

PIPERATO LAW OFFICE, LLC

JOSEPH J. PIPERATO, III, ESQUIRE

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October 9, 2020

Bethlehem Historic Conservation Commission
10 E. Church Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018
Attn: Craig Peiffer, AICP

RE: Application for Certificate of Appropriateness

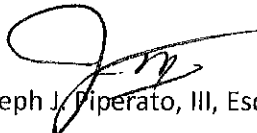
Dear Mr. Peiffer:

Please be advised that I represent 325 South New Street Development, LLC. Enclosed herein please find an Application for Certificate of Appropriateness and required submission materials on behalf of my client pertaining to properties located at 319, 321, 323, 325 and 327 South New Street in the City of Bethlehem. (collectively the "Property"). The Property is located within the South Bethlehem Historic Conservation District and therefore, requires a meeting before the South Bethlehem Historic Conservation Commission for a recommendation to Bethlehem City Council.

It is my understanding that you will review the enclosed Application to determine its completeness. Upon the determination that the Application is complete, you will schedule the matter for a meeting with the SBHCC which normally meets on the third Monday of each month. Please advise me of your determination on the completeness of the Application and the date of the scheduled meeting before the SBHCC.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and should you have any questions or require additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,


Joseph J. Piperato, III, Esquire



Historical Conservation Commission
City of Bethlehem
10 East Church Street
Bethlehem, PA 18018

09-October-2020

Re: Existing Buildings
319, 321, 323, 325, 327 South New Street
Bethlehem, PA

To Whom it May Concern:

The Ballina Group, LLC performed an inspection of the buildings referenced above on Tuesday, August 11, 2020. The purpose of this inspection was to document existing conditions and note building deficiencies as they relate to life safety, general building code compliance, and overall building integrity.

The age of the buildings was unknown at the time of inspection, but upon review of the existing building make up and condition, it can be assumed that the buildings are approaching, if not exceeding, 100 years in age.

The existing structures are five continuous buildings comprising approximately 6,500 square feet. Each building is currently a mixed-use occupancy, with a commercial tenant on the ground floor and a mixture of apartments on the floor levels above.

Please see the following sections as they apply to each building and the attached appendix for existing photographs:

Existing Structure:

Each building contains a basement, crawl space, or combination thereof. The existing foundations are consistent with "rock & rubble wall" with a concrete floor. Wood floor framing consists of wood 2x10s at a spacing of 16 inches on center, bearing directly on the top of the stone foundation wall. Wall framing is wood 2x4 construction with lath and plaster and/or gypsum board. Roof framing members could not be identified, but appear to be consistent with traditional wood framing structures.

Each basement showed signs of moisture/water intrusion, although no active leaks were present at the time of the inspection. This foundation construction method is historically susceptible to leaks and intrusion which can create air quality and mold issues. The basements are unventilated, which present long term risks to structural framing and overall building and occupant health.

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Building façades are made of a mixture of brick, siding, stucco and ornamental moldings/trim. These façade members show signs of fatigue, cracking, and outright failure.

Each floor/story shows signs of uneven settlement. This can be attributed to an inherent structural deficiency, lack of maintenance and repairs, foundation displacement, or shifting subsurface conditions. Further investigation would be required to determine the root cause of the issues.

Life Safety & Code Compliance:

Each building presents a number of life safety issues that can pose risk to the building occupants. These items include, but are not limited to the following:

- Lack of secondary exits from apartments. In the event of a fire or other incident that would cause building evacuation, occupants can become trapped and exposed to unnecessary risk.
- No sprinklers are present in the buildings, which pose a risk to occupants in the event of fire.
- No fire extinguishers / fire / smoke alarms present. Building occupants are at risk of improper warnings or ability to extinguish small fires.
- Exits blocked by tenant usage. In the event of evacuation, this can pose an unnecessary risk.
- Staircases not code compliant. Stairs exceed allowable rise and run permitted by code. Staircase width appears to be too narrow to comply with code.
- Hallways and exit egress paths deficient.
- No emergency lighting provided. This poses a life safety risk in the event of evacuation.
- Apartment layouts appear to be configured in “boarding house” style, consisting of multiple bedrooms and little to no utilities. Apartments have shared facilities that can pose health risks to occupants.
- Bedroom windows are not identified with rescue windows and not all are operational in event of fire. In the event of a fire, fire fighters may have difficulty locating bedrooms with trapped occupants, which poses a life safety risk.
- Building main entrances/exits are not ADA accessible. Given the existing slope of the public way, they are unable to be upgraded appropriately without causing significant disturbance to the public way and limit use to pedestrians.
- Apartments are not ADA accessible, nor adaptable per latest code standards. There are no Type A or Type B apartments.

- There is no potential for the addition of elevators or the creation of “areas of refuge” on upper floors.

Environmental Concerns:

As per the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment, conducted by Liberty Environmental, we have the following concerns for the health and safety of the building users and building integrity:

- Previous building uses indicated a dry-cleaning business as well as a printing and supply business, no chemical or hazardous spill incidents are currently known and the linger presence of such materials is unknown. Per the Phase I report, “*No releases or spill incidents are known to have occurred. However, printing and dry-cleaning facilities pose the potential for subsurface impacts of chlorinated solvents, which have the ability to migrate to nearby properties...*”
- A total of 850 gallons of oil can be stored in the basements of the buildings at any time (assuming tanks are regularly filled). These fuel tanks are the buildings’ main heat source. In a multi-story/multi-occupant building, the continued presence of these tanks poses a risk of direct surface release in the event of damage or deterioration, which can be harmful to the building materials and occupants.
- Building age and construction is consistent with building methods and materials that would contain both lead paint and asbestos containing material (ACM). Further testing should be completed as these items can be quite harmful to building occupants.
- Unventilated basements can be a breeding ground for mold and other harmful bacteria / organisms.

Recommendations & Conclusions:

Upon conclusion of the study, we find the following:

1. Due to the location of apartments on the upper floors and the present condition of the buildings there is a serious threat to the health and safety to the occupants in the event of a building fire or related incident.
2. It is not feasible to conduct a renovation program to these structures that would meet all current codes without significant reconstruction. Additionally, the existing conditions of the structural members would not allow such improvements.
3. The indoor air quality issues that are existing currently cannot be overcome at this point without extensive renovations and replacements to the mechanical systems.
4. Americans with Disabilities Act compliance within these buildings is non-existent and not feasible without significant structural alterations and alterations to space planning.



It is our recommendation that the buildings should be demolished in favor of new, code compliant and most importantly, safe development to better serve the community.

Should you need any other information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "JGCL".

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See Attached Appendix

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Existing Street View



Existing Street View



Existing Street View



Existing Street View



Existing Street View



Existing Street View



Basement Access / Bilco Door



Basement exit / Electrical and Foundation



Stairs to Ground Floor



Crumbling Foundation



Crumbling Foundation



Oil Tank and Electrical



Oil Tank and Concrete Floor



Buildings Utilities



Oil Tanks



Unventilated Crawl Space



Unventilated Crawl Space



Unventilated Crawl Space



Unventilated Crawl Space with checked beam



Framing



Narrow, steep staircase



Unsafe split level stair



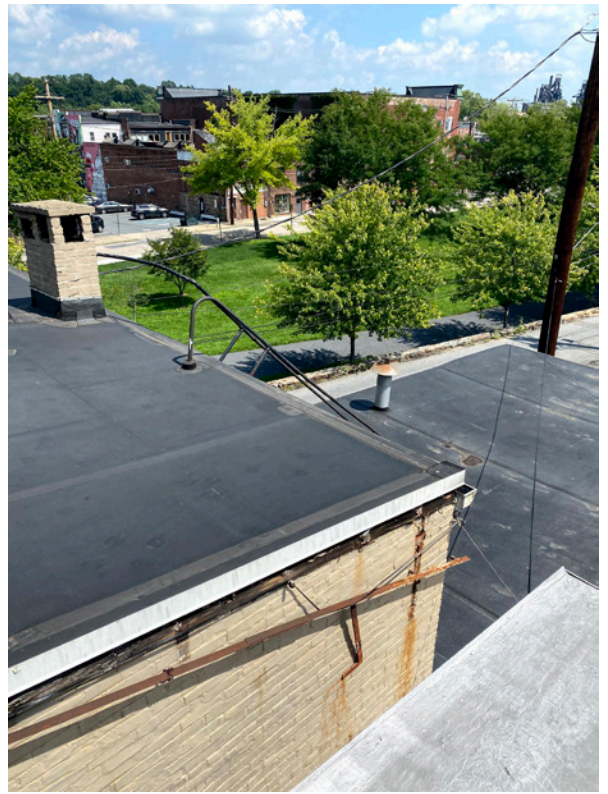
Commercial Space



Exit door to roof



No egress on roof



Illegal stair leads to lower roof, no access to grade



No access to grade



Existing Entrance, Non-ADA Compliant



Existing Entrance, Non-ADA Compliant



Dumpster against building blocking egress path