

ADDRESS: 25 S VAN PELT ST

Proposal: Alter facades; construct four-story addition

Review Requested: Final Approval/In Concept Approval

Owner: 25 Van Pelt Real Estate Advisors, LLC

Applicant: Christopher Stromberg, S2 Design

History: 1894; Evening Home and Library Association; Westray Ladd, architect; Addition, 1939, Big Brothers Association, Magaziner & Eberhard, architects

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 with a one-story addition on the gymnasium roof. The plans did not propose any changes to the 1894 building.

The current proposal, which calls for a four-story addition on the gymnasium and eight apartments, was first submitted for review at the November 2025 Architectural Committee meeting. In response to the staff recommendation, that proposal was withdrawn and has been resubmitted for the December 2025 Architectural Committee meeting. The revised proposal still includes four stories above the former gymnasium, amends the fenestration pattern significantly on the east and west facades, adds balconies that no longer project from the west façade and two garage doors 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.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Cut down/enlarge window openings to create garages and a pedestrian entrance;
- Remove brick to create second-floor windows at the front and rear;
- Alter banded gymnasium windows; and,
- Construct four-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.*
 - The application proposes to remove substantial portions of existing brick, significantly altering 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.*
 - This application proposes to alter the number, location, and size of windows on the primary elevation of the former gymnasium building and 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.
 - 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.
 - 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.*
 - Although the proposed addition is differentiated from the historic building it is incompatible in material and scale.
 - The application does not comply with Standard 9.

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

November 24, 2025

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

The following addresses the overview/staff recommendations provided by Historical Commission based on our October 30, 2025 resubmission package. Our team decided to take a closer look at the proposed design based on the comments. In particular, we wanted to address the Commission's concerns regarding the West Elevation of the 1939 Magaziner building. We are submitting updated Exterior Elevations and Floor Plans that reflect our response to these concerns, which we plan on including in our presentation to the Architectural Review Committee on November 25, 2025.

Below are bullet points highlighting the changes we've made in relation to preserving the historic character, maintaining glazing patterns, and creating a differentiated but compatible addition:

- We refined the size and location of the proposed openings on the West - and likewise, the East - facades of the 1939 addition in order to be more sensitive and respectful to the original Magaziner design
- We eliminated the protruding portions of the balconies - at all levels. We feel this is less disruptive to the overall 'form' of the clerestory opening in the existing facade and allows a cleaner, more contiguous relationship between the existing facade and the facade of the proposed addition above
- We maintained the cornice line (now uninterrupted) of the 1939 building, thus allowing a more distinct separation of the proposed addition to the original building
- We incorporated a spandrel element between the windows & terraces on the Second & Third floors as well as the windows & terraces on the Fifth & Sixth floors of the West facade, thus creating similar sized 'ribbon-like' forms that span that across the façade. This in turn highlights the compatible massing and proportions that occurs between the existing building and proposed addition above

The following illustrates some the reasoning behind our latest revisions:

Although the existing clerestory window in the gym doesn't necessarily represent a true "ribbon window" in the pure Modernist sense, we do appreciate its connection to mid-century modern aesthetics and, in particular, some of the work coming out of the "Philadelphia School" architects at the time. However, as discussed at our previous discussions with the H.C., the design of this particular building-addition was clearly driven by the more utilitarian needs of the user (as well as a limited amount of funding) and not necessarily by its contextual relationship to the surrounding buildings, a connection of interior spaces to the outdoors, or by its presence at the street level. That said, we feel our latest iteration retains the character of the upper floors of the 1939 Magaziner addition and its relationship to the fenestrations on the upper floors of the 1894 Ladd building, while also utilizing the three structural bays and existing lower windows openings to provide the necessary building access and create a more inviting street presence along Van Pelt.

As was noted in the Background section of the Commission's overview, this entire site went through some fairly dramatic changes between the 1890's and the 1930's - including demolishing half of Ladd's stunning Italianate structure. As well, we can see from Magaziner's original design drawings, that there was even a proposal to demolish the *entire* Ladd building and construct a larger 5 - 6 story building in its place. Of course, we're all glad that didn't happen! However, based on the massive, oversized concrete

columns and beams installed in the 3-story structure that was ultimately built, it seems clear that additional floors were intended to eventually be added to this building someday - possibly when the funding became available. This design idea is even further strengthened by our structural engineering analysis which confirmed that 4 additional stories can indeed be added without modifying the existing structure. Relatedly, given the CMX-4 Zoning of virtually all of the properties in this area - the overall height of the proposed development (existing + addition) still remains well below what is allowable by-right.

Lastly, although Ladd's 1894 building is not officially part of this particular presentation, we wanted to take this opportunity to state that we feel the meticulous restoration we have planned for this beautiful Italianate gem is really the highlight of this entire redevelopment. And this is certainly not new territory for us as *both* the owner/developer and the architects have won several Grand Jury awards from the Preservation Alliance on past projects. Of course, as you well know, these types of restorations are extremely costly and labor-intensive and often require other parts of a project to help off-set and balance out those efforts. We are looking forward to working closely with the Historical Commission in the near future to breathe new life into that stately structure and restore it - as best we can - to its original glory.

Sincerely,



Christopher Stromberg
S2 Design



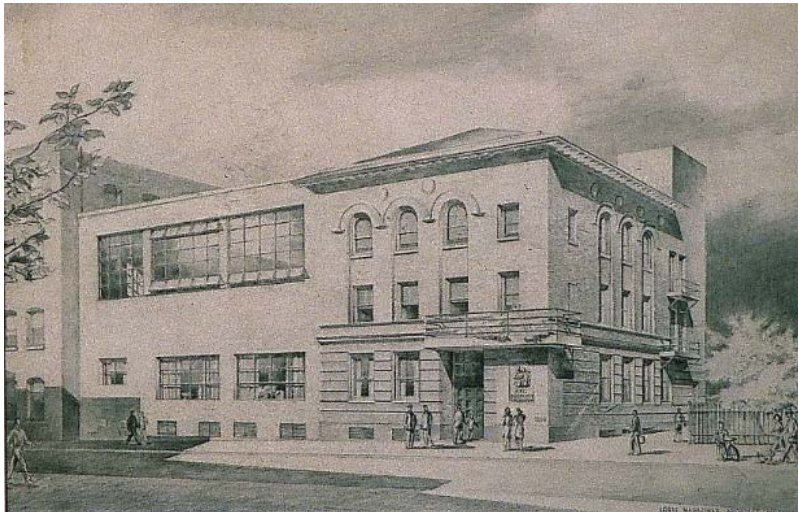
S2 DESIGN
1536 Montrose St
Phila, PA 19146
215.300.5030

25 S VAN PELT ST

(Re)Submission to the Phila
Historical Commission

Owner:
25 Van Pelt Real Estate Advisors

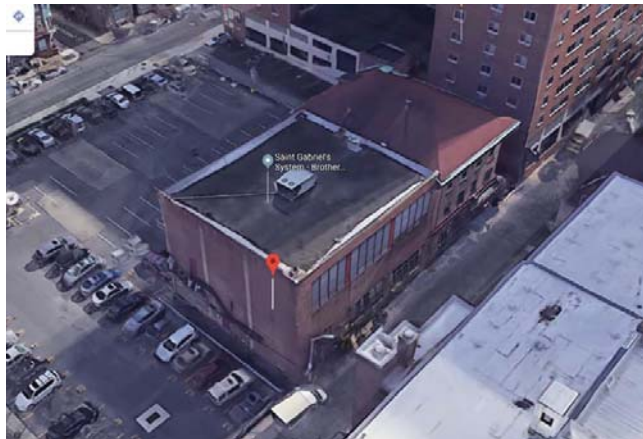
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Circa 1939



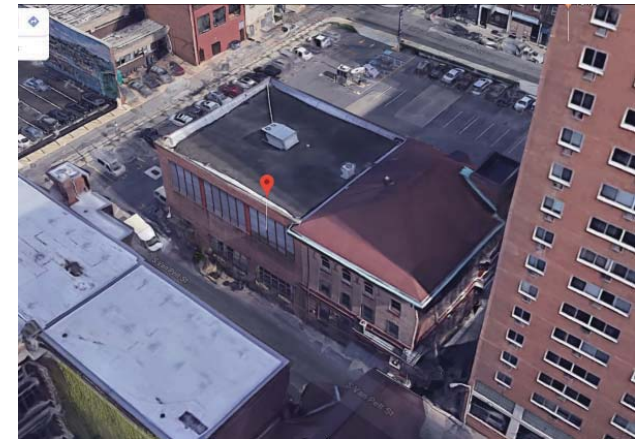
Circa 1918



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

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STREETSCAPE

25 S VAN PELT ST
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19103



West & South Elevation



North Elevation

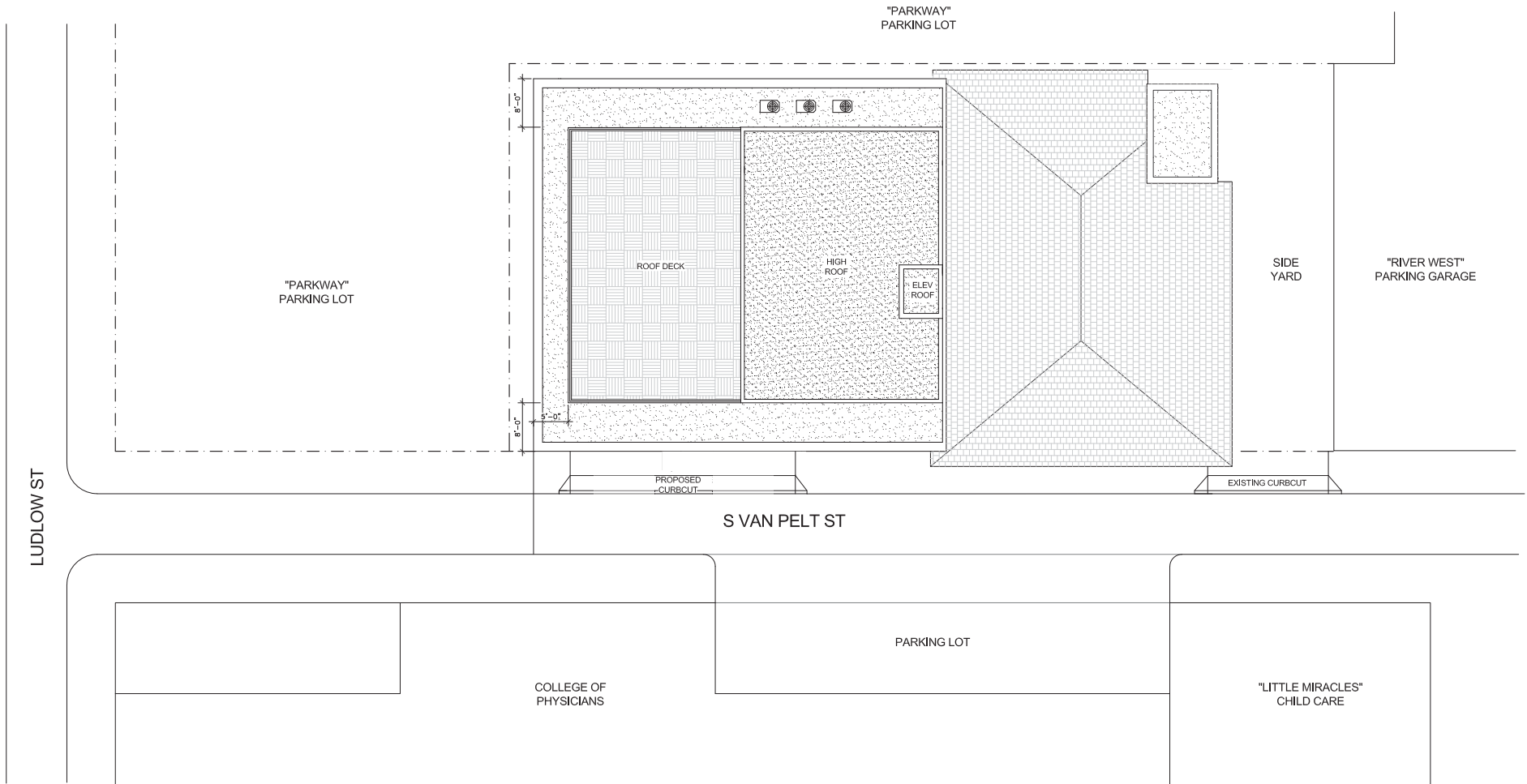


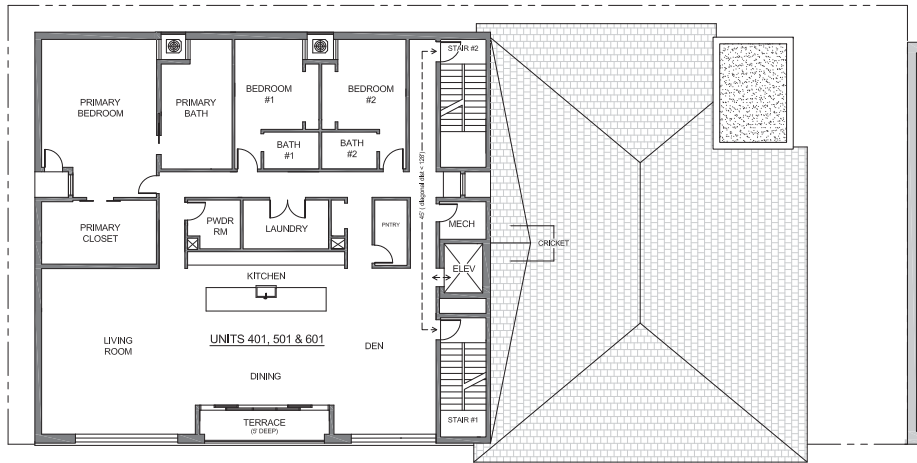
West Elevation



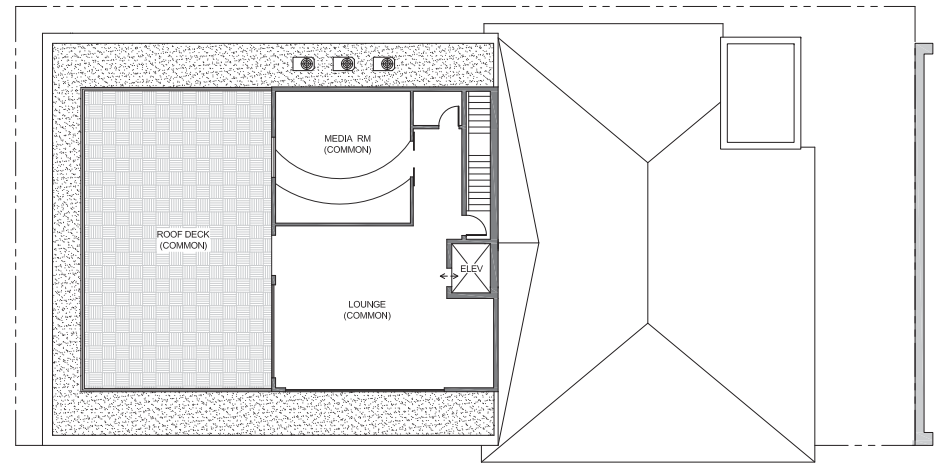
East Elevation



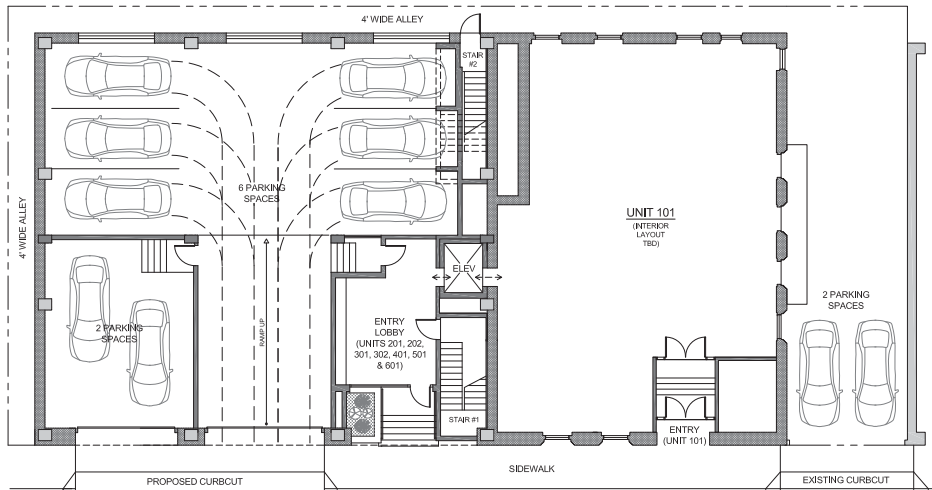




4th, 5th & 6th FLOORS

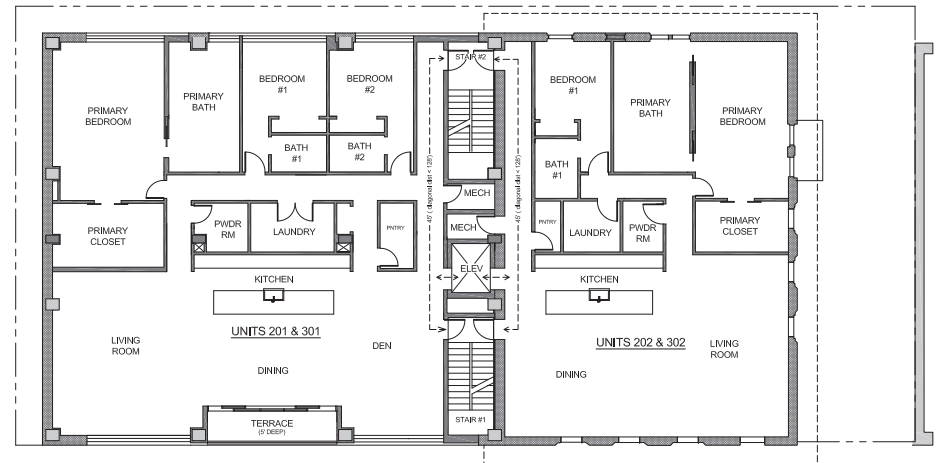


PENTHOUSE / ROOF DECK



1st FLOOR

S VAN PELT ST

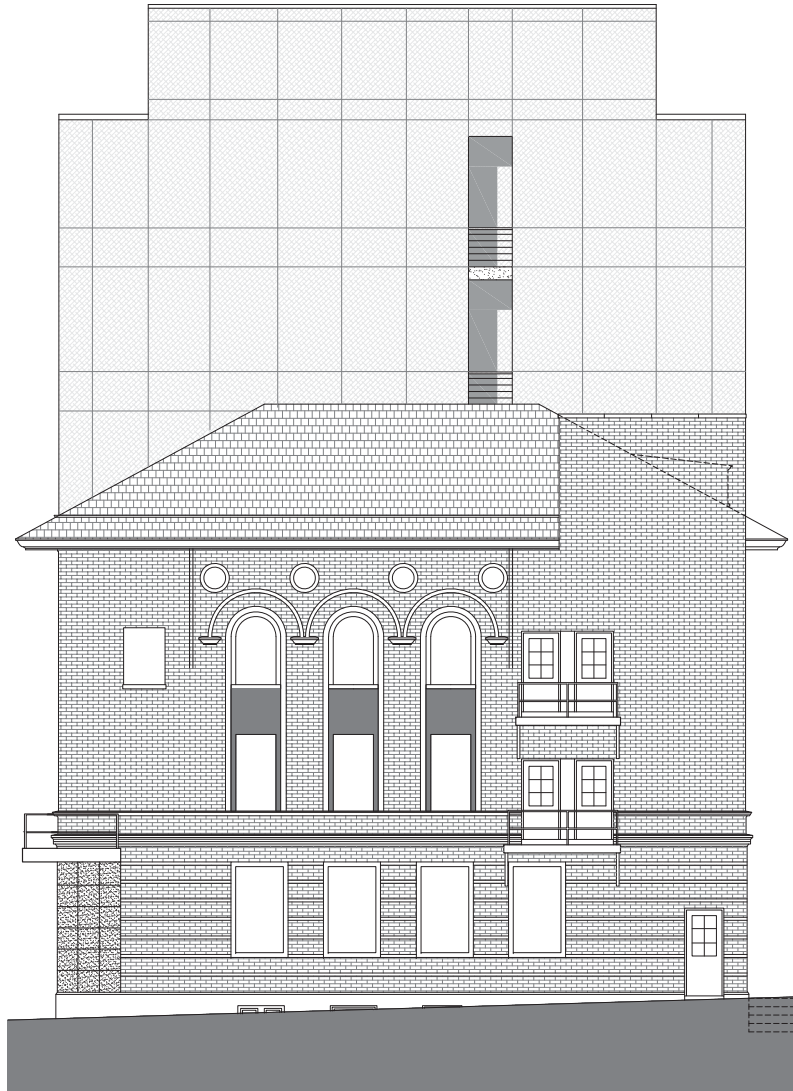


2nd & 3rd FLOORS

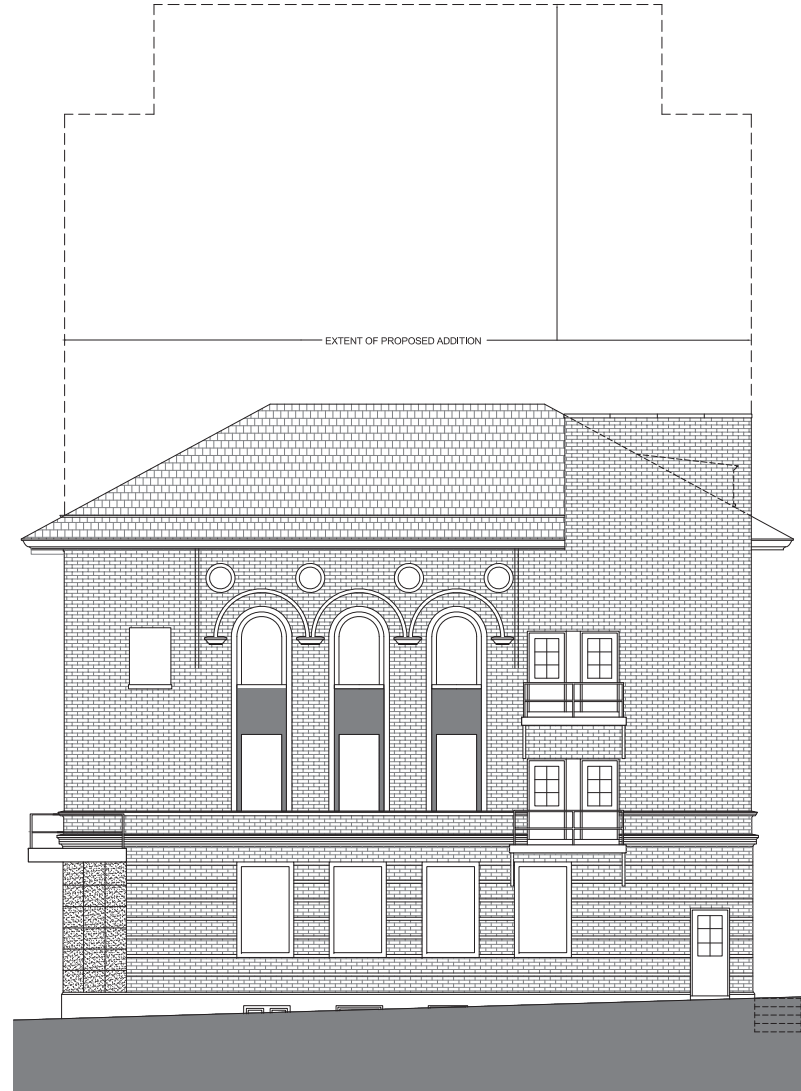




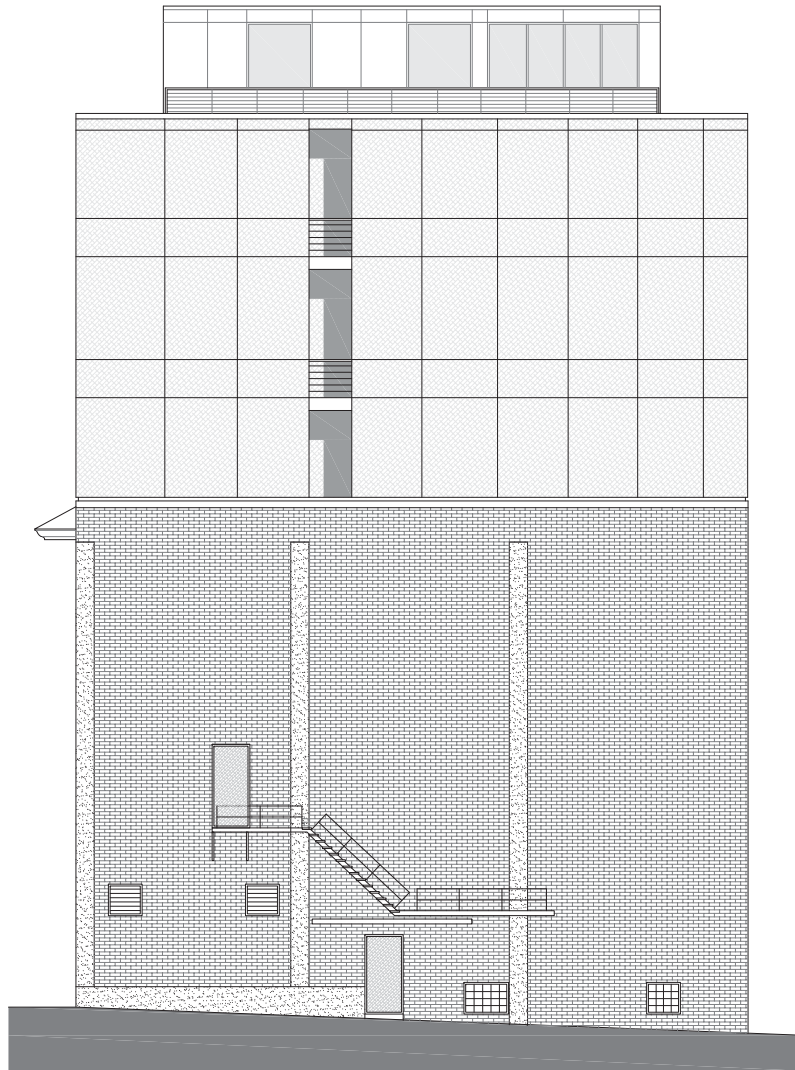




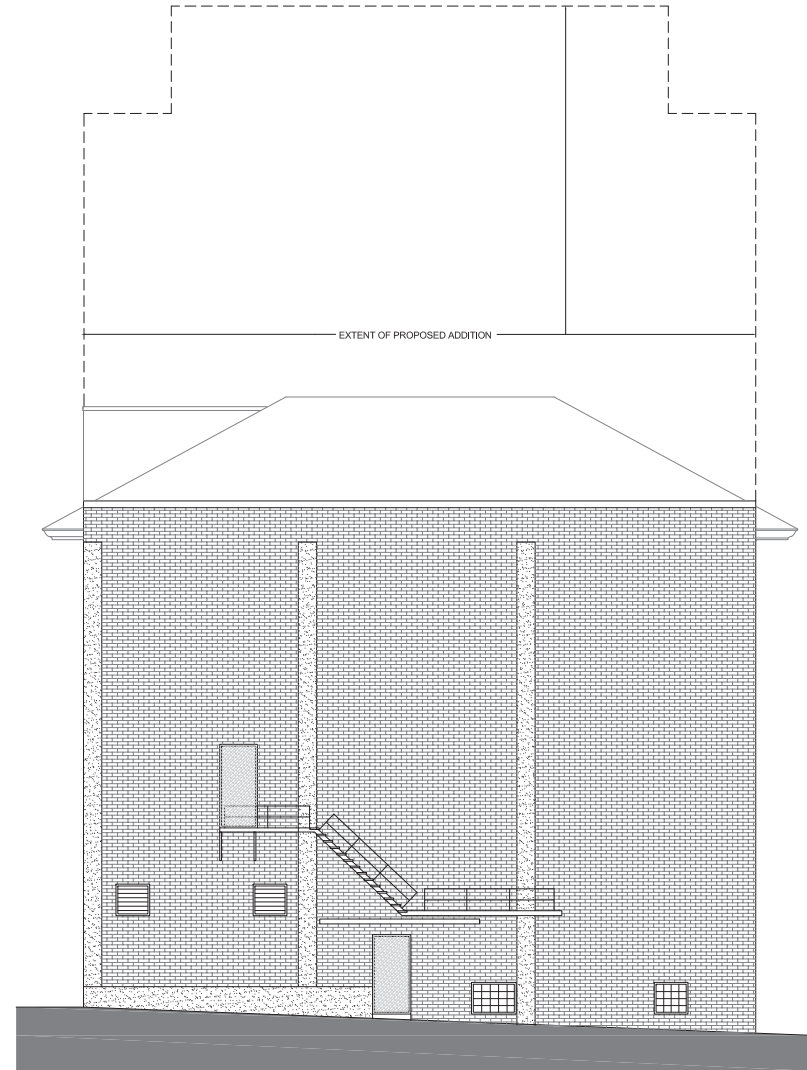
(PROPOSED)



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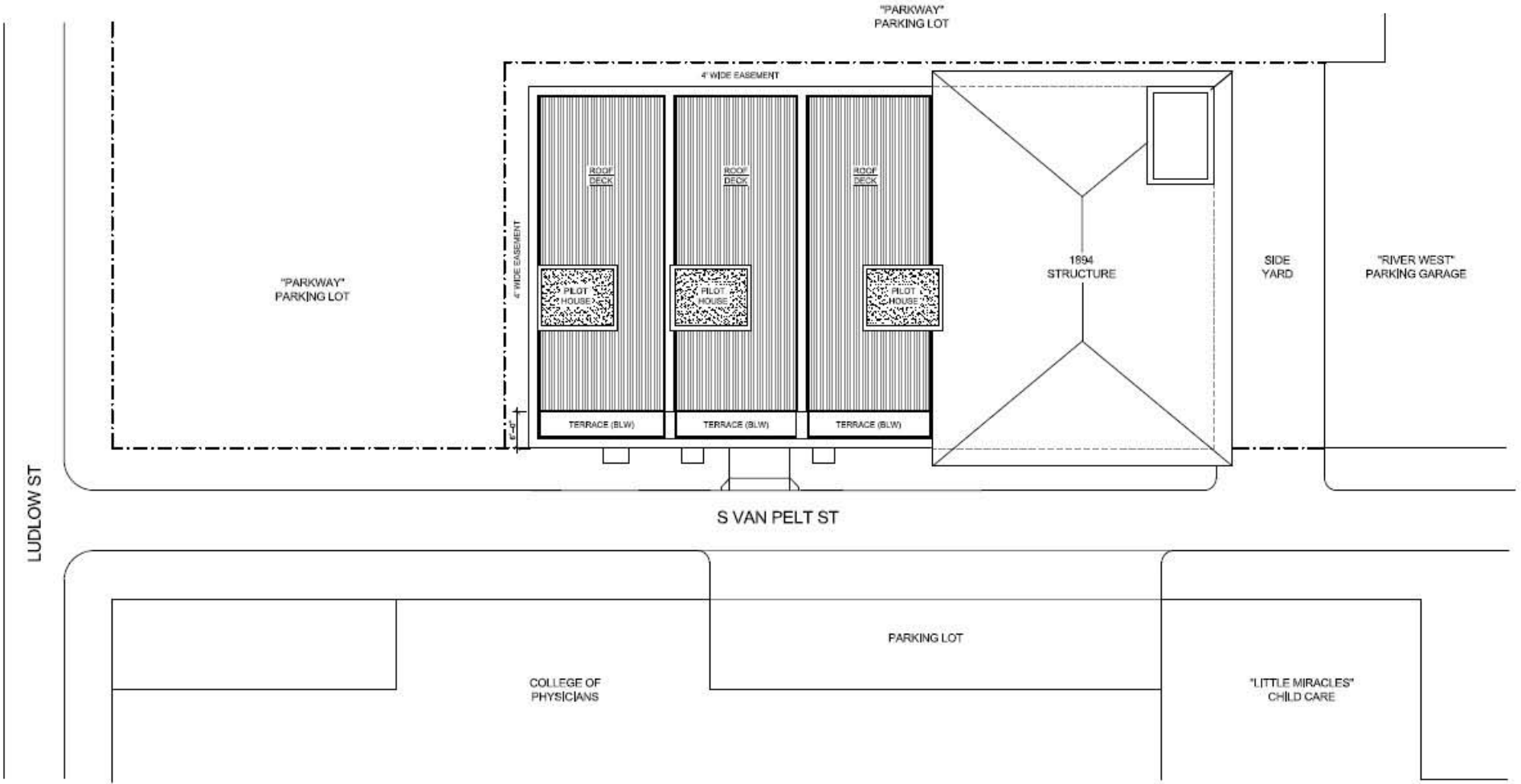


(PROPOSED)



(EXISTING)

APPROVED BY HISTORICAL COMMISSION - FEBRUARY 2020



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