

Manayunk Neighborhood Council, PO Box 4667, Philadelphia, PA 19127

www.ManayunkCouncil.org

215-482-5528

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June 8, 2005

Michael Sklaroff, Esquire, Chair
Philadelphia Historical Commission
576 City Hall
Philadelphia, PA 19107

Re: 3 Rector Street; Demolition - **OPPOSED**

Dear Mr. Sklaroff,

The developers for 3 Rector Street presented their plans at Manayunk Neighborhood Council's June meeting. Attendees universally opposed the project. People objected to the loss of an important historic structure and the fact that we are losing much of the historic ambience of the historic district. Manayunk was built around the mills along the canal. The historic mill buildings are the heart of our community. They are the reason Manayunk is a historic district and an interesting place to visit. Without them, Manayunk will not be a unique historic mill town or a popular destination.

The developer's plans call for a parking lot on the tow path level. Manayunk Development Corporation recently completed a master plan for the tow path. The plan established guidelines for access to the tow path from the buildings that line the canal. 3 Rector Street has the best facade of any building along the tow path. In the attached photo, you can see nine attractive arched openings that provide access the entire length of the building. The loss of this unique structure will lessen the tow path experience. A parking lot however well screened, will degrade it further.

The current, low height of 3 Rector St. provides a picturesque view from Main St. to Venice Island and across the river.

Residents also oppose the burden additional residential units place on the area, primarily traffic congestion and parking. Recently, 130 residential units were completed. Another 398 units are under construction on Venice Island. Hundreds more units are proposed. The small size of this project may limit its impact on congestion and parking problems, however, its small size also makes it a meaningless contribution to the current residential glut. This project provides no value to the community and, at best, a trivial contribution to the city. The project does not, under any scenario, justify the demolition of a contributing historic building.

The developers assert that the building has little value due to its long time on the market. Offers have been made on the building. It is not the job of the community or the Historical Commission to meet the profit expectations of property owners, however unrealistic they may be. There is no hardship or compelling need that justifies the destruction of this building.

The developers have argued that the site is unsuitable for retail because Smith & Hawken, an upscale garden store that operated at 2 Rector St., closed after a few years. Smith & Hawken simultaneously opened several other stores in the area, undercutting their own operation. They provide no lesson on the viability of retail at this just-off-main location. Bourbon Blue, a restaurant now across the street, is very successful. If this rate of turnover defines unsuitability, we will have to declare most of Main Street a failure.

There is no need to tear at the historic fabric of our community and destroy an interesting, unique, and historic building that served the community for over 120 years. This building is a significant and irreplaceable part of the Manayunk Historic District. It must not be demolished.

Kevin Smith

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Smith', written over a white background.

President

Copy: Councilman Michael Nutter
Kay Sykora, Manayunk Development Corporation

