

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ARCHITECTURAL COMMITTEE OF THE PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

18 April 1984

Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman

Present: Herbert W. Levy, A.I.A., Chairman, Architectural Advisor to the Commission
Theodore T. Bartley, Jr., F.A.I.A., Preservation Committee, American Institute
of Architects, Philadelphia Chapter
John Dickey, F.A.I.A.
Penelope H. Batcheler, Historical Architect, Independence National Historical
Park
Henry J. Magaziner, F.A.I.A., National Park Service
F. Otto Haas, Chairman of the Commission
Allen J. Beckman, Member of the Commission
William Blades, Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation
Bob Jaeger, Philadelphia Historic Preservation Corporation
Richard Tyler, Historian
Patricia Siemiontkowski, Architectural Historian

Also: Steve Ziegler of Goldfarb Associates and Messrs. Josephs and Gross of
First Pennsylvania Bank to present plans for the installation of an
automated teller at the Packard Building, 15th and Chestnut Streets.
George Lovera of Agoos/Lovera Architects to present plans for the
rehabilitation and reuse of the Rebecca Gratz complex at 532-540 Spruce
Street.
Hans Egli, Architect, to present plans for alterations to the Ridgway
Library property.
Frederick Petersen and Anne Eriksen, Architect, to present revised
drawings for renovations to 1201 Locust Street.
Bill MacRostie of Langelier Historic Properties and Theodore Oldham of
Oldham and Seltz to present plans for the proposed rehabilitation
of the Curtis Building at 6th and Walnut Streets.
Brenda Axel, Tenant, to discuss with the Committee her proposal for
alterations to the ground floor at 5924 Germantown Avenue.
Lou Verruni, Owner, to discuss with the Committee his proposal for the
installation of a basement entrance under the existing stairs at 1116
Pine Street.
Jack Dichter, Owner, to request permission to demolish 1021 Waverly Street.
Claude Gittinger of Hansen Properties to request permission to demolish
the Lit Brothers Department Store buildings at 7th, 8th, Market and
Arch Streets.
Ellen Miller, Let Lits Live Coalition.
Eleanor Gesensway, Let Lits Live Coalition.
Charles Robb of the PHILADELPHIA DAILY NEWS.
Leslie M. Gallery, Foundation for Architecture.

SUBMISSIONS FOR ALTERATIONS

Packard Building, Southeast corner of 15th and Chestnut Streets, Messrs.
Josephs and Gross of First Pennsylvania Bank and Steve Ziegler of Goldfarb
Associates.

Mr. Ziegler presented for review to the Architectural Committee a proposal for the installation of an automated teller within the main entrance area to the First Pennsylvania Bank at 15th and Chestnut Streets. The alteration, as proposed, would include the removal of the storefront and doors flanking the existing revolving doors which are to remain on Chestnut Street. The new work, as described, will entail the installation of a new bronze anodized aluminum storefront to the west of the revolving doors and the installation of a new automated teller machine to the east. The teller is to be set in a marble background with a marble counter surrounded by a bronze frame. The bronze frame color and finish will match the existing "First Pennsylvania Bank" sign fascia.

The Committee found the location of the proposed automated teller within the main entrance and set back behind the original iron gates to be acceptable, but objected to the variety of proposed materials. The Committee directed the architect to simplify the design of the storefront teller area by using a single material. The members suggested a spandrel (black reflective) glass, duronatic aluminum or a dark marble.

The Committee directed the architect to revise his elevation drawing, to specify a single material and to submit it to the Commission staff for a final review and approval.

532-540 Spruce Street, Rebecca Gratz complex, Agoos/Lovera Architects. George Lovera, Architect, presented for the Committee's consideration plans for the rehabilitation and reuse of the Rebecca Gratz complex. The large stone structure at 532-536 Spruce Street, built originally as a hospital in 1913 from the designs of Hewitt, Granger and Paist, is not a certified structure. The two smaller, nineteenth century brick buildings at 538 and 540 Spruce Street, however, do appear on the Commission's list and fall within its purview.

The Committee members reviewed the plans submitted by Mr. Lovera and voted to recommend their approval subject to two minor changes. The members asked that the architect retain the existing brick chimney between 538 and 540 Spruce Street and reuse it. If necessary, the chimney may be rebuilt and reduced to a reasonable height. The Committee also called for the removal of the iron, fan-shaped guard at the rear of 540 Spruce Street.

Although the Commission maintains no jurisdiction over new, unattached construction, the Committee offered recommendations regarding the design of the new construction at the rear of the Spruce Street properties, particularly as seen from 6th Street. The Committee recommended that the window sash in the gable wall of the new building at 6th and Cypress Streets contain larger size glass lights. Two over two light sash, in the opinion of the Committee, would be appropriate. If smaller glass lights are desired, larger sized window openings with window heads more consistent with those on the gable wall of 540 Spruce Street would allow for better proportioned glass lights and would present a better appearance. It was

the opinion of the Committee that the architect should study more carefully the relationship of the two gable walls along 6th Street.

Ridgway Library, 901 S. Broad Street, Hans Egli, Architect. Mr. Egli presented to the Committee for consideration plans for renovations to the Ridgway Library, an imposing Greek Revival structure designed by Addison Hutton in 1878, and its surrounding area. A portion of the building and the library grounds are presently being used for recreational purposes by the community.

The alterations, as described by the architect, include the following:

- 1) Removal of certain wrought iron grills from emergency exits (to be stored in the building);
- 2) closing up of two window openings in the east facade;
- 3) removal of graffiti;
- 4) installation of a tubular picket fence mounted on the stone wall surrounding the property;
- 5) repair of existing fence facing Broad Street and the installation of concrete walls at the corners;
- 6) installation of two stationary gates along Broad Street; and
- 7) installation of light poles.

Following some discussion of the proposed work, the Committee agreed that additional information and drawings would be necessary for an adequate review of the project. In particular, the Committee asked for details of the concrete walls and tubular fencing, including cuts where available; elevation drawings of the fence and new gates; cuts of the proposed light fixtures; and details showing the closing of the two windows on the east wall.

The architect was asked to prepare this additional information and to submit it to the Architectural Committee at its next scheduled meeting.

1201 Locust Street, Frederick Petersen, Developer and Anne Eriksen, Architect. Mr. Petersen and Ms. Eriksen presented for the Committee's consideration revised drawings for the rehabilitation of 1201 Locust Street, a three-story nineteenth century, stucco-faced, brick building.

The Committee found the revised submission to be acceptable and voted to recommend its approval as submitted. The project has also received a preliminary rehabilitation certification from the Bureau for Historic Preservation in Harrisburg.

Curtis Building, 6th and Walnut Streets, Bill Mac Rostie, Langelier Historic Properties, and Theodore Oldham, Architect. Mr. Oldham presented for preliminary review by the Architectural Committee plans for the complete rehabilitation of the Curtis Building at 6th and Walnut Streets. It is the intention of the developer and his architect to restore the exterior of the Curtis Building with some minor modifications.

Mr. Oldham described the proposed renovations in detail. They included the enlargement of an existing Walnut Street entrance to the building and the introduction of a second entrance, the conversion of a two-story vehicular entrance on 7th Street to pedestrian use, door and window alterations on the Sansom Street elevation, the repair of steel sash and wood sash or the replacement of sash with wood where necessary, the extension of the 12th floor area approximately 50 feet along Walnut Street and other minor changes.

Following some discussion of the project, the Committee voted to recommend its approval in concept. Before a final approval can be granted, a complete set of working drawings and details must be submitted for review.

5924 Germantown Avenue, Brenda Axel, Tenant. Mrs. Axel presented to the Committee for consideration an artist's rendering for proposed storefront renovations to 5924 Germantown Avenue, a two-story, Victorian structure.

Mrs. Axel explained to the Committee that the rendering was inaccurate and did not reflect the proposed work she intended to undertake. Unfortunately she was unable to secure an accurate measured drawing in time for the Committee meeting. She described to the members her proposal for the ground floor storefront which included placing the entrance door flush with the face of the building, using cinder block and stucco in lieu of brick, removing the existing deteriorated storefront cornice and hanging a new awning.

The Committee explained to Mrs. Axel that without an accurately measured drawing, the members could not review her submission. The members advised the applicant to hire an architect to prepare an elevation drawing which will accurately reflect the proposed work. So as not to cause the tenant any undue delay, the Committee agreed to review the drawing before its next scheduled meeting.

1116 Pine Street, Mr. Verruni, Owner. Mr. Verruni appeared before the Committee to request permission to install a basement entrance and stair at 1116 Pine Street, a three-story, Greek Revival, brick rowhouse with a commercial ground floor.

Mr. Verruni explained his need to obtain access to the basement of his store where he will house and restore his antiques. He further expressed to the Committee his intention to reuse, in the construction of the basement entrance, an old iron handrail salvaged from another building.

The Committee agreed to the proposed alteration, in concept, and asked Mr. Verruni to submit a measured drawing, showing the proposed alteration, to one of the Committee members for a final review and approval.

Subsequent to the meeting, a drawing was submitted by the owner and reviewed by Mr. Bartley. A final approval of this project is recommended.

DEMOLITIONS

1021 Waverly Street, Jack Dichter, Owner. Mr. Dichter appeared before the Architectural Committee to request permission to demolish the building at 1021 Waverly Street, a small two-story, nineteenth century, stucco-faced house, to allow for construction of a new residence on the site.

Mr. Dichter explained to the members of the Committee that the present structure does not meet his needs. Mr. Dichter and his architect had studied the possibility of constructing an addition to the rear of the existing building and prepared a submission which the Committee reviewed at its March meeting. The Committee made suggestions regarding the proposed design of the addition and asked Mr. Dichter and his architect to consider them. Following additional study, the owner determined that the house could not be altered to suit his needs. The Waverly Street building which was purchased along with a commercial property on Pine Street where Mrs. Dichter operates an antiques business will serve as the Dichters' residence.

If permitted to demolish the Waverly Street house, Mr. Dichter agreed to construct a building of good contemporary design that would meet with the approval of the Historical Commission and its Architectural Committee.

Following some discussion, the Committee voted to recommend that Mr. Dichter be permitted to demolish 1021 Waverly Street and construct a new house in its place. The Committee thanked Mr. Dichter for offering a courtesy review of the proposed new construction. Plans for the new house will be submitted at a later date.

Lit Brothers Department Store Complex, 7th, 8th, Market and Arch Streets, Claude Gittinger, Hansen Properties. Mr. Gittinger appeared before the members of the Architectural Committee to request permission to demolish the Lit Brothers buildings at 701-739 Market Street, 720 Arch Street, 721-725 Filbert Street and miscellaneous structures.

The Lits Complex, certified by the Philadelphia Historical Commission in June of 1970, stands as one of the finest collections of nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial buildings in the city. Since its abandonment in 1977, various persons and groups have studied Lits' potential for reuse.

In his presentation to the Architectural Committee, Mr. Gittinger listed many developers who examined the complex and found it unworkable. In addition to Hansen Properties, other developers and architects included Vincent Kling, Arthur D. Little, Dan Keating, Jay Nathan, Provident Mutual, Harting and Silver.

Hansen Properties in February of 1983 entered into an agreement of sale with a scheduled closing date of August 1983. Hansen assembled a qualified design

team which included the architectural office of Hans Stein Associates, and later Cope Linder Associates, Latimer and Buck as financial advisors and John Milner Associates as historical consultants. This group developed a \$58 million mixed use rehabilitation project which preserved the historic structures and adapted them for new uses.

As the study proceeded, Hansen found that rising construction costs, an increase in interest rates, a lack of enthusiasm in Market Street East office development and relatively little activity from the financial and leasing community seriously impacted the Lits project. This, in addition to the loss of a \$10 million UDAG, led to a \$12 million shortfall and the demise of the project.

Although Hansen Properties applied for a \$10 million UDAG and later elected not to pursue it, the developer purchased the property in January of 1984 and continued to develop plans toward the proposed reuse of the complex.

After some additional study, however, Hansen Properties reached the conclusion that the proposed rehabilitation of the Lits complex was not a prudent investment at this time. It was decided not to proceed with the project.

Hansen Properties has and will continue to talk with newly interested developers and investors regarding Lits. Mr. Gittinger offered to make all of Hansen's financial figures and packaging available upon request to interested parties. Mr. Gittinger reported that Hansen Properties would consider a joint venture with another developer and, in fact, has been talking with several. If a buyer for the property comes forward, Hansen Properties will sell the entire parcel for \$10,250,000. This price will increase by \$6,000 a day - the daily carrying charges on the property. Sale of the cast-iron building on Arch Street as a separate parcel, according to Mr. Gittinger, would be given consideration.

Mr. Gittinger explained that, at this time, investment in the Lits project does not appear prudent. Instead, Hansen Properties intends to proceed with demolition of the buildings on the site at a cost of approximately \$600,000 and to enter a holding pattern until such time as the market improves. In the meanwhile, Hansen will pave the site and use it for surface parking. Mr. Gittinger pointed out to the Architectural Committee that One Reading Center's inability to attract tenants indicates a soft market for office space at this time. While the long term development potential exists in Market Street East, Hansen Properties believes it unwise to make an investment on the Lits site at this time.

The Committee asked Mr. Gittinger if Hansen Properties had considered an interim scheme of a less grand scale. This might include preserving a strip of the buildings along Market, 7th and 8th Street and developing some small scale commercial uses with, perhaps, five year leases. Mr. Gittinger reported that Hansen had not examined such a scheme. He was of the opinion that the cost of such a project would far exceed any reasonable return.

The Committee suggested that, perhaps, some compromise possibly could be achieved and requested that it be considered. Mr. Gittinger explained that the economic return would need to outweigh the risk if the financial community were to support such a venture. He was not optimistic in this regard.

The Committee next asked Mr. Gittinger to explain the loss of the \$10 million UDAG and the potential for its retrieval.

Mr. Gittinger related to the Committee members that HUD moved the UDAG application to the next quarter which would have caused Hansen Properties some serious cash flow problems. The City which would have received a handling fee for lending Hansen the \$10 million in advance of the UDAG award would have become a quarter partner in the project for the life of the loan. Hansen Properties found this arrangement to be unacceptable and, as a result, decided to withdraw the UDAG application.

The UDAG complication coupled with the lack of leasing activities in Market East, rising interest rates and construction costs and an uninterested financial community led Hansen to scrap the project.

At this time, the Chairman apologized for having to leave the meeting early. Before departing, Mr. Levy cast his vote in favor of recommending to the Commission the imposition of the statutory six-month delay on demolition of the Lit Brothers buildings.

Mr. Bartley took the chair in Mr. Levy's absence and the meeting continued. Some further discussion ensued concerning several issues. These included the feasibility and cost of an additional study which might address preservation of the facades of the buildings, the re-use of the buildings as a hotel, the consideration of a scaled down interim scheme and the parceling up and marketing, separately, of various pieces of the complex.

Following considerable discussion, Mr. Bartley, acting as chairman, thanked Mr. Gittinger for appearing before the Committee to answer its questions. Mr. Bartley then called for a vote of the Committee members. The Committee agreed, unanimously, to recommend that the Commission impose its six-month statutory delay on the demolition of 701-739 Market Street, 720 Arch Street, 721-725 Filbert Street and miscellaneous structures. Within this period of time, the Commission, its Architectural Committee and its staff will work with Hansen Properties and others to secure the preservation of these fine buildings.

PLAQUES

1902 Waverly Street. The Committee again reviewed the owner's request for a plaque for 1902 Waverly Street. It was the opinion of the Committee that the house, in its present condition, does merit receipt of an altered plaque. The members voted to recommend that the Historical Commission approve an altered plaque for display on the house at 1902 Waverly Street.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Patricia Siemiontkowski
Architectural Historian