

From the Philadelphia Business Journal:

<https://www.bizjournals.com/philadelphia/news/2019/04/16/harbisons-factory-in-kensington-sold.html>

Harbison's factory in Kensington sold

Apr 16, 2019, 7:02am EDT

The Harbison's Dairies plant, known for its iconic water tower shaped like an old fashioned milk bottle, in the Kensington neighborhood of Philadelphia has sold for \$4.2 million and there are plans to redevelop it into a mixed-use project.

An affiliate of Pop! Promos bought the famed building at 2041-2055 Coral St. after a nearly two-year search for a new building to expand its business, said Sterling Wilson, co-founder of Pop! Promos. The company has run out of space at its offices at 2nd and Brown streets in Philadelphia.

Last May, Wilson came across the Harbison's property and explored how a redevelopment might work. "It's a fairly complex project," he said. The building is historic and the neighborhood "feels very strongly about it" and its iconic bottle, he said. Plans needed to go through the historical review process as well as receive zoning approvals. The property consists of four connected structures totaling 58,000 square feet and nearly runs the length of a block.

Preliminary plans call for converting three of the structures into 55 residential units and the fourth structure would be office space for Pop! Promos, which has a total of 80 employees of which 35 are based in Philadelphia. The buildings that would house the residential units would also be expanded by three stories to accommodate the units.

An interior courtyard would be cut out of the three residential structures and be exposed to the milk bottle, which will be restored to its original glory. It will be painted white with the Harbison's logo in red. In addition, dozens of windows that are boarded up now will be exposed.

Wilson said he aims to preserve much of the interior's historical character. Stuart G. Rosenberg Architects designed the project. The project is expected to be completed by next summer.

"The redevelopment of this building will be a game changer for Old Kensington and Fishtown," said Nadia Bilynsky, a broker with MPN Realty Inc. who, along with Ken Mallin, represented the buyer in the transaction. The seller, Fozan Ehmedi, had used the building for storage and was represented by Jack Byers of NAI Geis.

The Harbison's plant dates back to 1895 and served as a bottling factory for the milk producer. The property is on the Philadelphia Register for Historic Places, giving it protection from demolition and requiring any redevelopment to adhere to certain provisions that would protect the building's historical character.

The property was put up for sale late last summer and received a lot of interest from developers because of its location in Kensington, which is seeing an uptick in residential construction, and its potential for conversion.



NATALIE KOSTELNI

Sterling Wilson in front of the Harbison's Dairies' factory. Wilson plans to convert the property.

Natalie Kostelni

Reporter

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