

# After 7 decades, family sells Spruce Street brownstones

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For 70 years, the Kramer family owned and managed a portfolio of four buildings along Spruce Street in Center City that had 35 apartments.

The brownstones at 1023, 1026, 1027 and 1028 Spruce St. were originally built as single-family homes in the mid-1800s and acquired in 1939 by Nathan and Ceil Kramer, who decided to convert the buildings into apartments. Over the decades, the family maintained them as such until recently the difficult decision was made to sell.

“It took a lot of mind searching,” said Alan Kramer, Nathan and Ceil's grandson. “It came to the point that it was time.”

Many families own real estate on a long-term basis as a way to create wealth, but as happens, there comes a point where moving on is in the best interest for everyone and such was the case for the Kramer family. Alan's mother mother along with a trust inherited the four properties from Ciel. Through circumstances and deaths, Alan, who is a lawyer, took over managing the properties in 1991.

“Since then, I've been a one-man-show,” he said. “I took care of everything. I started to see my life consumed by it.”

The burden of the day-to-day operations of tending to tenants, maintenance and collecting rent, combined with a desire to cash out sooner rather than later also weighed into the family's decision. “We decided it made sense to share a good thing before our mother dies,” said Alan Kramer, who has three brothers. “This helps all of us.”

These “grand old buildings” seldom come up for sale but are very desirable for investors and there is a segment of renters who prefer to live in brownstones that have historic character, said Josh Nadel of MPN Realty, who represented the Kramer family in the transaction. Veronica Blum of MPN Realy represented the buyer.

Apartment buildings along Spruce and Pine streets seldom come up for sale but often draw a lot of interest when they do.

“There's nothing like that available,” said Mike McCann, a real estate agent with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices. “Millions of people want buildings like that but there is nothing ever available. People hold onto them or what has happened is people who own those buildings convert them into condos and sell the condos individually for \$400 to \$500 or even \$600 a square foot.”

Those brownstone that aren't subject to conversion are often sold in off market transactions, McCann said.

If anything underscores interest in the Kramer portfolio it's the number of showings and offers that were tallied. Over the course of 60 days, there were 40 tours and 20 offers, Nadel said. The offers were whittled down to five based on price, terms and buyer. While Nadel declined to disclose the names of those prospective buyers who took a stab at buying the buildings, he described them as “marquee players ...household names of Philadelphia real estate.”

The buyer, who Blum declined to disclose, is from Philadelphia and owns properties in University City but wants to expand into Center City. It paid \$6.55 million for the buildings, which was \$50,000 over the asking price, and plans to renovate the units as they come available.



NATALIE KOSTELNI

This Spruce Street property was one of four that sold in a portfolio.

**Natalie Kostelni**

Reporter

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