

REPORT OF THE SPECIAL MEETING
OF THE
ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE
PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Robert Thomas, Chair
Commission Conference Room, One Parkway, 13th Fl., 1515 Arch St.
8 July 1999

Present

Robert Thomas, Chair
Herbert Levy
Daniel McCoubrey
Suzanne Pentz

Randal Baron, Assistant Historic Preservation Officer
Elizabeth Harvey, Historic Preservation Planner
R. Scott Jacob, Executive Secretary
Richard Tyler, Historic Preservation Officer

Also

Myles Kelly
Nahal Toosi, Philadelphia Inquirer
Alan Gilbert
Barbara Gilbert
Lenore Millhollen, Center City Residents Association (CCRA)
Richard Wilson
Marc Brookman, Esq., Duane Morris and Heckscher Attorneys
Walter Chatham
John Soroko, Esq., Duane Morris and Heckscher Attorneys
Laura Goldman
William Schwartz, Esq.
Diana Fertik
Ian Rubinstein
Marc Uravic
Judith Eden, CCRA
Aliko Strakes, Preservation Alliance
Michael Schade, CCRA
Katherine McCormick, Duane Morris and Heckscher Attorneys
Norman Tissian, Society Hill Civic Association
Ruthanne Madway, East of Broad Improvement Association
John Thrower, Bower Lewis Thrower Architects
Peter Shaw, P & A Associates
Alan Casnoff, P & A Associates
Richard Colucci, P & A Associates

Robert Thomas, Chair, explained that the Architectural Committee did not have a quorum at its last meeting. The Committee meets again today owing to objections to review without a quorum.

1914-1916 Rittenhouse Square Street; 1915-1919 Manning Street

Henry McNeil, Owner

Walter Chatham, Architect/Applicant

DATE: 1914 Rittenhouse Square Street - 1859; Entrance Pavilion - 1957;

Rear ell - late 19th century and mid 20th century; garage - c. 1960

PROPOSAL: Demolition of entrance pavilion, rear garage and ell; new additions; rooftop alteration and addition

This proposal calls for:

1. Extending the front steps.
2. Removal of the existing shutters on 1914 Rittenhouse Square Street.
3. The demolition of the one story entrance pavilion at 1916 Rittenhouse Square Street and the rear ell and garage on Manning Street.
4. A new four story gallery addition.
5. A large fifth floor living room addition and roof deck with clear railing atop the mansard roof of the historic structure to provide views of Rittenhouse Square.
6. A new two story garage and wider rear ell with vaulted roof deck.

The proposal no longer calls for the metal and glass canopy and metal railing at the front entrance. Walter Chatham, architect for the proposal, stated that the owner still wishes to bring the steps several feet forward, using real brownstone to match the original. The Committee did not object to the enlargement of the steps.

Mr. Chatham also stated that the owner wants to remove the existing shutters from 1914 Rittenhouse Square Street. He does not intend to replace them. The Committee acknowledged that the current shutters are not appropriate for a house of this period, but wanted the applicant to return for approval of the installation of shutters befitting this style and period of building.

Mr. Tyler explained that one year ago, the Architectural Committee, at the request of the present owner, reviewed the possibility of demolishing the pavilion for comment only to assist the owner in his decision to purchase the property. The Committee thought the pavilion could be demolished; however, the Commission took no action on that opinion.

In response to the Committee's recommendation the last time it reviewed this proposal, the applicant has lowered the first floor windows of the new addition. The new design extends the windows down to a more pedestrian level, but with frosted glass in the lower half to accommodate the owners special needs for that location. The applicant agreed to ask the owner if he would install interior shutters instead of the frosted glass. The Committee did not object to the proposal to demolish the entrance pavilion or the new addition in its place.

At the request of the Committee at its last meeting, the applicant constructed a mock up with poles and flanges to demarcate the proposed rooftop addition and deck. Mr. Thomas stated that he viewed the mock-up and found it highly visible from many locations, including directly across the street. The other committee members agreed that the proposed rooftop additions are too visible in the current scheme. The applicant showed the Committee drawings of what the addition and deck would look like from two locations, and with a planting screen placed at the front of the deck in an attempt to mitigate the appearance of the rooftop addition. Mr. Chatham stated that the penthouse addition will rise nine-and-a-half feet above the top of the mansard. He also explained that the revised proposal calls for sinking the roof deck floor below the top of the mansard, thus necessitating a smaller amount of visible railing. The railing will be constructed in clear plexiglass. The Committee objected to all aspects of the proposed rooftop addition except for the deck, and reiterated its recommendation that the applicant relocate the rooftop addition over the rear ell. The Committee also asked Mr. Chatham to lower the pitch of the proposed skylight to mitigate its visibility.

Mr. Thomas stated that he, along with J. William Cornell of this Committee and members of staff, examined the rear ell and determined that most of it was constructed in the 1950s. For this reason, the Committee did not object to the proposal to demolish and replace the rear ell and garage. Mr. Chatham explained that the owner chose a garage door of "pierced" metal, to allow for light and air into the rear yard. The proposed garage will have these doors on both ends for this purpose. The Committee agreed to recommend approval in concept of the proposed rear ell and garage.

Several members of the community voiced strong objections to the proposal. Miles Kelly who resides near the subject property noted that this house already has many windows with full views of Rittenhouse Square, and that the proposed additions will block views of the Square for himself and other homeowners. Alan Gilbert, also a neighbor, quoted the section of the ordinance regarding the Historical Commission's obligation to consider how proposals affect neighboring structures.

George Thomas, Architectural Historian, strongly objected to the recommendation to approve the demolition of the entrance pavilion. He commented on the significance and appropriateness of the pavilion for that location, and the unsuitable design and scale of the proposed addition at 1916 Rittenhouse Square Street. Alike Strakes of the Preservation Alliance stated the Alliance's objections to the proposal, including the lack of correlation between the fenestration of the proposed addition and the historic structure's, the amount of windows on the rear ell, and the rooftop addition.

William Schwartz, Esq., counsel for a party in opposition to the proposal, noted that a proposal involving the entire demolition of a building or a significant part thereof requires review by the Committee on Financial Hardship, unless the demolition is in the public interest. Mr. Schwartz also asked the applicant to make plans for the proposal available to interested parties. Marc Brookman, Esq., counsel for the owner, said he would ask the owner.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend:

Approval of:

- 1. Extending the front steps, using real brownstone to match the original, with staff to review and approve details.*
- 2. Removal of the existing shutters on 1914 Rittenhouse Square Street, subject to their replacement with shutters befitting this style of building, with staff to review and approve details.*
- 3. The demolition of the one story entrance pavilion at 1916 Rittenhouse Square Street and the rear ell and garage on Manning Street.*
- 4. A new four story gallery addition, with staff to review and approve details.*
- 5. The sunken roof deck, without the planting screen, and staff to review and approve details.*

Conceptual Approval:

- 1. A new two story garage and wider rear ell, with Committee and Commission to review materials and details.*

Denial of:

- 1. The rooftop addition.*

700-718 Walnut Street; 201-219 South 8th Street

Samuel Rappaport Family Estate, Owner

Peter Shaw, Applicant

John Thrower, Architect

DATES: 1868; 1898 700-710 Walnut Street

c. 1807 712-716 Walnut Street

c. 1965 718 Walnut Street

1961; 1969 201-219 South 8th Street

PROPOSAL: Partial demolition and complete demolition; build residential tower

Review in concept

This submission for a Review in Concept proposes the mixed use development of the entire block bounded by Seventh Street, Walnut Street, Eighth Street, and St. James Street. It includes the adaptive reuse of the PSFS Complex, the construction of a forty-six story luxury residential high-rise with 309 rental units, parking in the lower nine floors of the tower, and the creation of an

entry court off St. James Street. It will preserve three houses of York Row to a depth of fifteen feet. The Committee and Commission approved in concept a comparable proposal by this developer in 1995 and again in concept with this architect and a different developer in February 1999.

Peter Shaw and Alan Casnoff, developers of the proposal, described the locations of different aspects of the proposal. Mr. Shaw stated that the front exteriors of the existing group of historic buildings at the northeast corner of Walnut and 7th Streets will remain intact and restored. Committee and community members recognized the importance of restoring and reusing these neglected and highly significant structures. The proposal will entail the demolition of several additions in the interior of the block to make way for the entry court off of St. James Street.

The proposal will also include substantial demolition of the three remaining houses of York Row. The proposal calls for the complete demolition of a mid- twentieth century building on the corner of Walnut and South 8th Streets and another building on the east side of South 8th Street. Mr. Baron explained that in February 1999 the Commission approved the concept of truncating the York Row houses, subject to the restoration of the facade of 716 Walnut Street, adding historic dormers on all the York Row houses and raising the roof height of the corner building at 8th Street to hide the meeting point of the gabled roof with the new structure. He noted that the drawings submitted for the proposal show the retention of the newer storefront on 716 Walnut Street and the restoration of the dormers, but with the wrong dormer roofs. Mr. Shaw stated that the York Row storefront is necessary for the proposed use of that location as retail space. The Committee did not object to leaving the storefront, but wanted the arched dormers.

Mr. Baron asked the applicant to consider bringing a section of the new construction up to the sidewalk line along Walnut Street to conceal the side of the westernmost rowhouse, to enhance the illusion of its completeness. The Committee did not think this was necessary.

Mr. Tyler noted that the applicant must seek demolition permits for several of the properties, including York Row, and of the possibility that the Commission may send the matter to the Committee on Financial Hardship. Norman Tissian of the Society Hill Civic Association stated that the Association has met with the applicant, and unanimously supports the proposal. Other members of the community spoke in favor of the proposal.

The Committee voted unanimously to recommend approval of the proposal in concept, with retention of the York Row storefront and rounded dormers.

Respectfully submitted,



R. Scott Jacob
Executive Secretary