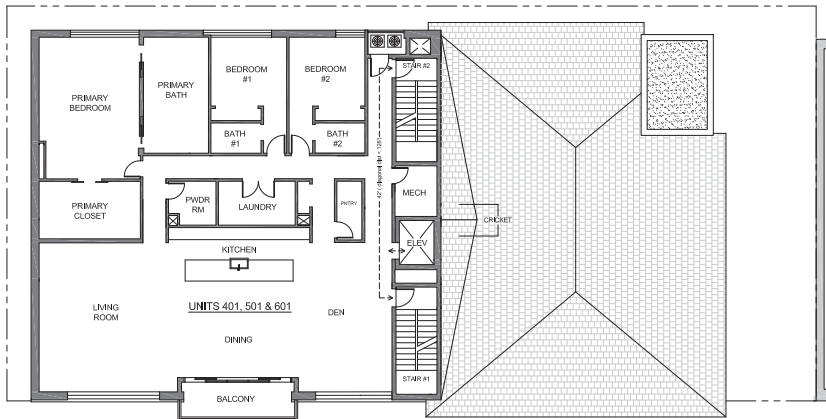
West Elevation



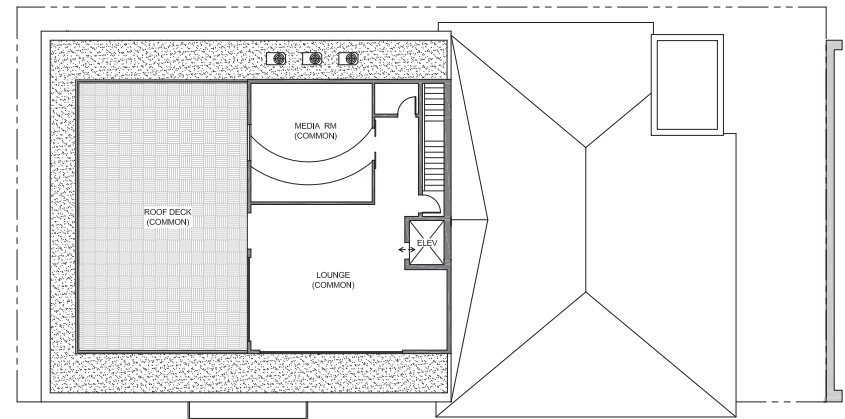
East Elevation







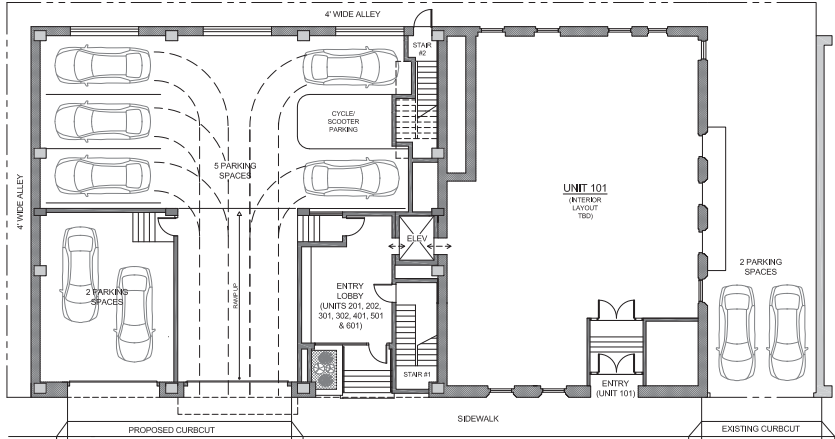
4th, 5th & 6th FLOORS



PENTHOUSE / ROOF DECK

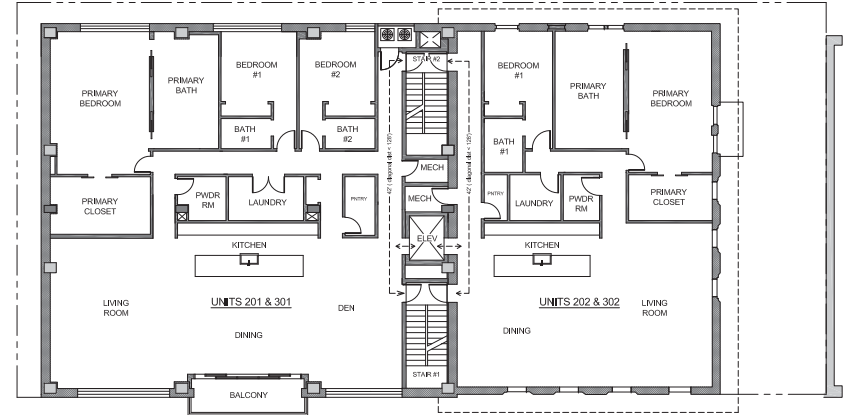


3rd FLOOR (EAST FACADE)



1st FLOOR

S VAN PELT ST



2nd & 3rd FLOORS

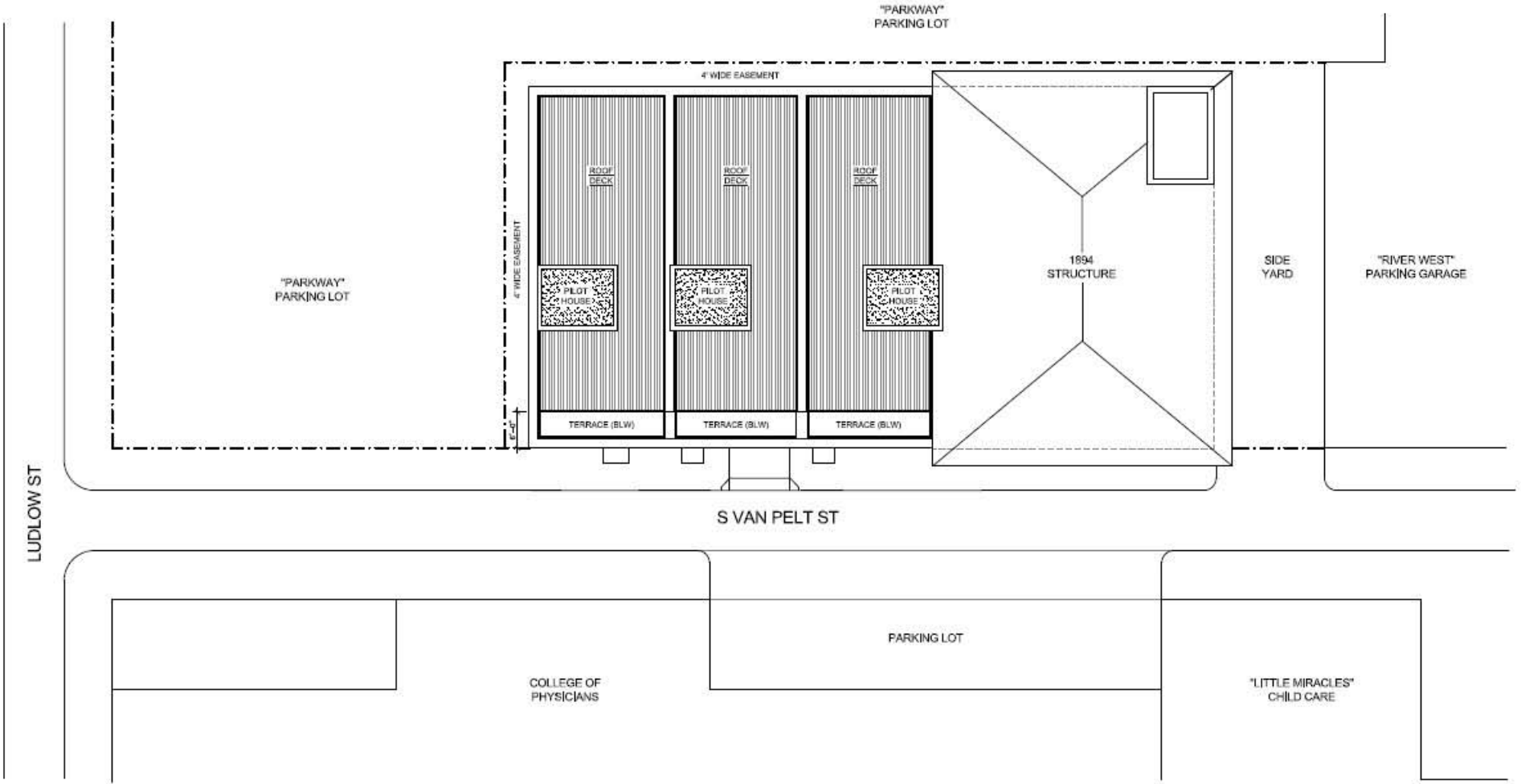








APPROVED BY HISTORICAL COMMISSION - FEBRUARY 2020



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PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103