

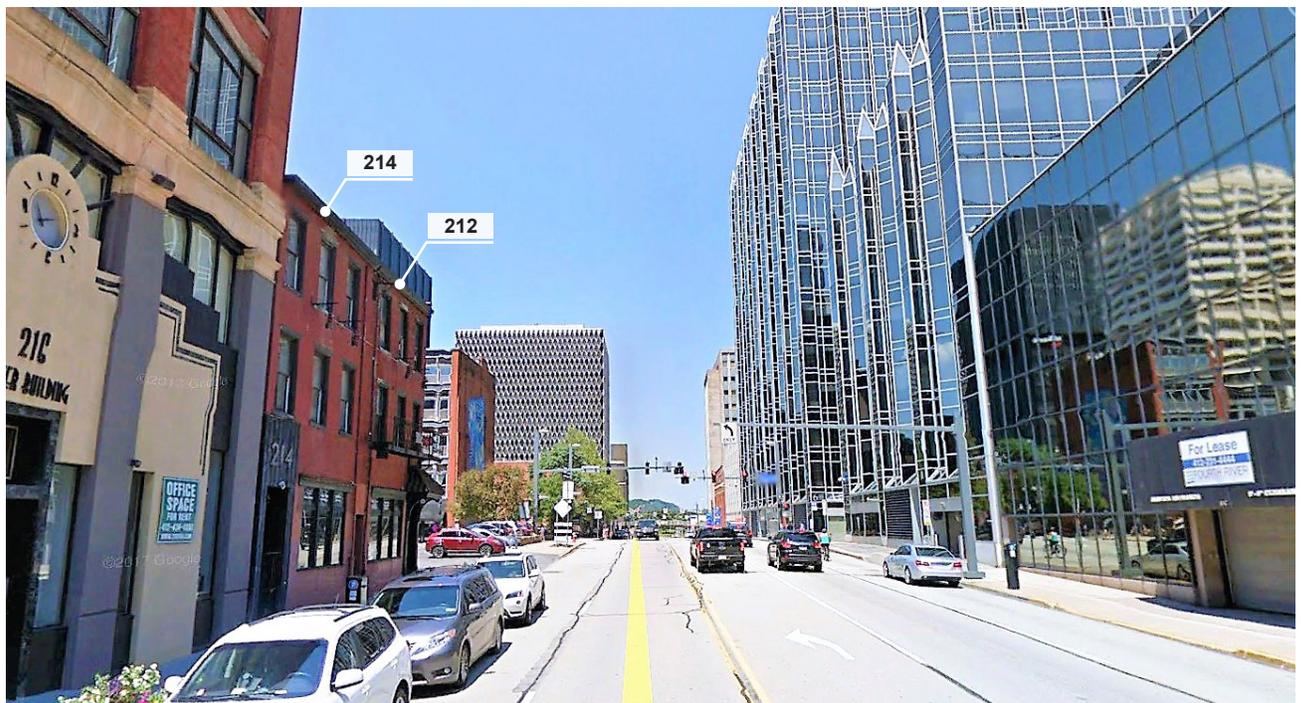
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Troiani approved to tear down former Papa J's downtown

By Tim Schooley



The Troiani family eked out a vote from the Pittsburgh Planning Commission to demolish the former Papa J's restaurant building at 212 and 214 Boulevard of the Allies by a vote of 4-3 with one abstention.

The vote to tear down the 19th century structure came as some on the commission signaled a perhaps harder vote to come in demolishing the other buildings within the larger block at Market Street and Boulevard of the Allies, which the Troianis hope to consolidate into one parcel of more than 25,000 square feet that can

be used for a larger development.

While there was some disagreement on the commission about whether the building and others can be restored and economically viable, there wasn't any preservation-minded opposition to the demolition plan to provide any testimony against tearing down the structure at the hearing before the vote.

Representatives of the ownership of two neighboring properties spoke out in favor of the Troiani plan, echoing their concern that the buildings are a safety

risk for the neighboring First Side community.

Ken Doyno, an architect and principal of Strip District-based Rothschild Doyno Collaborative, argued to the commission that the buildings were too small to reuse in a way that's economically viable, with the structures mostly 20 feet wide and of varying heights.

He called them "not characteristic with contemporary development uses."

Michael Troiani, serving in the role of owner's representative for his family's property, contended

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before the commission that the future viability of the building ended in 2013 when it was condemned by the city after a gas leak caused by a nearby street valve. Soon after, other basic systems of the building failed to pass muster as well.

“Use is life,” he said. “Without use of the building, the building deteriorated rapidly in the last five years.”

Pittsburgh Planning Commission Chairwoman Christine Mondor, who voted against demolition, made sure the vote in no way influenced votes on the other properties to come.

She said she disagreed with the notion that the buildings were not market viable, observing that comparably similar buildings across

Market Street have been converted into expensive condominiums.

Becky Mingo also disagreed, arguing that she has renovated buildings like it as an architect and developer.

Yet the Troiani team argued the buildings are too far gone and expressed concern about their structural safety.