

Public comment received for 4221 Pine Street



December 11, 2025

Philadelphia Historical Commission  
Re: 4221 Pine St

Dear Philadelphia Historical Commission,

The University City Historical Society (UCHS) is keenly interested in the application to legalize the roofing at 4221 Pine Street given the precedent this sets within the newly formed Southeast Spruce Hill Historic District. The 4200 block of Pine consists of monumental twin homes developed by William Kimball circa 1900, including the subject property with its spectacular Flemish gable dormer, applied ornamentation, modillioned cornice, and slate mansard roof. This block is a photogenic favorite of West Philadelphia, appearing frequently in promotional materials and social media accounts owing to its beauty, integrity, and historic character.

We oppose this application given the incongruous color, shape, finish, and texture of the brown replacement asphalt shingle. The brown shingles sit in jarring contrast to the grey slate of both the adjacent and the attached properties and to the slate which it replaced.

UCHS advocates for the architectural and cultural resources of West Philadelphia. We believe that affordability and preservation are not mutually exclusive, and we actively support alternative replacement materials and assemblies that do not detract from the architectural character of our historic properties. This application sets an important precedent for future work within the Southeast Spruce Hill Historic District. We therefore urge the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission to deny this application so that the owner can work with the PHC staff to select a more appropriate material.

Yours truly,

Amy Lambert  
UCHS Board President

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## 4221 Pine Roof Application - SUPPORT

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From Chuck Ball <chuckball444@gmail.com>

Date Fri 12/19/2025 9:26 AM

To preservation <preservation@Phila.gov>

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Dear Members of the Philadelphia Historical Commission,

I am writing in **support** of the application to legalize the existing roofing at 4221 Pine Street within the Southeast Spruce Hill Historic District.

The 4200 block of Pine Street is rightly recognized for its architectural quality and historic significance. At the same time, the long-term health of historic districts depends on their ability to function as living, diverse neighborhoods rather than static, museum-like environments. Preservation is most successful when it supports continued occupancy, affordability, and stewardship by a broad range of residents and homeowners.

The roofing material currently in place at 4221 Pine Street represents a practical and responsible solution that allows the property to remain safe, weather-tight, and well maintained. The existing roof does not alter the building's essential architectural form or defining features and remains visually subordinate to the primary façades and ornamental elements that define the character of the streetscape. **Put simply, there is no meaningful difference in appearance for the average Philadelphian, whatsoever.**

Eclectic and layered neighborhoods—where buildings reflect both their historic origins and the realities of contemporary life—are what allow cities to thrive. Flexibility in materials and maintenance solutions supports economic diversity, helps prevent disinvestment, and ensures that historic districts remain accessible to residents of varying means. A district that accommodates thoughtful, modest changes is more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable over time.

Approving this application would affirm that preservation and livability are complementary goals. It would recognize that historic districts succeed not by freezing buildings in time or by having neighbors snitch on each other, but by allowing them to adapt while retaining their overall character and contribution to the city.

For these reasons, I urge the Architectural Committee of the Philadelphia Historical Commission to approve the application to legalize the roofing at 4221 Pine Street.

Sincerely,

Chuck