

After 20 years of ownership, Turchi sells Dilworth House to Philadelphia developer

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Astoban Investments has paid \$7.5 million for Dilworth House, an historic building that overlooks Washington Square in Philadelphia and has been involved in a series of legal battles for more than a decade.

John Turchi Jr. sold the property and brings to an end his controversial 20-year ownership of the building at 223-225 S. 6th St. Under his ownership, Turchi had proposed various controversial development plans for the building that were routinely met with resistance from neighborhood groups, such as Society Hill Civic Association, as well as historians and preservationists.

Dilworth House was built in 1957 by former Mayor Richardson Dilworth in a show of his commitment to the ongoing revitalization of Philadelphia — particularly in that neighborhood — and valued for its historical symbolism. It was placed on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1999. Turchi bought the house in 2001 and planned to use it as a single-family residence but later proposed the construction of a 16-story condominium tower.

Those plans were rejected by civic groups and those living in neighboring buildings and litigation ensued. In 2015, Commonwealth Court ruled in Turchi's favor. It wasn't until 2019 that plans were approved to demolish a portion of the rear of the structure to make way for a 12-story residential tower with 10 units.

Astoban is tweaking the design of what will be a roughly \$36 million project, working on construction financing and its development is expected to get underway by June, said [Tim Shaaban](#), managing director and partner at Astoban. The project will likely have nine units with the pricing starting out at around \$1,200 a square foot and eventually rising to between \$1,400 to \$1,800 a square foot.

Dilworth is a project that Shaaban had been looking at for a couple of years and befitting for the Philadelphia developer. It's not unlike a development Astoban built at 2110 Walnut St. and a project it is pursuing at 1808-1810 Chestnut St. in Rittenhouse Square.

"The project itself is a carbon copy of 2110," Shaaban said. "The difference is it's right on Washington Square."

At 2110 Walnut, Astoban bought a site that included a historically-designated Frank Furness structure and designed a 10-story condominium tower that integrated that building into the project.

In 2019, the real estate company [paid \\$14.3 million](#) for 1808-1810 Chestnut St. that served as the headquarters for Freeman's auction house for nearly a century. Astoban is retaining the existing structure of the Chestnut Street building and adding a new residential condominium tower on top that will span 10 stories.

"I think he's the number one choice to develop this into a gorgeous condo building," said [Ken Mallin](#) of MPN Realty, who arranged the transaction between Turchi and Astoban and was also involved in the sale of Freeman's Chestnut Street building. "It's a landmark site and is the only site on the square that is still not developed."

The property was on the market for about year and there were several interested parties but the coronavirus hit. While that set things back, it enabled Turchi to work through some outstanding issues related to the site and future development.

"It was very complicated and amazing how well John put this together," Mallin said.

Astoban has completed several high-end condominium developments in Center City including 2207 Chestnut St. and 124 N. 2nd St. Astoban targets a buyer who doesn't desire to live in a 200-unit tower but prefers larger residential units that are more private and secure, Shaaban said.

"It's generally meant to be boutique, private and restricted," he said.



ARTIST'S RENDERING VIA PLAN PHILLY/WHYY.

A rendering shows a proposed tower behind Dilworth House, as approved in 2019. The project fronts Washington Square.



