



# Airy Street Prison Conditions Assessment and Report

November 1, 2024

## Intensive Multi-Disciplinary Conditions Assessment Montgomery County, Pennsylvania

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- Appendix B | Historic Preservation Assessment
- Appendix C | Site / Civil Feasibility
- Appendix D | Structural Definitions and Photographs
- Appendix E | Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is the synthesis of a multi-disciplinary study assessment of the Airy Street Prison at 35 East Airy Street in Norristown, PA. It was prepared by Colliers Engineering and Design (CED) for Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, in the summer of 2024 with the intent of assessing conditions relevant for the potential re-development of the prison site and adjacent parking lot. Elements of the study include assessment and analysis of geotechnical, environmental, zoning and entitlement, architectural, structural, and historical elements, as well as field analysis of masonry components and construction inputs required for contemplated interventions on the site. Finally, a preliminary evaluation of potential funding sources

This report is structured so that the report body includes an overview of the multiple factors for the entire site, including a physical conditions assessment, synthesis of risks, recommendations for immediate, pre-development, and development action, zoning and building code analysis of what may be built on the site, and considerations a developer may make in taking next steps.

Detailed reports and studies generated by each discipline as appendices.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 SITE HISTORY

Constructed in 1851, the Montgomery County Prison was designed by the renowned architect Napoleon LeBrun in present-day Norristown, Pennsylvania. LeBrun is best known for his designs for the Philadelphia Academy of Music and the Cathedral of St Peter and St. Paul.<sup>1</sup>

In 1849, Napoleon LeBrun submitted his designs in a contest for a new county prison and courthouse.<sup>2</sup> LeBrun won the contest, and in July 1851, the massive gothic-style Prison was constructed.<sup>3</sup> John Haviland's Eastern State Penitentiary and its intimidating gothic façade heavily influenced the design and construction of this Prison.<sup>4</sup> The prison's location was chosen to ensure it would be surrounded by adjacent streets and completely isolated from the local township.<sup>5</sup> The entire complex remains enclosed by a formidable stone wall supported by angle towers and buttresses. Additionally, two octagonal battlement turrets along the front wall are eclipsed by the 85-foot-tall center guard tower.<sup>6</sup> The enormous castle-like Prison is an isolated reminder of Montgomery County's history.

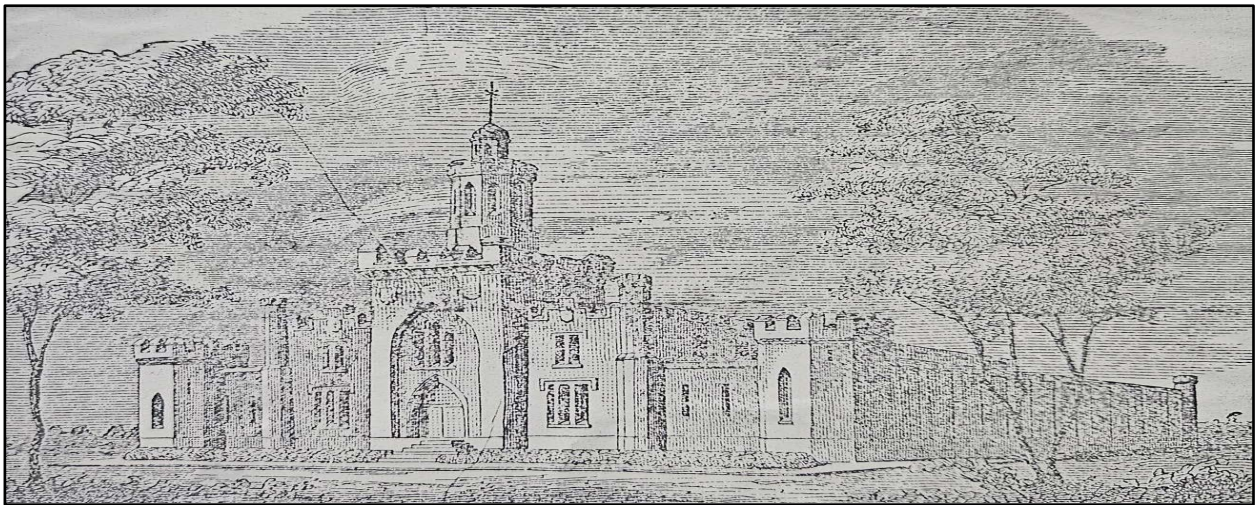


Figure 1. LeBrun's drawing of the Montgomery County Jail, 1850. Source: Montgomery Historical Society

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas, George E. "Old Montgomery County Jail." SAH ARCHIPEDIA, June 17, 2019. <https://sah-archipedia.org/buildings/PA-02-MO22>.

<sup>2</sup> The Reporter. "Prison Overcrowding / Possible Expansion. ." Newspapers.com, September 1, 1904. <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-reporter-prison-overcrowdingpossibl/154125555/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Thomas, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> The Norristown Herald and Free Press. "The New Montgomery County Prison." The Norristown Herald and Free Press. July 17, 1850.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

The Montgomery County Prison was able to house forty inmates at one time in 1851, with the construction of twenty cells on both the first and second floors of the first addition (Phase II).<sup>7</sup> The cell blocks were also constructed "so completely fireproof" that if the building were engulfed in flames, there would be no need to remove the prisoners from their cells.<sup>8</sup> During the turn of the century, the Montgomery County Prison began to draw the attention of other prison developers for its use of updated techniques such as appropriate ventilation and warming of all cells, as well as refurbished cast iron latrine pipes.<sup>9</sup> Several plans were adopted to expand the Prison; however, the Prison became drastically overcrowded during the early twentieth century and a second addition (Phase III) was added in the 1890s.<sup>10</sup> According to accounts from the weekly inspection of the Montgomery County Prison, 153 prisoners and convicts were awaiting trial, and multiple prisoners were assigned to one cell.<sup>11</sup> During this period of overcrowding, the Warden of the Prison was also assaulted by several inmates.<sup>12</sup>

The prison was also the site of several public executions for Montgomery County. One of the most notable instances was the execution of Frank Chicarine and Nick Maringe for the murder of George Johnson in 1909.<sup>13</sup> Both prisoners were held at the Montgomery County Prison and hung in the rear courtyard for the entire township to witness. This was the last of ten executions by hanging in Montgomery County.<sup>14</sup> During the 20th century, the Prison began to see a significant decline in prisoners' mental health and physical welfare, especially with female inmates.<sup>15</sup> According to reports, the Montgomery County Prison had as high as a twenty percent women inmate population; however, their holding areas consisted of "small, separate quarters which were built for men".<sup>16</sup> These female inmates were subjected to inappropriate situations and living conditions, thus opening the prison staff and county to significant political scrutiny from the community.<sup>17</sup> During the Prison's final years, the county faced considerable backlash for the lack of rehabilitation programs for female inmates.<sup>18</sup>

The Prison was officially shut down in 1986 with the construction of the new Montgomery County Jail. After its closure, the old Prison became known as the "Airy Street Prison" in Montgomery County.<sup>19</sup> Since it shut down, there has been almost a complete lack of upkeep; thus, the inside of the Prison

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> The Reporter, 1904.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Kennedy, Joseph. "Capital Punishment Was a Local Affair at the Turn of the Century." Newspapers.com, June 11, 1995. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/178124703/?match=1&terms=Airy+street+jail>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Alberts, Anita. "Women in Prison Marooned in Man's World." Newspapers.com, November 26, 1971. <https://www.newspapers.com/article/the-daily-intelligencer/154722921/>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Rubert, Russell. "Norristown Preservation Society: Old Airy Street Prison Is in Danger." The Times Herald, February 9, 2023. <https://www.timesherald.com/2023/02/09/norristown-preservation-society-oldy-airy-street-prison-is-in-danger/>.

has fallen into a deplorable condition.<sup>20</sup> Today, the fate of the Airy Street Prison has become a heavily debated topic amongst Norristown and Montgomery County residents.<sup>21</sup> With a partial roof collapse occurring in 2019, there has been a recent push for demolishing the entire site.<sup>22</sup> Others have argued for refurbishing the Prison into a museum or cultural center, but to no avail.<sup>23</sup> However, the Airy Street Prison remains almost entirely outwardly intact today.

## 1.2 PROJECT/REPORT HISTORY

This report follows a 2020 report generated by Gannett Fleming on the Airy Street Prison site. The owner has reported that the quantitative findings of that report are accurate, aside from three critical factors:

1. The impact of four subsequent years of decay on the on-site physical assets.
2. The 2020 report did not consider the adjacent parking lot at the intersection of Airy Street and Rt. 202.
3. The 2020 report was framed in the context of expected demolition and recommended clearing of the site. Concerns relating to the re-use of the existing building were not contemplated.

Since the 2020 report recommending the demolition of the prison, various community and preservation groups have advocated for the prison's adaptive reuse instead of demolition. Consequently, we recommend a review of the 2020 Gannett Fleming report as providing relevant but incomplete information for future development. This report attempts to use the same terminology (phasing, etc.) as the 2020 report when appropriate for continuity's sake.

## 1.3 REPORT OBJECTIVES

This report endeavors to summarize relevant factors for future development of the Airy Street Prison site at 35 East Airy Street, Norristown, PA as well as the adjacent parking lot, across Maris St. CED has engaged in writing this report with the goal of fairly evaluating the potential re-use and/or redevelopment of existing historic structures on the site. This report leaves future use possibilities open and aims to highlight significant factors relevant to many future users. With the data and interpretation provided in this report, a potential developer of the Airy Street Prison site should have a baseline assessment of the short-term and long-term physical opportunities and risks and opportunities inherent in various configurations of the property, as well as an understanding of processes and costs involved for stabilization, remediation, and potential re-use of existing assets.

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<sup>20</sup> Bagenstose, Kyle. "Historic Norristown Prison Under Imminent Threat of Demolition." Hidden City Philadelphia, September 5, 2023. <https://hiddencityphila.org/2023/08/historic-norristown-prison-under-imminent-threat-of-demolition/>.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Rubert, 2023.

Because future use is speculative, a future developer is expected to build on the findings and reports included as part of a due diligence process catered to their specific proposed use.

## 2.0 REPORT METHODOLOGY

This report synthesizes the investigative findings of multiple engineering and architectural disciplines, all of which are divisions of Colliers Engineering and Design. Of note is that the CED disciplines represented include architecture, historic preservation, structural engineering, site/civil engineering, environmental engineering, geotechnical engineering, and our grant writing team under Colliers Project Leaders' direction. The report also includes professional evaluation from Wolfe Scott Construction of Norristown and KMC Partners of Philadelphia, PA, for constructability analysis and cost projection and Joseph Dugan Masonry Restoration of Erdenheim, PA, for the specific assessment of the structure's masonry condition.

All disciplines that delivered full investigative reports have their findings summarized in the body of this report, with the full reports, including testing data, included in the appendices.

### 2.1 SITE VISIT SUMMARY

Site visits occurred on the following dates, with participating teams named:

July 15, 2024 – Project Leaders, Environmental, Preservation

July 16, 2024 – Project Leaders & Preservation

July 30, 2024 – Geotechnical Investigation, Environmental Engineering

August 2, 2024 – Project Leaders, Drone Investigation, Architecture, Dugan Restoration, Wolfe Scott Associates

August 22, 2024 – Dugan Restoration (Testing)

### 2.2 METHODS OF INVESTIGATION

The methods of investigation vary by discipline but are generally based on a series of site visits, as listed above. Historical research was conducted at the Historical Society of Montgomery County and the Montgomery County—Norristown Public Library. Various news articles were sorted through Ancestry's newspaper database, and contact was made with the Norristown Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB).

### 2.3 INVESTIGATION LIMITATIONS

Physical and logistic factors during the execution of this study limited some of the investigation. Please see below for relevant factors by discipline:

#### **Geotechnical Evaluation**

Because of physical space constraints of openings in the prison walls, the geotechnical evaluation relies on two test boring locations in the rear courtyard of the existing site. Montgomery County was also able to provide geotechnical reports from the nearby municipal building project (currently under construction), the information from which was reviewed and used to supplement our general understanding of the conditions at the subject site. A final geotechnical exploration, including additional test borings, will be necessary once a more formal development scheme is available.

### **Building and Structural Evaluation**

Due to on-site physical safety concerns, the architectural, structural, and preservation teams could only directly access the first floor and basement of existing structures. Telephotography and drone footage allowed the team to examine some high spaces and the building's exterior; however, some areas of the prison that are out of sight cannot be affirmatively characterized. When Gannett Fleming evaluated the Phase in 2020, some areas were accessible but are now inaccessible. Photos from that report have been analyzed and included in context.

### **Environmental**

No significant data gaps that would affect the ability to identify recognized environmental conditions were identified.

### **Masonry**

The masonry restoration team was limited to areas of safe occupancy in terms of physical evaluation of the masonry. They were also able to rely on drone footage and telephotograph images. Dugan Restoration took mortar samples from eight locations around the existing prison and, in consultation with the structural team, selected four locations for mortar analysis.

### **Site/Civil**

Due to the timeline required to assemble a title report for the adjacent parking lot site, which at one point was multiple lots, an ALTA (American Land Title Association) survey for that lot is not available at the time of this report. CED Site/Civil has based their analysis on available metes and bounds for the site. An ALTA survey is recommended for the parking lot site to confirm any easements or other considerations for future development. Additionally, without a known use of the site, commenting on the adequacy of available utilities is impossible.

### **Grant Research**

Because many grants are use-specific, the research information is limited to likely funding sources and sources not tied to future use.

### **Construction Pricing**

Construction pricing, in general, is fluid and generally trends upwards. Any figures in this report are estimates based on the information available at the time of the estimate. A reader of this report is advised to escalate any estimates and/or prices to the intended future date of the work.

### 3.0 OVERALL SITE & LOCATION

#### 3.1 OVERALL SITE & LOCATION

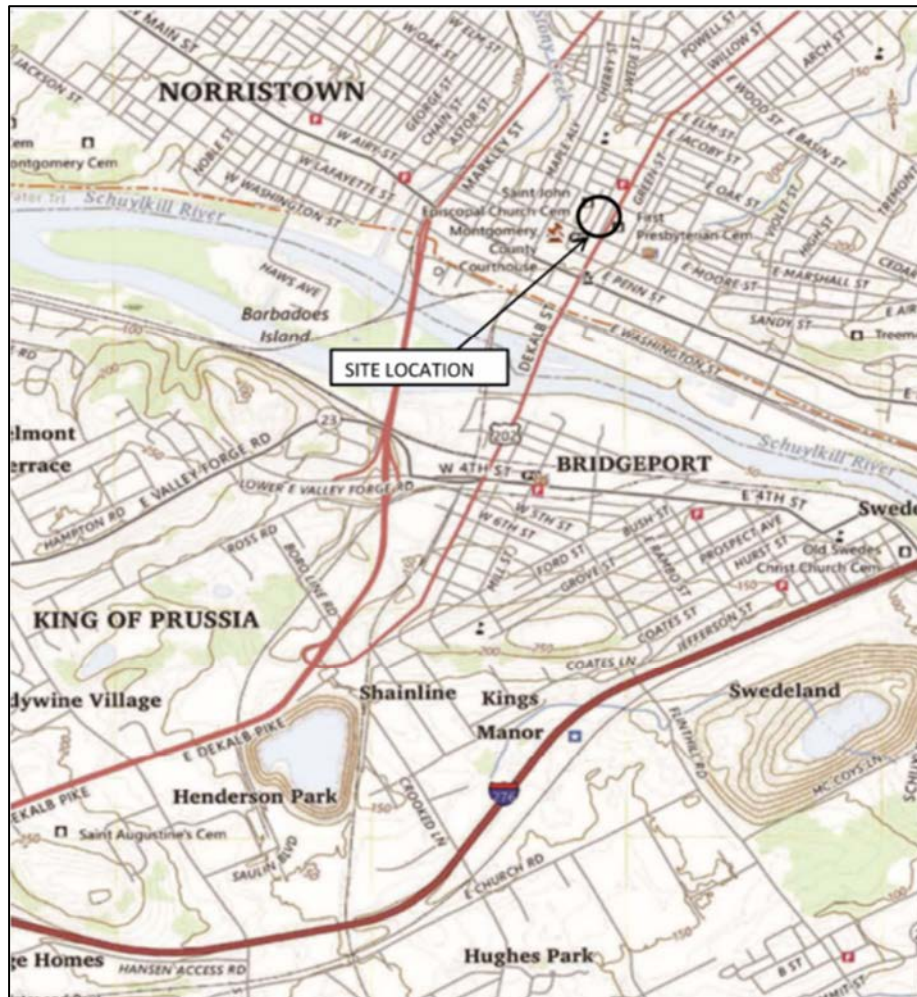


Figure 2. Site Location Map

#### 3.1.1 NORRISTOWN ECONOMY & DEMOGRAPHICS

Norristown, PA, is the county seat of Montgomery County and has a population of approximately 35,700 as of 2023.

The town is strategically located near Philadelphia, providing easy access to major transportation networks, including the Schuylkill Expressway (I-76), the Pennsylvania Turnpike (I-276), and the Blue Route (I-476). Additionally, Norristown benefits from public transportation connections via SEPTA's regional rail, which links the town directly to Center City Philadelphia, several bus routes, and the Norristown High-Speed Line.

Demographically, Norristown's population has been relatively stable, growing by about 13.88% from 2000 to 2023, with a median age of 32. The town's diverse population includes significant Hispanic, African American, and White communities, contributing to various cultural influences.<sup>24</sup> The young demographic profile and relatively high population density (9,400 people per square mile) make the area suitable for residential and mixed-use developments, particularly those targeting first-time homebuyers, renters, and young professionals.

Economic development in Norristown has been a focus for local and county officials, with efforts to revitalize the downtown area. One major project contributing to this is the construction of a new justice complex, which is expected to boost economic activity in the central business district by increasing demand for office space, retail, and hospitality services. The justice complex is part of more significant initiatives to improve public infrastructure and attract private investment.

Norristown has cultural and entertainment potential, with several established venues like the Centre Theater and the Montgomery County Cultural Center. These institutions play a central role in the town's arts scene and provide a foundation for further cultural and entertainment developments. Additionally, Norristown is home to the Elmwood Park Zoo, a 100-year-old, 16-acre public zoo that has recently completed a series of significant capital improvements.

Norristown's economy is also supported by its role as a regional employment hub, particularly in the healthcare and public service sectors. Key employers in the area include Einstein Medical Center Montgomery and various county government offices. The ongoing investment in infrastructure and public services, coupled with its accessible location, make Norristown a viable option for various future developments.

Nearby economic hubs Conshohocken (4.7 miles) and King of Prussia, PA (3.6 miles) are easily accessible from Norristown. Conshohocken's growing residential market and proximity to Philadelphia have it poised for post-pandemic growth. King of Prussia features record low office vacancy rates, making it a vital center for post-pandemic return-to-office economic activity.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Data USA – Norristown, 2022, <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/norristown-pa/>

<sup>25</sup> King of Prussia District, 2023 Report to the Community, <https://visitkop.com/2023-report-to-the-community/>



- 1-Mile Buffer
- Historic District
- Eligible
- Listed
- Local

Figure 3. Cultural Resources Background Map

### 3.1.2 IMMEDIATE PROXIMITY/NEIGHBORS

The Airy Street Prison site is in the Central Norristown Historic District. Key neighbors on the block immediately across Airy Street include the historic Montgomery County Courthouse (under renovation), the new Montgomery County Justice Center (under construction), the US Post Office, and the Theatre Horizon performing arts center. The surrounding neighborhood also includes residences, law offices, retail, and restaurants.

Immediately west of the Airy Street Prison are the associated structures and cemetery for St. James Episcopal Church, Norristown's oldest place of worship, founded in 1812. (Of note, St. James Church was closed by its leadership in 2015 and was successfully re-opened in 2017.) The First Presbyterian Church of Norristown, founded in 1819, is located across US-202 from the parking lot portion of the site contemplated in this report.

The Norristown Transportation Center is 0.3 miles from the Airy Street Prison and provides multi-modal transportation links to the region, including direct service to and from Center City Philadelphia.

US-202, one of the major regional arteries running through Norristown, passes the parking lot portion of the site being contemplated by this report. Main Street, which becomes Ridge Pike outside of the town, is two blocks to the south. The site is visible from both major thoroughfares.

### 3.2 CURRENT STATE

Airy Street Prison has remained vacant since its last use as a prison in 1987. The building, with its gothic-revival-style architecture, including towers and turrets, still retains many of its original features. However, decades of neglect have left it in a state of disrepair, with parts of the structure suffering from the effects of deferred maintenance, including a roof collapse of the rearmost portion of the prison.

Over the years, the jail has become a subject of preservation efforts, with local historians and advocacy groups calling for its adaptive reuse. Various proposals for repurposing the building have surfaced, including transforming it into a museum, hotel, or cultural center, but none of these ideas have come to fruition.

There has been significant debate about the jail's future in recent years. In 2023, the county allocated nearly \$1 million to demolish the jail, stating that the building was a "crumbling, environmentally hazardous structure" that no longer represented the community's values." Preservationists, including the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, have urged Montgomery County to reconsider plans for its demolition.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Bagenstose, Kyle, "Historic Norristown Prison Under Imminent Threat of Demolition," Hidden City Philadelphia, <https://hiddencityphila.org/2023/08/historic-norristown-prison-under-imminent-threat-of-demolition/>, accessed 9/9/2023

For this study, and in keeping with terminology from the 2020 Gannett Fleming Report, the prison consists of four “phases,” constructed at different times, surrounded by a masonry prison wall. The four phases of the prison include:

Phase I – “The Castle” is the oldest portion of the prison, dating to 1851. It faces Airy Street and is the most visible façade of the prison. It formerly held the warden’s residence and was the main entry to the complex.

Phase II – The original cell block includes ten cells on either side of a central corridor over three floors and a basement initially used for storage.

Phase III – This 1890s addition consists of a large room with three stories of steel cells that are structurally independent of the exterior structure.

Phase IV – A circa-1920s, two-story addition that originally housed service areas for the prison, has experienced a roof collapse and has structurally deteriorated.

Prison Yard – The remaining portion of the site includes prison yards in the interstitial space between the prison wall and the four phases of the prison itself.

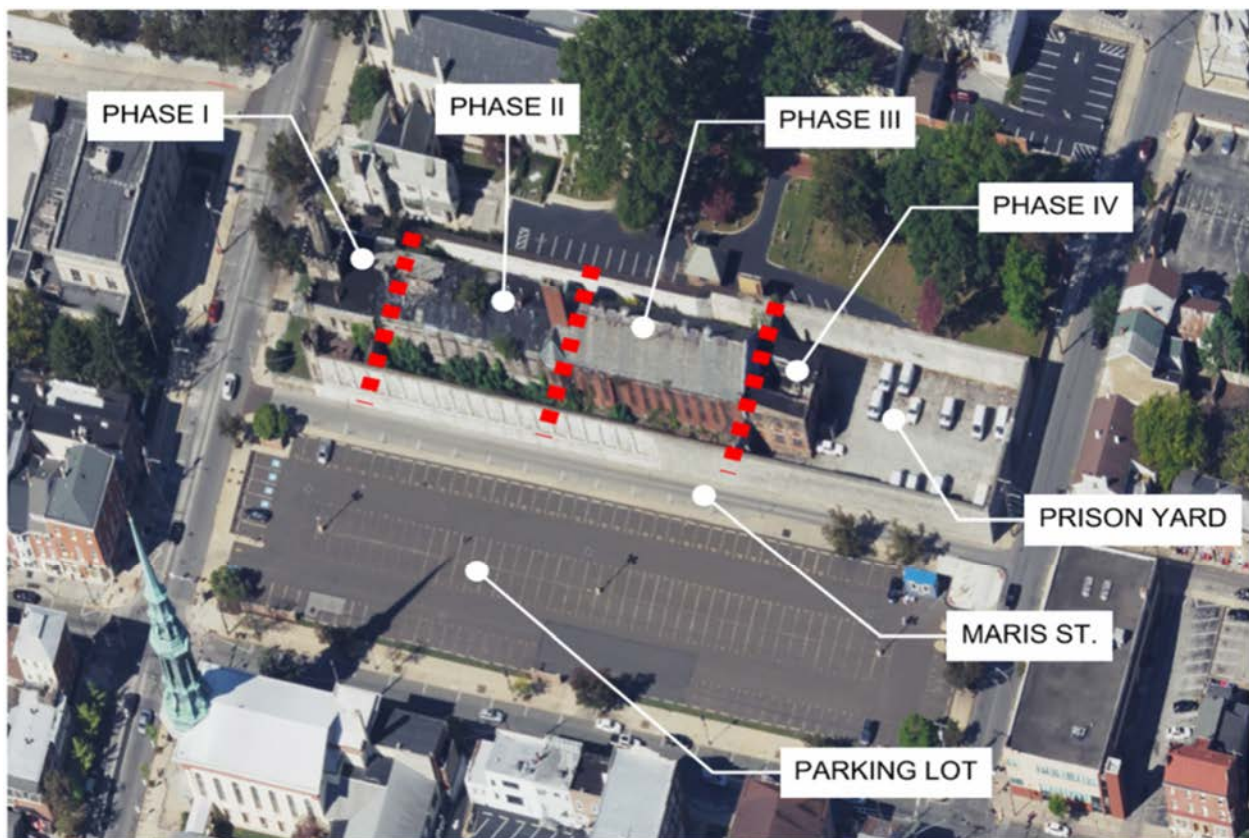


Figure 4. Project Phases Key

Parking Lot – The site contemplated in this report will also include a neighboring parking lot, separated from the Prison by Maris Street. The proposed development assessment assumes that Maris Street would be vacated, and the Maris Street right-of-way, prison parcel, the neighboring parking lot parcels, and alleys/former streets would be consolidated into one lot, totaling approximately ±118,807 SF. (The County and Municipality have expressed support for vacating Maris Street and joining the parcels.)

While all sections have experienced deterioration due to a lack of maintenance, the conditions of the portions are varied and have different factors relevant to redevelopment. This report expands upon the condition of the various portions.

### 3.3 APPLICABLE ZONING

<b>Dimensional Criteria (§320-130)</b>	
<b>Minimum Lot Area (§320-130A(1))</b>	N/A
<b>Minimum Lot Width (§320-130A(2))</b>	20 FT
<b>Occupied Area (Buildings) (§320-130A(3))</b>	90% (Lots over 5,000 SF)
<b>Setbacks</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Front Yard</b></li> <li>• <b>Side Yard</b></li> <li>• <b>Rear Yard</b></li> <li>• Any principal building constructed, modified, or remodeled in this district must have its front façade built to the edge of the public sidewalk, unless the structure is utilizing an existing historic façade as part of the redevelopment project. Corner properties shall be considered as having two front facades. Rear facades are exempt from this requirement. Instead, they are encouraged to provide space for loading docks and dumpsters (§320-130A(5))</li> </ul>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p> <p>N/A</p>
<b>Maximum Building Height (§320-130A(6))</b>	10 Stories or 120 FT
<b>Minimum Building Height (§320-130A(7))</b>	2 Stories and 25 FT
<b>Building Height (HARB A)</b> *See Section 3.3 for additional regulations related to HARB Zones	The height of any new building or structure shall not exceed the height of the tallest adjacent building or structure by more than 25% or one story, whichever is greater. This requirement shall also apply to any proposed modifications to existing buildings or structures.
<b>Lot Depth (§282-403(2))</b>	Not to exceed 2.5 times its width

Figure 5. Town Center Dimensional Criteria

The prison site is in the Norristown TC (Town Center) District. The purpose of the Town Center District is to encourage and permit uses compatible with the historic character of the downtown and to assist in its revitalization. Pedestrian-oriented uses are permitted and encouraged, while automobile-related uses that promote a suburban mall or strip commercial appearance are restricted. Also, uses that traditionally accompany and strengthen the commercial core, such as office, cultural, residential, and related uses, are permitted. Please see Appendix C for a complete list of permitted uses. Parking lots shall be separated and buffered by low-lying walls and decorative fences from streets and sidewalks.

At the same time, new construction should utilize traditional building materials and accepted urban design principles. Furthermore, all new construction shall preserve the existing streetscape by requiring that all new buildings be built to the edge of the public sidewalk. There is a discrepancy between the Zoning Code and the Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance regarding landscape buffering. Additionally, there is a potentially two readings of the Zoning Code for allowable building height. HARB A building height restrictions state that “The height of any new building or structure shall not exceed the height of the tallest adjacent building by more than 25% or one story, whichever is greater,” are likely to constrain future development. It also has to be confirmed with AHJ how “tallest adjacent building” is defined for zoning purposes. For future purposes in this report, it is assumed that the tallest adjacent building is 30 ft/3-stories. Outside this restriction, the allowable building height would be 10 Stories or 120FT. The municipality has indicated a use registration application would be required to clarify the height limit. The final interpretation of the height restriction would have a significant impact on the allowable zoning envelope on the site in question. Please see above for a table of the dimensional criteria.

Detailed information on zoning requirements is included in Appendix C of the report.

### 3.4 HISTORICAL DESIGNATIONS AND MEANINGS

The site is in HARB Zone A, which is a local historic district within the nationally designated Central Norristown Historic District and is intended to provide with the highest level of protection. The State Historic Preservation Officer has listed Airy Street Prison as a contributing property in the District, though it is not listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) individually. HARB Zone A has a fairly restrictive list of requirements for compliant development, the full list of which can be found in Appendix C, Section 3.3.

Of note, Norristown HARB has been a significant advocate for the preservation and re-use of the Airy Street Prison. In 2023, HARB issued a report recommending that the Norristown Municipal Council deny demolition permits for the structure. Prime concerns are the “profound” impact demolition would cause due to “1.) the loss to the town’s streetscape and skyline; 2.) the loss to the town’s identity; 3.) the loss of an important historical artifact and 4.) the loss of potential economic benefit that would result from its adaptive reuse.” The report concluded that “The negative impact to the Central Norristown Historic District by the removal of the 1851 Le Brun portion along Airy Street (Phase I) cannot be overstated.”<sup>27</sup> Consequently, it is reasonable to expect support from the HARB on efforts to preserve and/or reuse portions of the existing structure, especially Phase I.

Aside from legal protections, there is notable community support for preservation of the prison. Public meetings where demolition has been contemplated have seen strong resident turnout in support of preservation. Groups such as Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, 4Ward Planning, Friends of the Prison, and penal reform group the Sentencing Project have provided vocal public support for

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<sup>27</sup> Seiler, Doug, “HARB Report to Norristown Municipality,” 11/08/2023

preservation.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, an online petition to save the prison gained over two thousand signatures in 2023.<sup>29</sup> Public sentiment for preservation will likely be a factor in the approvals process.

### 3.5 OTHER ZONING

Other zoning factors to consider include:

#### 3.5.1 FAA DETERMINATION

The Federal Aviation Administration requires notice of specific proposed construction, or the alteration of existing structures. Any construction or alteration that exceeds an imaginary surface extending outward and upward at 100 to 1 for a horizontal distance of 20,000 FT from the nearest point of the nearest runway of any airport.

The site is approximately 20,000 FT from the nearest point of Wings Field's nearest runway, 1501 Narcissa Road, Blue Bell, PA 19422. Further coordination and approval with the FAA are required for development.

#### 3.5.2 PNDI DETERMINATION

A Pennsylvania Natural Diversity Inventory (PNDI) report was obtained on 8/14/2024 and is provided in the Appendix of this report. The PNDI receipt is valid for two years.

The PNDI report indicates that there may be potential impacts to threatened or endangered and/or special concern species and resources within the project area as follows:

- PA Game Commission – Conservation Measure (no further coordination with the agency is required).
- PA Fish & Boat Commission – Potential Impact – Threatened Species
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service – Avoidance Measure – Northern Long Ear Bat (tree removal may not be conducted from May 15 to August 15).

Further coordination with these agencies will be required during the permitting process and prior to approvals being obtained for any proposed development. As noted above, there is an avoidance measure to not allow tree removal from May 15 to August 15.

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<sup>28</sup> Riordan, Kevin, "At Norristown Forum, Calls to Preserve Historic County Prison Other View as a Relic of Racism," Philadelphia Inquirer, 10/12/2023, <https://www.inquirer.com/news/pennsylvania/norristown-airy-street-prison-demolition-preservation-20231012.html>

<sup>29</sup> Ravina, Rachel, "'We're Not Going Away': Montgomery County Public Opposition to Demolition of Airy Street Prison Continues," The Times Herald, 11/2/2023, <https://www.timesherald.com/2023/11/02/were-not-going-away-montgomery-county-public-opposition-to-demolition-of-airy-street-prison-continues/>

### 3.6 PERMITTING TIMELINE

A permitting timeline has been provided as part of Appendix C – Site/Civil Feasibility at the end of this report. Anticipated approvals include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Borough of Norristown
  - Zoning Permit Approval
  - Zoning Hearing Board Meeting (Variances & Special Exceptions)
  - Zoning Decision
  - HARB Design Review
  - Preliminary Land Development
  - Final Land Development
  - Traffic Impact Study
  - Subdivision/Lot Consolidation (if required)
  - Borough Planning Commission
  - Borough Fire Marshal
  - Topsoil Removal Permit
  - Driveway Location Permit
  - Shade Tree Commission
  - Sewer Authority
  - Stormwater Management
- PennDOT (if required) – US 202 is a State Route
- PNDI Endangered Species – Impacts Noted
- Montgomery County Planning Commission
- PADEP Sewer Planning Module (Sanitary Approval)
- Montgomery County Conservation District
  - NPDES
  - Erosion and Sediment Pollution Control
  - Stormwater Management

Overall, CED is projecting an estimated 16-month approval timeline. It should be noted that a number of factors can influence approval times and that this is an estimate. Also of note, public participation at approval meetings can impact the approval timeline. The notable public support for preservation of the site will likely impact the approval timeline. Specifically, public opposition to development plans that do not call for some sort of preservation will likely slow the process.

### 3.7 UTILITIES

A preliminary utility investigation was conducted, and coordination has been provided in Appendix C. Upon determination of the proposed use, the utility companies should be reconsulted to determine adequate capacity and service. As of the date of this report, the status of all utilities within the vicinity of the project are as follows:

### 3.7.1 ELECTRICAL

- Provider: PECO
- Availability at Site: TBD
- Comments: A will-serve letter was sent to the provider on 8/13/2024. Additional follow-up and coordination are required to obtain serviceability.

### 3.7.2 GAS

- Provider: PECO
- Availability at Site: TBD
- Sufficient Capacity: TBD
- Comments: A will-serve letter was sent to the provider on 8/13/2024. Additional follow-up and coordination are required to obtain serviceability.

### 3.7.3 SANITARY

- Provider: Norristown Municipal Waste Authority
- Availability at Site: Yes; Map Provided in Appendix.
- Sufficient Capacity: No known issues with capacity; further coordination is required once the proposed use is known to determine adequate capacity.
- Line Size & Location: Airy Street
- Moratorium: No

### 3.7.4 STORM SEWER

- Provider: Municipality of Norristown
- Availability at Site: TBD
- Sufficient Capacity: TBD
- Line Size & Location: TBD
- Comments: A will-serve letter was sent to the provider on 8/13/2024. To obtain serviceability, additional follow-up and coordination are required.

### 3.7.5 WATER

- Provider: Pennsylvania American Water
- Availability at Site: Yes
- Line Size & Location: 8" Main in E. Airy Street (preferred)
- Moratorium: No
- Comments:
  - The 8" main in E. Airy Street was replaced in 2020, and it appears that a 4" service line was installed for the jail at that time. It is assumed that the 4" service matched the line that was in place when the building was last occupied.
  - The mains in Dekalb and E. Marshall Street are vintage cast iron and are not the preferred point of connection.

- A meter pit will be required for the project.
- Mains are generally expected to have a 4 FT depth of cover above the top of the main, but field location by the contractor is recommended as part of the preliminary construction of the site.

### 3.7.6 TELECOM

- Provider 1: Verizon
- Availability at Site: Aerial cable along the south side of Airy Street
- Provider 2: Comcast
- Comments: A will-serve letter was sent to Comcast on 8/13/2024. To obtain serviceability, additional follow-up and coordination are required.

## 3.8 ENVIRONMENTAL

Colliers Engineering and Design completed a Phase I Environmental Site Analysis (ESA) of the Airy Street Prison site and the adjacent parking lot site. The ESA highlights Recognized Environmental Condition (REC), this is an environmental condition where the presence or likely presence of any hazardous substances or petroleum products exist on a property. CED has identified the following RECs in connection with the subject property:

- **Adjacent Properties:** Several dry cleaning establishments have previously been located in close proximity to the site. Spill recordings were not identified; however, the historic dry cleaning operations have the potential to have impacted the subject property. An undertaker/funeral home establishment also previously operated close to the subject property.
- **Historic Structures:** A review of historical aerial photographs and topographic maps identified several former structures built on the subject property between the 1880s and 1990s. The previously extant buildings within the subject property included a hosiery manufacturer building, a shirt manufacturer, a Fellman Nelson M printer, a YMCA, a borough market, and several smaller structures. Former structures are considered RECs, as the potential exists for foundations, fill material, hazardous materials, potential underground storage tanks (USTs), and former septic systems in these areas.

Of note, no Historic Recognized Environmental Conditions (HRECs) or Controlled Recognized Environmental Conditions (CRECs) were identified in connection with the subject property.

No reported Environmental Liens or Activities or Use Limitations (AULs) are identified for the subject property.

A Hazardous Materials Assessment was conducted by Gannett Fleming and summarized in a Technical Memorandum dated May 24, 2022. The study of the prison interior indicated the following throughout Phases I, III, and III:

Lead-Containing Paint: A visual assessment of the Prison identified coated surfaces as paint with the potential to contain lead. A Lead Inspector/Risk Assessor collected representative paint chip samples from the surfaces and submitted them to a certified laboratory for analysis. Potential lead-containing paint (LCP) was sampled from multiple locations in the basement and first floor of the Prison.

Asbestos-Containing Material: A visual assessment of the Prison identified certain building materials as suspect asbestos-containing material (ACM). Suspect ACM was sampled from the basement, first floor, and prison roof. Testing indicated asbestos-containing pipe insulation, mastic, roofing material, and floor tile throughout the building.

Universal Waste: A visual assessment of the Prison identified universal waste throughout the structure, including fluorescent lighting tubes, ballasts, e-waste, stored chemicals, ammunition, and tires, among other items. No sampling of universal waste was conducted.

Prior to further development, CED recommends remediation of Asbestos-Containing Materials and Lead-Based Paints. Additionally, completion of Phase II ESA/Subsurface Investigation with Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) to determine the presence or absence of impacted soil/fill material, groundwater, orphan tanks, and/or other subsurface anomalies is recommended.

### 3.9 GEOTECHNICAL INFORMATION

CED's Geotechnical Engineering Department performed a preliminary geotechnical exploration as part of the overall site investigation. The field exploration consisted of two test borings located within the prison courtyard, with infiltration testing at offset locations adjacent to the test borings. Please see the full geotechnical report in the appendix for a detailed description of testing methods, as well as the preliminary conclusions and recommendations. The geotechnical team was also provided a geotechnical report for the nearby Montgomery County Justice Center (approximately 600 feet away) by GZA, dated September 2019, which was reviewed and used to supplement our understanding of the local subsurface conditions. Please note that a final geotechnical evaluation with additional field explorations will be required as part of future design phases, particularly once a formal development scheme is available.

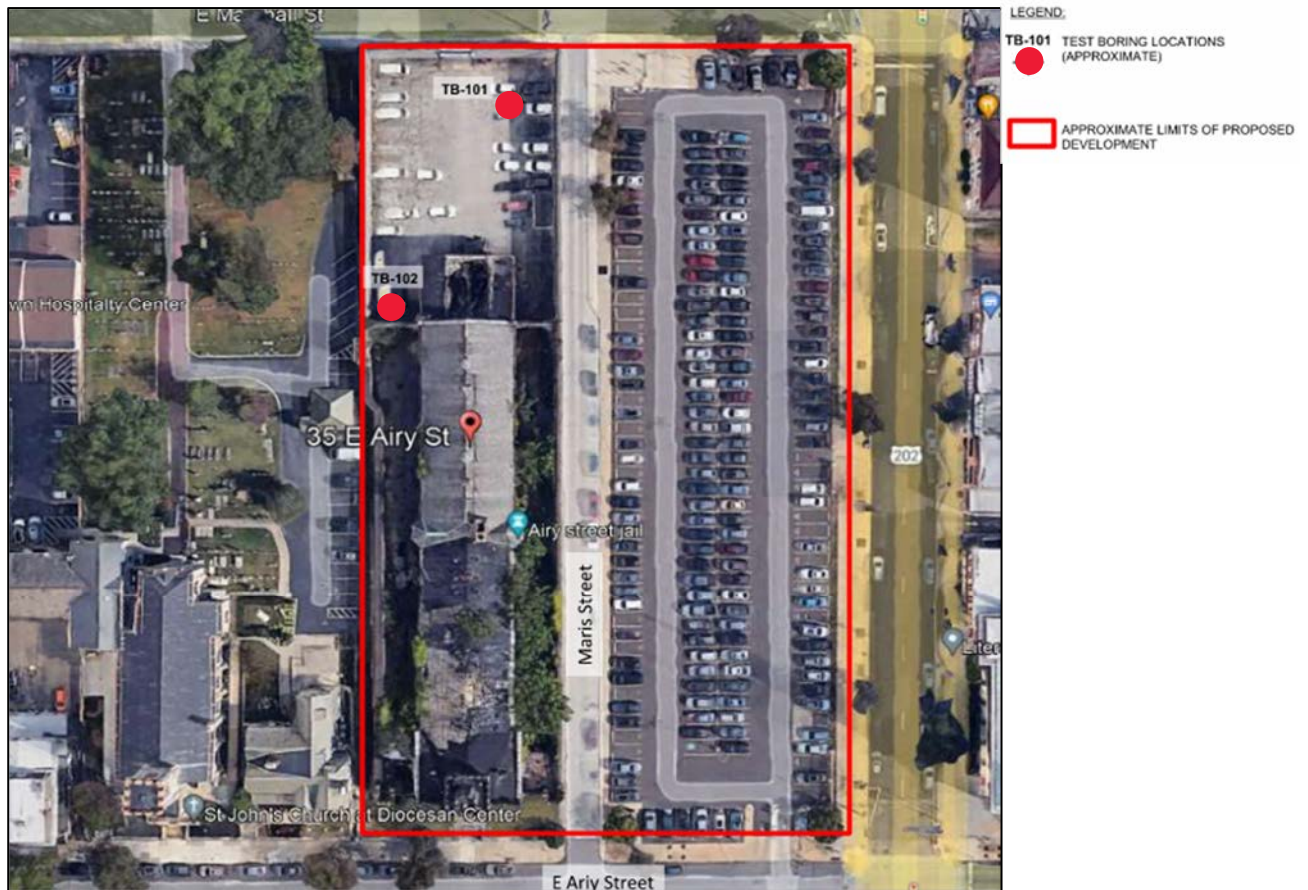


Figure 6. Geotechnical Coring Sites

Below the existing 3-inch thick asphalt pavement, the test borings encountered a thin zone (approximately 2 feet thick) of granular existing fill soils, underlain sequentially by naturally occurring decomposed rock and altered rock to an approximate depth of about 8 feet. Augur refusal, indicating the likely presence of rock, was encountered at that depth. Groundwater was not encountered in the test borings. However, groundwater levels may fluctuate seasonally. Furthermore, evidence suggesting the possible presence of groundwater (trapped over top of the intact rock layer) was discussed by GZA in their geotechnical report for the nearby Montgomery County Courthouse. As a result, observation wells are recommended as part of future more extensive geotechnical explorations.

Excavation through the overburden soils (i.e. to the approximate 8-foot depth of apparent rock) should be achievable with standard construction equipment. Larger excavation equipment outfitted with rock ripping teeth will be more productive excavating through the denser decomposed rock and altered rock soil layers. On-site soils should be suitable for re-use as load-bearing fill. Of note, the varied history of the parking lot portion of the site indicates an increased risk of remnant subsurface building features such as foundations, slabs, and/or debris. Any debris or abandoned structure encountered must be removed and replaced with appropriate fill.

Any future disturbances to the site should be mindful of neighboring properties. St. John's Church, located to the west of the site, includes a graveyard and other structures that are very close to the existing west prison wall. A pre- and post-construction condition survey of the church and vibration monitoring are recommended in concert with on-site demolition and construction activities.

The subsurface conditions generally appear well suited for supporting new building features using spread footing foundations, assuming building loads are consistent with typical low—to mid-rise buildings. High-rise development may require alternate support, such as deep foundations. If new foundations are to be constructed within the existing prison footprint, the recommended allowable bearing capacity will be affected by the extent and quality of the new fill underlying the foundations, as well as the compaction efforts.

If the future development plans involve reuse of the existing building foundations, further evaluations will be required to understand the geotechnical and structural capacity of the foundation elements. Such evaluations would be performed as part of the future final geotechnical exploration for the site.

The site soils are expected to be suitable for supporting floor slabs on-grade.

The existing prison wall around the site perimeter retains several feet of soil in some locations. Any future development that modifies the prison wall should take this into consideration, as well as any implications that removing the wall might have for grading adjacent sites.

A full geotechnical report can be found in Appendix A of this study.

## 4.0 YARD & PERIMETER WALL

### 4.1 STRUCTURE

The prison wall surrounds the site, consisting of mortared stone masonry primarily laid in random squares in a semi-coursed pattern approximately 20 feet high. The wall encloses the east, west, and north yard. The wall abuts Phase I on the south side of the property and divides the service yard between Phases III & IV. Historical Sanborn maps indicate that the walls to the north of this division were added with the construction of Phase IV. The west wall retains soil along its entire length on the exterior side. Along the northwest side, steel piles have been added to the exterior side to stabilize the wall; the date of this repair is unknown.

The yard is the interstitial space between the walls and the Prison structure. It is roughly divided into three sections, two of which flank Phases II and III. These sections, referred to as the east and west yards, are separated by the portion of the wall that runs between Phases III and IV from the rear yard. Arched openings connect the flanking yards with the rear yard. All yards are currently paved with asphalt. There is a large opening in the wall opening to Marshall Street with a roll-up gate.

### 4.2 CURRENT STATE

#### 4.2.1 WALL STRUCTURE

East Wall (along Maris St): The southernmost section of this wall, construction in conjunction with Phase I & 2, is in *poor* condition. The stone facing, repaired surfaces and mortar joints are deteriorated. Loose and missing stone is present, including areas at the top of the wall. Numerous large tree trunks protruded tight against the masonry walls at grade along the interior side. Indications of structural distress, such as bowing or leaning, are not visibly apparent.

As the wall extends north towards East Marshall St, the condition improves to *average*. Some of the repointed repair mortar is spalling. Minor surface deterioration is present on both sides. Along the interior side, vegetation is growing up and along the walls.

West Wall (adjacent to St. John's cemetery): The southernmost section of the wall abutting Phase I is in *fair to average* condition. This wall portion retains grade along the exterior side and contains pilaster projections along the exterior side. A repair coating, applied to the exterior side, is spalling. The uncovered stone appears to have granular disintegration, loose/missing pieces, significant mortar deterioration, and vegetative growth. Along the inside face, a different repair coating type is beginning to deteriorate. This portion of the wall does not appear to be bowing or leaning.

Near the wall at Phase 4, a masonry tower is projected above the top of the stone wall (assumed previous use as a guard tower). This tower is in *fair* condition. Diagonal cracks and steel repair piles indicate the tower has settled significantly. Although stable in its current state, the tower appears to be leaning. Mortar joints are deteriorated, and the large settlement cracks are left unsealed.

As the wall extends north towards East Marshall St, the deterioration improves but leans considerably towards the interior yard and is considered in poor condition. A previous repair involving steel piles to stabilize the wall at pilaster locations is present. The connections of the steel piles to the top of the wall have begun to deteriorate and break away from the stone.

North Wall (along E Marshall St): The north wall is in *average* condition. Some of the repointed repair mortar is spalling. Horizontal tie rods near the top of the wall connect the south wall to the east and west walls near the large access gate opening. The purpose and effectiveness of the tie rods are unclear. Indications of structural distress, such as bowing or leaning, are absent.

South Entry Retaining Wall (along E Airy St): The front retaining and stair walls are in *fair* condition. Mortar deterioration, surface repair spalling, and significant weathering are present. Portions of the stone course appear to push and shift towards the exterior.

#### 4.2.2 YARD

Rear Yard: The portion of the yard closest to Marshall Street is paved with asphalt. It has been used for County Storage in the past, and currently there are county trailers parked on-site. CED was told that the structurally compromised Phase IV has deterred the county from using this yard for further storage.



Figure 7. Vegetation within the east yard

Side Yards: The portions of the yard flanking Phases II and III are accessible through large arched openings in the masonry walls on either side of the prison. These yards are also paved with asphalt and are experiencing moderate to heavy vegetation growth. The East yard has heavy vegetation growth, with numerous tree-sized plants growing around and in the Prison building walls.

Please see Appendix D for further photographic documentation of structural conditions.

#### 4.3 OPPORTUNITES/ASSETS FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Despite deferred maintenance for several decades, most of the wall perimeter is generally in *average* condition. The potential for re-use as an element of future development exists.
- The side yards flanking Phases II and III could become private outdoor spaces supporting development within the existing Prison buildings.

#### 4.4 THREATS/LIABILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL



Figure 8. Maris Street perimeter wall showing spalling, west elevation

- The current condition of the wall presents a danger to the public from falling debris by deteriorated stone along Maris St. The wall should be made safe and monitored for further degradation.

- The steel pile repair at the Northwest is nearing the end of its useful life and in need of monitoring or repair/ replacement.
- If the wall is removed as part of future development, portions serving as a retaining wall must be replaced.
- Prison walls are intentionally and notoriously difficult to penetrate and could present a site access challenge for construction equipment.
- Assuming site access is reached through the existing rear gate on Marshall Street, the existing interior stone prison wall separating the prison yards between Phases IV and III features 7'-5" x 10'-8" (6'-5" at low point of arch) arched openings. For example, during CED's investigation, a typical geotechnical rig could not fit through the existing openings. Heavy construction equipment will likely face a similar challenge. Small equipment or a system to hoist large equipment over the wall may be needed for construction.



Figure 9. East Prison Wall Arch, View South

## 4.5 PRIORITY NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### 4.5.1 PRIORITY NEEDS

- Eliminate danger to the public of falling stone debris along Maris Street.
- Establish a program to monitor the steel pile connection to the top of the wall on the northwest side and wall movement.

- The internal prison yards flanking Phases II and III contain heavy vegetation growth, trash, and debris, including an abandoned vehicle. The vegetation has spread and is growing within masonry cracks for the main structure. It should be removed from the site.

#### 4.5.2 PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- Debris and trash dumped on the site must be removed as part of development.

#### 4.5.3 DEVELOPMENT

- Portions of the wall to be re-used will have to be repaired and re-parged.

#### 4.6 IMPLICATIONS OF NON-ACTION

- The wall could continue to degrade and drop large pieces of debris into the vehicular right-of-way.
- Continued deferred maintenance will lead to higher restoration costs.

## 5.0 PHASE I

### 5.1 STRUCTURE DESCRIPTION

Phase 1 is constructed of masonry with castellations. The primary roof structure appears to be timber-framed and supported on mortared stone and brick masonry bearing walls. The first and second-floor wings are timber-framed; the interior section is masonry brick arch floor construction. The masonry arches are one-way, semi-circular, with the brick laid in a staggered position. The tops of the arches are filled with concrete or wood substrate to create a level surface. The exterior walls and foundation are constructed of mortar stone masonry.

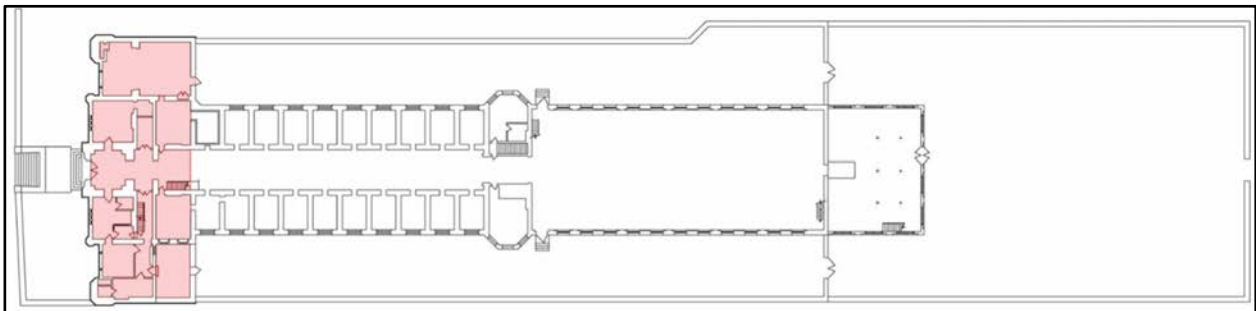


Figure 10. Phase I Footprint from 10/10/23 Seiler + Drury Presentation

### 5.2 CURRENT STATE

Refer to 'Definition of Terms' in Appendix D for a description of conditions noted in *italics*

#### 5.2.1 STRUCTURE – MASONRY WALLS

##### Exterior Walls

The south wall (along E Airy St) is in *average* condition with minor stone weathering, staining, and surface spalling; structural distress such as bowing or leaning is absent. The mortar joints have some general deterioration. Moderate cracking along the west bastion tower where root penetration pressure has occurred within the mortared joint.

Along the east and west sides of Phase I, the exterior wall transitions from square-coursed stone to random square-coursed rubble stone while also transitioning from Phase I exterior wall to a free-standing site yard wall. Refer to Section 4.0 'Yard Perimeter Wall' section for additional information.

##### Foundation and Interior Walls

The foundation and interior masonry brick and stone walls are in *average* condition. Most areas have been plastered or parged. Where exposed, the surface of the stone and brick is in *average* condition. Some mortar deterioration and loose stone or brick are present.



Figure 11. Phase I Interior

### 5.2.2 STRUCTURE – FLOORS

The general condition of the masonry arch floors on the first and second floors is average; indications of structural distress, such as excessive deflection or cracking, are not present. The undersides of the brick arches are finished with plaster. Where the brick is exposed due to plaster spalling, mortar deterioration is visible.

The timber-framed first floor is in *poor to critical* condition. Portions of the first floor have collapsed, likely due to deterioration at the bearing pocket into the stone wall. The second-floor timber framing, where exposed to view, is in *poor to fair* condition. Deterioration is visible at the beam pocket interface.

### 5.2.3 STRUCTURE – ROOF

Interior observation of the roof framing was not visible due to the inaccessibility of the second floor. Based on a review of the drone photos, the roof structure appears intact and in *average to fair* condition. The roofing membrane seems to be deteriorated but primarily intact. Portions of the roofing have vegetative and plant growth.

#### 5.2.4 UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

See previous analysis of utility availability to the site. Capacities may vary, but all required utilities are generally located to allow connection to the site.

#### 5.2.5 ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES & EQUIPMENT

The interior of Phase I includes several architecturally interesting features, including large wood doors, vintage hardware, metal strapping, remnants from the historic prison, and masonry groin and barrel vaults. Windows and doors should be repaired wherever possible and replaced in-kind when not. Any existing interior utilities housed in Phase I should be completely removed and replaced for future development.

#### 5.2.6 MACRO CODE/ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

Per the International Existing Building Code (IEBC), redevelopment would likely be classified as a “Level 3 Alteration,” or an alteration that affects over 50% of the aggregate area of a building. Consequently, any future work shall be treated by code as new construction. In these cases, historically proportioned and constructed spaces frequently do not meet the current code, particularly in accessibility. Future development efforts that preserve building elements will require the services of an architect proficient in IEBC standards.

All building systems should be replaced for future development. Assuming the work is classified as a Level 3 alteration, an automatic sprinkler system and fire alarm and detection systems will likely need to be added. Level 3 alterations do not require the entire building to meet current energy code standards; only the alterations will be expected to meet current energy code standards. This portion of IEBC is significant, given the heavy masonry structure of Phase I.

In general, code compliance for future use should be achievable within Phase I, though considerations and modifications will have to be made depending on the use. All building elements are anticipated to be accessible to the greatest extent possible. One challenge will be the elevation of the main floor concerning the Airy Street sidewalk: the main floor is 14 steps above the sidewalk (approximately 7' of grade differential). Several possible solutions may be considered for the solution to this issue, including:

1. Mechanical means, such as a lift. A lift is often the costliest alternative, aesthetically challenging to incorporate (especially on a historic building), and requires the most maintenance, although it requires a minimal footprint.
2. Ramping, which will take up a significant amount of surface area.
3. Relocation. The accessibility code intends to provide building elements that can be used by all users. In this project, if the main front doors are utilized as a primary entrance, a scenario where a separate accessible entrance is provided (from the Marshall Street side, for example) might be seen by the public as an unequal experience. The location and availability of on-site

parking, particularly if placed on the current prison yard or the parking lot portion of the site could also allow for accessible entry to future development.

Similarly, on the interior, all current vertical circulation is by a staircase (currently collapsed). The code requires an accessible circulation path through the building to public elements. Because the first floors of the various phases are largely level, an accessible entrance could be achieved at grade along the Marshall Street façade. Internal circulation could be achieved via an elevator in new construction or one of the other Phases of the original prison if an accessible path is available to public portions of Phase I.

### 5.3 HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The exterior and interior preservation assessment indicates a range of conditions in Phase I, ranging from “poor” to “fair,” depending on location. Overall, the evaluation indicates “poor” to “average” condition. The elements have changed some of the exterior and interior and need maintenance for significant repairs. See below for an overview of exterior and interior elements, including character-defining features and their overall condition.

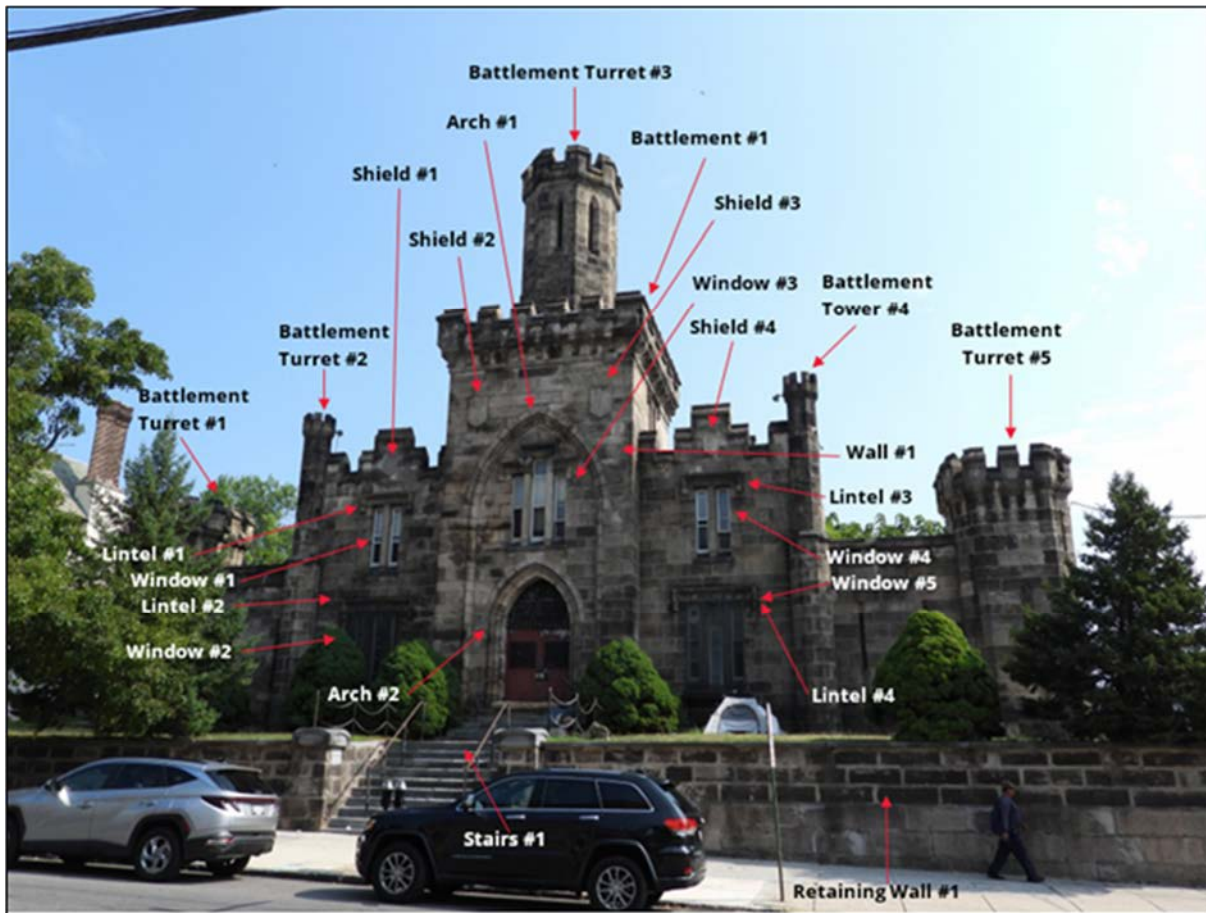


Figure 12. Exterior character defining features

**Table 1. Phase I exterior conditions**

Features	Material(s)	Condition	Level of Priority
Foundation	Stone, Mortar	Fair	Moderate
Exterior Walls	Stone, Mortar, Parging	Fair	Moderate
Battlement Turret	Stone, Mortar	Fair	Moderate
Shield	Stone	Average	Maintenance
Drip Mold Crowns	Stone	Fair	Moderate
Window	Wood	Fair	Moderate
Arches	Stone, Mortar	Fair	Moderate
Door	Wood, Iron	Average	Maintenance
Stairs	Stone, Mortar	Fair	Moderate
Retaining Wall	Stone, Mortar	Poor	Significant
Roof	Brick, Wood	Fair	Moderate
Chimney	Brick, Stone	Fair	Moderate

**Table 2. Phase I interior features**

Features	Material(s)	Condition	Level of Priority
Ceilings	Brick, lath, and plaster	Poor	Significant
Walls	Brick, Plaster, Stone	Poor	Significant
Floors	Wood	Poor	Significant
Trim	Plaster	Poor	Significant
Architrave Trim	Wood	Fair	Moderate
Transom Lights	Wood	Average	Maintenance
Sidelights	Wood, Glass	Fair	Moderate
Stairs	Wood	Fair	Moderate
Casings	Wood	Fair	Maintenance
Metal Gate	Stone, Mortar	Average	Maintenance
Doors	Metal	Average	Maintenance

Please see Appendix B for a full preservation assessment, including specific recommendations and standards.

## 5.4 OPPORTUNITIES/ASSETS FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Except for the timber framing on the first and second floor, the masonry arch floor construction and masonry walls are generally in *average* condition.
- The roof covering appears generally in *average* condition.
- The building's main elevation along Airy Street provides a striking and unique street presence.
- The interior of Phase I includes aesthetically and architecturally interesting elements that could be incorporated into future uses and/or ornamentation.
- The unique and interesting masonry elements in Phase I would likely be economically infeasible to recreate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- Re-use of existing building structures significantly reduces the carbon footprint of any future development.

## 5.5 THREATS/LIABILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- The existing timber floor framing on the first and second floors is in *poor to critical* condition.
- Currently compromised internal wood structures will cause an access challenge for construction activities. Temporary shoring/structures must be installed to allow for safe work.
- Ongoing moisture infiltration to the building will continue to degrade building elements.
- Ongoing decay of the retaining wall could lead to costly repairs and potential endangerment of pedestrians.
- The access stairs from Airy Street present an accessibility challenge for future development. An accessible method of site entry will be required for any public use. Depending on the proposed method, this access may come from Marshall Street or another entry point.

## 5.6 STATEMENT OF UNKNOWNNS AND POTENTIAL RISKS

- The condition of timber roof framing is unknown. Some level of deterioration, especially in the masonry pockets at bearing, should be anticipated. Due to safety concerns, the CED team was not able to access the roof framing for up-close evaluation.
- Painted wood surfaces likely have lead contamination.

## 5.7 PRIORITY NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### 5.7.1 PRIORITY NEEDS

- Remove vegetation growing in and near the building.
- Repoint and repair the existing retaining wall and stairs along Airy Street to prevent future degradation.
- Monitor and fill critical open joints at the façade.
- Prohibit access to timber-framed first-floor areas.
- Continue to prohibit access to all second-floor areas.
- Discourage occupancy by unhoused and transient inhabitants on the property.
- Close and/or cover exterior openings, allowing moisture to enter the building.

- Repair the stormwater system and/or divert stormwater away from the building.

### 5.7.2 PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- Remove moisture from the building before engaging in any severe mitigation efforts.
- Internal environmental hazards, including lead paint, asbestos-containing materials, and other waste, need to be remediated.
- Professional contractors should stabilize the floors, ceilings, and walls as soon as possible to make the building safe for people to walk through and prevent further damage.
- The foundation and exterior paving should be thoroughly assessed to determine the extent of damage and how much must be repaired or replaced by a professional contractor.
- Test any painted surface to be re-used (doors, windows, stairs, metal gates, etc.) for lead before scraping or sanding.
- Provide safe access to the roof for a full assessment by a professional mason and roofer.

### 5.7.3 DEVELOPMENT

- Missing windows should be replaced in kind.
- A professional contractor should repoint the foundation and walls and replace missing stones to keep the walls stable.
- Repoint, repair, and/or replace parts of the sandstone and brick throughout the exterior to strengthen the building.
- Exterior masonry should be cleaned.
- Repair/replace roof.

## 5.8 IMPLICATIONS OF NON-ACTION

- Non-action in preventing vegetation and mold growth and moisture infiltration will continue to degrade the existing building, increasing the ultimate cost of remediation and restoration and eventually causing the building to become structurally unstable.
- Non-action in stabilizing the retaining wall along Airy Street could result in a hazard to pedestrian safety.

## 6.0 PHASE II

### 6.1 STRUCTURE DESCRIPTION

Phase II is the original cell block portion of the prison, which was constructed along with Phase I, "Castle." It is primarily built of brick and stone masonry. The roof structure above the central hall is an exposed brick masonry barrel vault supported on grouted stone and brick-bearing walls; the roof above the second-floor cells is assumed to be the same brick arch construction spanning between adjacent cells (inaccessible for visual observation). The brick roof structures are over-framed with wood sleepers/joists to create a gable pitch.

The second-floor cell blocks are masonry brick arch floor construction. The masonry arches are one-way, semi-circular, with the brick laid in a staggered position. The tops of the arches are filled with concrete or wood substrate to create a level surface. Above the central hall, a full-width platform spans between the second-floor cell blocks for the first half of the building and reduces to catwalk access along the rear half of the building. The full-width platform is built with wood joists between steel girder bearings on masonry walls. The catwalk is steel framed and supported by brackets anchored to the masonry walls.

The first floor is a masonry brick arch floor supported on brick-and-mortar stone foundation walls, similar to Phase I.

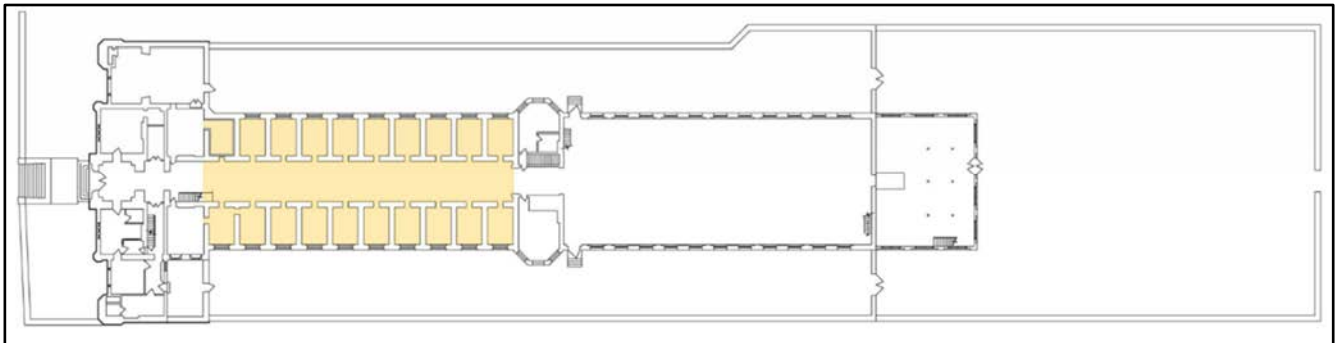


Figure 13. Phase II Footprint from 10/10/2023 Seiler + Drury Presentation

### 6.2 CURRENT STATE

Refer to 'Definition of Terms' in Appendix D for a description of conditions noted in *italics*

#### 6.2.1 STRUCTURE - MASONRY WALLS

##### Exterior Walls

The exterior side of the western walls is in *fair* condition. Significant plant growth along the length of this wall is present, extending from the ground surface up to the roof. The stone surface appears in average condition where visible, with minimal surface deterioration. The mortared joints appear to be moderately deteriorated.

The exterior side of the eastern walls is in fair condition, similar to the western side. While there is not as much dense growth along this side, numerous large tree trunks protrude tight against the masonry walls at grade. Some loose stones and significant mortar deterioration are present.

The walls appear structurally stable with no visible signs of structural distress such as leaning, bowing, or cracking.

#### Foundation and Interior Walls

The foundation and interior masonry brick and stone walls are in *average* condition. Most areas have been plastered or parged. Where exposed, the surface of the stone and brick is in *average* condition. Some mortar deterioration and loose stone or brick are present. No visible signs of structural distress or settlement are present.

#### **6.2.2 STRUCTURE – FLOORS**

The general condition of the masonry arch on the first and second floors is average; indications of structural distress, such as excessive deflection or cracking, are not present. The underside of the brick arches is finished with plaster. Minor mortar deterioration is visible where the brick is exposed due to plaster deterioration.

The second-floor access platform and catwalk are in *fair to unknown* condition. Portions of the wood decking were damaged due to deterioration. The steel girders supporting the wood platform appeared to be in average condition with some surface corrosion, however the bearing condition was concealed. Most of the steel catwalk framing was covered with peeling paint, and the condition of the structural elements supporting the catwalk was not accessible for observation.

### 6.2.3 STRUCTURE – ROOF



Figure 14. Phase II Roof

The general condition of the roof structure appears to be fair. While the main brick arch structure over the central area appears to be in average condition, the wood over-framing above the arch roof has incurred moderate deterioration and invasive plant growth. The roof membrane itself is significantly compromised.

### 6.2.4 UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Any utilities in Phase II should be removed and replaced as part of future development. See previous analysis of utility availability to the site and Phase I. Capacities may vary, but generally, all required utilities are located to allow connection to the site.

### 6.2.5 ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

The interior of Phase II includes several architecturally interesting features, the most significant being the brick barrel vault running along its central axis. Though a safe, direct physical examination was not possible as part of this investigation, Dugan Masonry Restoration commented on the good condition of the vault. Recreating a brick masonry vault found in Phase II would be economically infeasible for future development.

### 6.2.6 INTERNAL CONTENTS & EQUIPMENT

Abandoned infrastructure and equipment from the prison are intact in the interior, though salvageable items appear to be limited to metalwork, doors, and the structure itself. Windows and doors should be repaired wherever possible and replaced in-kind when not. All building systems should be replaced.

### 6.2.7 MACRO CODE/ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

It is assumed that access to Phase II would be through Phase I (see section 5.2.8 for discussion). The first floor of Phase II is level with Phases I and III, so accessibility to the contiguous portions should allow for relatively easy accessibility to Phase II. Vertical circulation between floors is via a staircase (currently unsafe for use on upper floors). Basement access is via stairs located in Phase III. Only one basement stair was evident during CED's on-site investigation, so the current code would likely not allow public basement access. Accessible vertical circulation would be required for future public use of the upper floors and basement. Additionally, access doors to the former cell spaces are too small for accessible use without modification.

Per section 604.1 of IEBC, this project would be classified as a "Level 3 Alteration." Level 3 indicates that the new work shall be done as if it were new construction.

All building systems should be replaced for future development. Assuming the work is classified as a Level 3 alteration, an automatic sprinkler system and fire alarm and detection systems will likely need to be added. Level 3 alterations do not require the entire building to meet current energy code standards; only the alterations will be expected to meet current energy code standards. This portion of IEBC is significant, given the heavy masonry structure of Phase I.

## 6.3 HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The exterior and interior preservation assessment indicates a range of conditions in Phase I, ranging from "poor" to "fair," depending on location. Overall, the evaluation indicates "poor" to "average" condition. The elements have changed some of the exterior and interior and need maintenance for significant repairs. See below for an overview of exterior and interior elements, including character-defining features and their overall condition.

**Table 3. Phase II exterior features**

Features	Material(s)	Condition	Level of Priority
Foundation	Stone, Mortar	Fair	Moderate
Walls	Stone, Mortar	Fair	Moderate
Windows	Wood	Poor	Significant
Roof	Brick, Wood	Fair	Moderate

**Table 4. Phase II interior features**

Features	Material(s)	Condition	Level of Priority
Ceilings	Brick, Mortar	Poor	Significant
Walls	Brick, Parging	Poor	Significant
Floors	Concrete, Brick	Fair	Moderate
Windows	Wood	Poor	Significant
Doors	Metal	Average	Maintenance
Cells	Metal	Fair	Moderate

Please see Appendix B for a full preservation assessment, including specific recommendations and standards.

#### 6.4 OPPORTUNITIES/ASSETS FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- The masonry construction throughout Phase II appears to be in fair to average condition, indicating the likely structural capacity for re-use.
- The distinctive brick vault over the central space is architecturally unique and economically infeasible in today's construction market.
- Re-use of existing building structures significantly reduces the carbon footprint of any future development.

#### 6.5 THREATS/LIABILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Dimensions and accessibility of former cell spaces will provide challenges for any useful occupancy of the former cells without modification to entry doors.
- Degraded sleeper and roof structure allows water to enter and will lead to further degradation of masonry construction, including brick roof vault if not stabilized.
- Ongoing moisture in the basement will continue to degrade the building's condition.
- Internal environmental hazards, including lead paint, asbestos-containing materials, mold, and other waste, need to be remediated.

#### 6.6 STATEMENT OF UNKNOWNNS AND POTENTIAL RISKS

- Safety concerns regarding access to upper floors during CED's evaluation of the building made in-person examination of those spaces impossible.

## 6.7 PRIORITY NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### 6.7.1 PRIORITY

- Remove vegetative growth on exterior walls and roof to prevent accelerated stone and brick masonry deterioration.
- Remove large tree roots adjacent to the walls.
- Provide a protective covering or weatherproof barrier over the existing roof to prevent water mitigation into the building above the brick vault below.
- Continue to prohibit access to all second-floor areas.
- Monitor and fill critical open joints at the façade.
- Close and/or cover exterior openings, allowing moisture to enter the building.
- Address compromised stormwater drainage contributing to moisture entry into building.

### 6.7.2 PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- Remove moisture from the building before engaging in any serious mitigation efforts.
- Provide new sleeper structure and a roof over brick barrel vault.
- Remediate internal environmental hazards, including lead paint, asbestos-containing materials, mold, and other waste.
- Repoint the deteriorated mortar joints on the exterior wall and foundation after removing all vegetation.
- Stabilize the floors, ceilings, and walls as soon as possible to make the building safe for people to walk through and prevent further damage.
- Test any painted surface to be re-used (doors, windows, stairs, metal gates, etc.) for lead before scraping or sanding.
- Thoroughly clean and inspect floors to fully assess the condition and the damage that moisture has potentially caused.

### 6.7.3 DEVELOPMENT

- To avoid improper treatment, have a professional masonry contractor assess the exterior of the building before any cleaning, repairs, or replacements.
- Repair and repoint masonry joints at the exterior.

## 6.8 IMPLICATIONS OF NON-ACTION

- Non-action in preventing vegetation and mold growth and moisture infiltration will continue to degrade the existing building, increasing the ultimate cost of remediation and restoration and eventually causing the building to become structurally unstable.

## 7.0 PHASE III

### 7.1 STRUCTURE DESCRIPTION

Phase III is an 1890s addition to the Marshall Street side of Phase II. It is directly accessible from Phase II. Phase III is constructed of masonry-bearing walls supporting a steel and masonry roof structure. A free-standing, prefabricated steel structure housing three levels of prison cells and access walkways occurs above the first floor

The roof profile is gabled with sloped steel members supporting an unknown roof system type spanning between the steel bents. The area was inaccessible for observation. Based on photographs and commentary from the 2020 Gannett Fleming report, it appears to be constructed of masonry supporting a slate roof.

The first floor is constructed of a masonry jack arch floor structure. A jack arch system utilizes shallow brick masonry arches similar to Phases I and II. However, instead of bearing on load-bearing masonry at each end, the arches are supported by steel beams. Tie rods span between steel girders, resisting the natural thrust that arch systems create and preventing the beams from outwardly spreading under loading conditions.

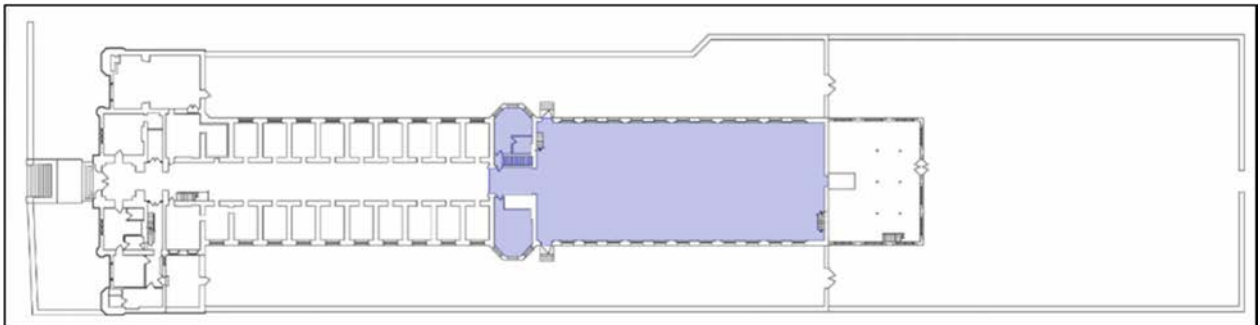


Figure 15. Phase III Footprint, from 10/10/2023 Seiler + Drury Presentation

### 7.2 CURRENT STATE

Refer to 'Definition of Terms' in Appendix D for a description of conditions noted in *italics*

## 7.2.1 STRUCTURE – MASONRY WALLS



Figure 16. Vegetation at Phase III exterior, east prison yard



Figure 17. Phase III exterior from west courtyard

### Exterior Walls

The exterior side of the eastern and western walls are in *average* condition. Brick staining and efflorescence are visible. Minor mortar and surface deterioration along the interior and exterior sides, including small cracks, has occurred. Several large tree trunks protruded tight against the eastern brick exterior wall at grade. The interior of the exterior brick walls are partially covered in peeling paint.

The chimney stack was not observed. However, per the 2020 Gannett Flemming report and drone imagery, cracks and deterioration of the brick chimney are present.

The walls appear structurally stable with no visible signs of structural distress such as leaning, bowing, or significant cracking.

### Foundation and Interior Walls

The foundation walls appear to be in *fair to average* condition. Portions of the rubble stone foundation wall along the eastern side appear to have significant mortar deterioration and loose stone. The interior brick masonry walls are covered in layers of parging or plater in various states of disrepair.

The walls appear structurally stable with no visible signs of structural distress such as leaning, bowing, or significant settlement cracking.

### 7.2.2 STRUCTURE – FLOORS

The masonry jack arch first-floor structure is in *fair to average* condition. Most of the underside of the brick courses have been painted. Painting brick with non-permeable paint could trap moisture and accelerate deterioration. Significant mortar deterioration is present when the paint has peeled and exposed the brick surface. In other areas, loose brick or missing brick pieces are visible. Only the bottom flange of the steel beams supporting the brick arches is visible and has minor to significant corrosion. Significant corrosion occurs in the framing above the Shower Room; this area and the Office area above should be prohibited from accessing.

The masonry jack arch second-floor structure occurs only at the 'front' of the Phase 3 structure, before entering the prison cell area. The brick in this area has significant mold growth and deterioration.

The prefabricated free-standing 3-story steel structure appears to be in *average* condition. Excessive paint peeling and surface corrosion are present.

### 7.2.3 STRUCTURE – ROOF

The roof structure was not visible from the interior for observation. Based on the 2020 Gannett Fleming report and drone image, the roof structure appears to be in *average* condition. Plant growth is occurring along the roof eaves within the gutter system

### 7.2.4 UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Any utilities in Phase III should be removed and replaced as part of future development. See previous analysis of utility availability to the site and Phase I. Capacities may vary. Still, in general, all required utilities are located as to allow connection to the site. Because Phase III is located mid-way between Airy Street and Marshall Street, utilities servicing the phase will likely traverse Phase I and II or any other new construction on the site.

### 7.2.5 ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES

Phase III is effectively a large brick shed with large windows and skylights, allowing for significant natural light in the space. In general, the ornamental brickwork is typical of a late nineteenth-century building, generally to a level of execution above what is economically available for new construction.



Figure 18. View of corridor between steel cell structure and brick building exterior wall

### 7.2.6 INTERNAL CONTENTS & EQUIPMENT

The steel prefabricated cell structure appears to be structurally independent from the overall building. The size and nature of the cells and their walkways make re-use for any practical purpose beyond

education unlikely. However, if future development includes an educational or historical element, some of the cells could be salvaged for display.

### 7.2.7 MACRO CODE/ACCESSIBILITY ASSESSMENT

Like Phases I and II, accessibility is a prime concern for Phase III, but because the first floors are generally level across the phases, an accessibility solution for one may serve the others. Of note, entry to the prison interior is currently made through Phase III near the point where it connects to Phase II. It is approximately 2.5 feet above grade at this point.

Because Phase III is a large unpartitioned, column-free space, interior redevelopment could include many potential uses. The interior space could be relatively easily configured to meet accessibility standards.

Per section 604.1 of IEBC, this project would be classified as a “Level 3 Alteration.” Level 3 indicates that the new work shall be done as if it were new construction.

All building systems should be replaced for future development. Assuming the work is classified as a Level 3 alteration, an automatic sprinkler system and fire alarm and detection systems will likely need to be added. Level 3 alterations do not require the entire building to meet current energy code standards; only the alterations will be expected to meet current energy code standards. Level 3 alteration under IEBC does not require meeting the current energy code for areas not altered, which is significant because almost every wall inherent to the structure is an exterior wall and features interior ornamental brickwork. Not having to insulate these walls significantly reduces redevelopment complexity.

### 7.3 HISTORIC PRESERVATION CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

The exterior and interior preservation assessment indicates a range of conditions in Phase III, ranging from “poor” to “fair,” depending on location. Overall, the evaluation indicates “poor” to “average” condition. The elements have changed some of the exterior and interior and need maintenance for significant repairs. See below for an overview of exterior and interior elements, including character-defining features and their overall condition.

**Table 5. Phase III exterior conditions**

Features	Material(s)	Condition	Level of Priority
Foundation	Stone, Mortar	Fair	Moderate
Walls	Stone, Mortar, Brick	Fair	Moderate
Windows	Wood	Poor	Significant
Doors	Metal	Average	Maintenance
Roof	Slate	Average	Maintenance

**Table 6. Phase III interior features**

Features	Material(s)	Condition	Level of Priority
Ceilings	Brick	Poor	Significant
Walls	Glazed Marble, Red Brick	Poor	Significant
Trim	Brick	Poor	Significant
Floors	Wood, Concrete, Tile	Fair	Moderate
Architrave Trim	Wood	Fair	Moderate
Windows	Wood	Poor	Significant
Stairs	Metal	Average	Maintenance
Gates	Metal	Average	Maintenance
Doors	Metal	Average	Maintenance
Cells	Metal	Average	Maintenance

Please see Appendix B for a full preservation assessment, including specific recommendations and standards.

#### 7.4 OPPORTUNITIES/ASSETS FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Because Phase III is a large, high-ceiling space without any columns, it is well-suited for future uses and easily adaptable.
- Existing large windows and skylights provide abundant natural light in the interior.
- Like much of the Airy Street Prison, Phase III has unique architectural elements, including ornamental brickwork.
- Part of the existing cell structure could be saved for educational purposes.
- Re-use of existing building structures reduces the carbon footprint of any future development.

#### 7.5 THREATS/LIABILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Internal environmental hazards, including lead paint, asbestos-containing materials, and other waste, need to be remediated.
- Although the first-floor structure appears to be capable of supporting a 3-story prefabricated metal structure, the brick mortar degradation poses a significant threat to the capacity of the floor structure in its current condition.
- Ongoing moisture in the basement will continue to degrade the building's condition.
- While IEBC will likely not mandate redevelopment to meet current energy standards, the current structure is not well-insulated.
- Construction equipment access through/over the prison walls may be a challenge.

## 7.6 STATEMENT OF UNKNOWNNS AND POTENTIAL RISKS

- Close inspection of the upper levels was impossible due to safety concerns. Drone footage of the exterior roof indicates that it is in average condition.
- The steel cell structure conceals portions of the building that prevented the CED team from examining portions of the structure, such as the first floor.

## 7.7 PRIORITY NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### 7.7.1 PRIORITY NEEDS

- Remove vegetative growth on and near exterior walls and roof to prevent accelerated stone and brick masonry deterioration.
- Remove large tree roots adjacent to the walls.
- Repair the stormwater system and/or divert stormwater away from the building.
- Close and/or cover exterior openings, allowing moisture to enter the building.

### 7.7.2 PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- Internal environmental hazards, including lead paint, asbestos-containing materials, mold, and other waste, need to be remediated.
- Replace missing windows in kind. For the windows that can be restored, a licensed professional should test the paint for lead to comply with all local, state, and federal laws.
- Repoint the deteriorated mortar joints on the exterior wall and foundation after removing all vegetation.
- Provide safe access to the roof for a full assessment of the roof's condition.
- Test any painted surface to be re-used (doors, windows, stairs, metal gates, etc.) for lead before scraping or sanding.

### 7.7.3 DEVELOPMENT

- Remove and dispose of interior prison cell structure, assuming no potential re-use for educational or other purpose.
- Inspect floor after removal of interior prison cell structure.
- Missing windows should be replaced in kind.

## 8.0 PHASE IV

### 8.1 STRUCTURE DESCRIPTION

Phase IV is the most recently completed portion of the prison complex, constructed in the 1920s. It is constructed of masonry brick walls with timber framed rafters, beams, and roof framing.

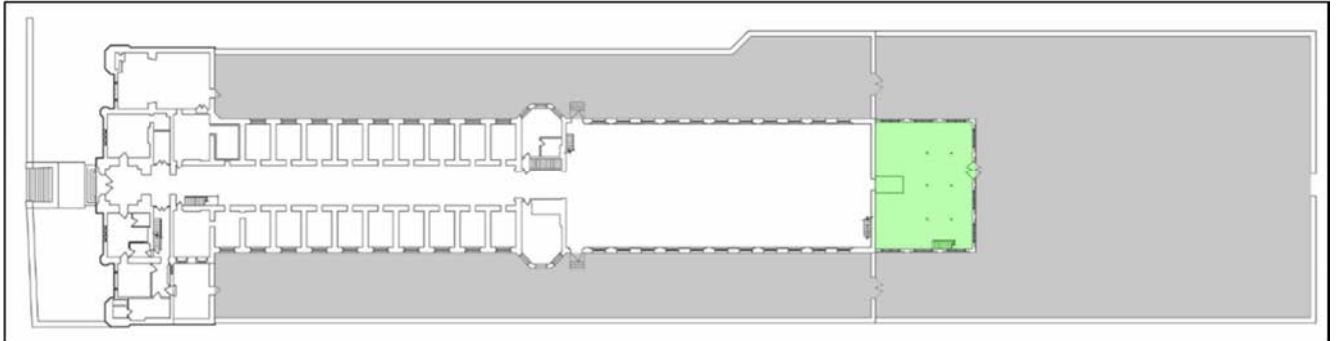


Figure 19. Phase IV footprint from 10/10/2023 Seiler + Drury Presentation

## 8.2 CURRENT STATE

The roof and associated structure on Phase IV had collapsed before the 2020 Gannett Fleming report. Decay has progressed in the intervening years, and the area is unsafe. The open roof is also a major conduit for water entry into the other phases of the building, accelerating the decay of the other Phases. As the most recently completed prison portion, it is the least historically significant. CED recommends demolishing this building as part of any future development.



Figure 20. Phase IV exterior

## 8.3 PRIORITY NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### 8.3.1 PRIORITY NEEDS

- Access to Phase IV should continue to be prohibited, and appropriate measures should be taken to secure access points.
- Prevent moisture from entering Phases III, II, and I through a large hole in the collapsed roof at Phase IV, either by covering the roof or closing all openings between Phase IV and the other buildings. Direct any stormwater runoff from temporary measures away from Phase III.

### 8.3.2 PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- If Phase IV is demolished, openings between Phase III and Phase IV should be temporarily closed and weatherproofed to prevent moisture from entering the building.

## 9.0 PARKING LOT

### 9.1 STRUCTURE DESCRIPTION

The parking lot is a relatively non-descript 200-spot parking lot created after existing structures on the site were demolished in the 1970s or 1980s. Initial title research has indicated as many as five historical parcels on the existing parking lot site and several structures through the years.

### 9.2 OPPORTUNITIES/ASSETS FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- The parking lot site is relatively level, largely clear of physical obstacles to development.
- The parking lot site is at a prime location in Norristown's downtown – at the US202 and Airy Street intersection.

### 9.3 THREATS/LIABILITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT POTENTIAL

- Various structures that have existed on the parking lot site indicate a higher risk of concealed or abandoned subgrade structures or debris.
- The lot itself is currently used for activities at the Justice Center, and when the new center comes online in the next few years, parking demand will likely increase.
- Removing a significant number of downtown parking spaces without replacement may change the commercial nature of Norristown's downtown.

### 9.4 STATEMENT OF UNKNOWNNS AND POTENTIAL RISKS

- At this time, the County is assembling the proper title reports for a complete American Land Title Association (ALTA) survey. One delaying factor in the attainment of final reports is that the property was once five separate plots. Without a full ALTA survey, the potential exists that there are unknown easements or restrictions on the site.
- Additionally, to develop the prison site and the parking lot as a contiguous site, the City of Norristown will have to vacate Maris Street. Initial conversations with representatives from Montgomery County indicate that there should be little resistance to vacating Maris Street from the municipality.

## 9.5 PRIORITY NEEDS & RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT

### 9.5.1 PRIORITY NEEDS

- Procure title reports and ALTA survey for the Parking Lot site.

### 9.5.2 PRE-DEVELOPMENT

- Maris Street should be vacated, and lots required for development should be consolidated as part of the land development process.

- Conduct appropriate sub-grade exploration to ascertain better the risk of abandoned sub-grade structures and debris.

## 10.0 OVERALL POTENTIAL & LOOKING INTO THE FUTURE

### 10.1 FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ENVELOPE

#### 10.1.1 ZONING FACTORS

For this report, CED contemplated three different physical scenarios that would preserve and re-use at least a portion of the existing Airy Street Prison. Because resolving the site's height restriction will require the submission of a use registration application, we have calculated the development square potential for both potential outcomes: ten stories/120 ft and four stories. Detailed explanations and full diagrams can be found in Appendix C: Site/Civil Feasibility.

Also, at the time of this report's issuance, an ALTA survey for the Parking Lot site had not been attained. This exercise assumes that there are no restricting factors on-site development for the parking lot site.

The Concept Plans are provided in Appendix C of this report and have been prepared based on the best available documentation during the preparation of this report. A new survey of the area, including the parking lot area, is suggested to confirm the existing conditions and dimensions noted in this report. The Concept Plans assume the following:

- Maris Street will be vacated, with all utilities within the Maris Street right-of-way to be relocated to public right-of-way
- The lots associated with the prison, the neighboring parking lot, Maris Street right-of-way, and all former alleys/streets will be consolidated as depicted on the plans. The total lot area is 118,807 SF.
- The existing perimeter prison walls along the property line will be removed. Additional coordination, design, and analysis will be required to determine if retaining walls will be required for the proposed development. It is likely that a retaining wall will need to be constructed along the eastern property line due to the existing grade changes between the site and the adjacent property.
- A 10' landscape buffer will be provided along all property lines. The code requires that any principal building constructed, modified, or remodeled in this district must have its front façade built to the edge of the public sidewalk unless the structure is utilizing an existing historic façade as part of the redevelopment project. This requirement should be verified with the municipality.
- The HARB A Zone requires that the maximum building height not exceed one story or 25% more than the height of the tallest adjacent building. For this report, we are assuming that the tallest adjacent building is three stories, and therefore, a four-story building would be allowed. Town Center Zoning allows for a 10-story/120 foot maximum building height. Clarification of the actual building height should be verified with the municipality.
- A 20' buffer will be provided from any portion of the existing building to remain in a proposed building as a constructability measure.
- The orientation and type of parking (surface, structured, or internal) has not been considered as a part of the plan preparation. Once the proposed use has been established, the

developer's required parking area will need to be deducted from the total buildable area for each plan.

- Development on the parking lot site will displace approximately 200 parking spaces in downtown Norristown. The parking lot is currently used for Courthouse parking, and with the new Justice Center expected to open in 2026, local parking demand will likely increase. Planned development on the site will likely need to replace some level of displaced parking. A traffic study will likely be required to coordinate safe entry and exit to any on-site parking.

**Concept Plan A: Phase I Re-Used**



Concept Plan A assumes that Phases 2, 3, and 4 of the existing building will be removed. Phase I of the existing building would remain with approximately 3,481 SF building area. With the assumptions above, the total buildable area, excluding buffers and the existing structure to remain, is 95,910 SF.

- With a maximum ten-story building, the total potential gross floor area is 959,100 SF.
- With a maximum four-story building, the total potential gross floor area is 383,640 SF.

**Concept Plan B: Phases I & II Re-Used**



Concept Plan B assumes that Phases III and IV of the existing building will be removed. Phases I and II of the existing building would remain with approximately 8,596 SF building area. With the assumptions above, the total buildable area, excluding buffers and the existing structure to remain, is 85,664 SF.

- With a maximum ten-story building, the total potential gross floor area is 856,640 SF.
- With a maximum four-story building, the total potential gross floor area is 342,656 SF.

**Concept Plan C: Phases I, II, III Re-Used**



Concept Plan C assumes that Phase IV of the existing building will be removed. Phases I, II and III of the existing building would remain with approximately 14,813 SF building area. With the assumptions above, the total buildable area, excluding buffers and the existing structure to remain, is 74,096 SF.

- With a maximum ten-story building, the total potential gross floor area is 740,960 SF.
- With a maximum four-story building, the total potential gross floor area is 296,384 SF.

### 10.1.2 BUILDING CODE FACTORS

CED performed an analysis of the potential redevelopment of the site, as it would be addressed in the Building Code. In this case, the “site” is comprised of the existing prison building site combined with the parking lot along Dekalb Street. It is assumed that these sites can be consolidated into a single parcel.

Per the Norristown Building Code, the proposed work is governed by the 2018 International Existing Building Code (IEBC). Per section 604.1, this project would be classified as a “Level 3 Alteration.” Level 3 indicates that the new work shall be done as if it were new construction.

Two primary concepts were studied:

1. A **four-story** building covering the entire developable area of the combined sites, based on assumption that tallest adjacent building is three stories. See above for conversation regarding building height restrictions.
2. A **ten-story** building covering the entire developable area of the combined sites.

While we focused on these 2 likely concepts, the potential scenarios can be endless, with minor modifications to the variables below. Additional scenarios can be run as different development options are considered. The key components of determining code compliance include:

1. Site coverage: How the building and any proposed additions are situated in relation to adjacent streets and adjacent properties.
2. Floor area: The occupied area of the building. In these scenarios, we utilized areas that maximize the building’s coverage of the combined site.
3. Construction Type: We started with scenarios utilizing the least restrictive construction types, which are typically the least expensive. Generally, as the Construction Type gets more restrictive, the building area allowed increases. However, as the construction type gets more restricted, the cost per square foot increases.
4. Fire Sprinkler: When a sprinkler system is provided, the allowable area is allowed to increase.
5. Occupancy Type: The most likely uses for the building, which we focused on for this study, are A-2, A-3, and B, with a parking garage of type S-2. Following is a brief summary of the allowed uses:

**Group A-2** occupancy includes assembly uses intended for food and/or drink consumption including, but not limited to:

- Banquet halls
- Casinos (gaming areas)
- Nightclubs
- Restaurants, cafeterias and similar dining facilities (including associated commercial kitchens)
- Taverns and bars

**Group A-3** occupancy includes assembly uses intended for worship, recreation or amusement and other assembly uses not classified elsewhere in Group A including, but not limited to:

- Amusement arcades
- Art galleries
- Bowling alleys
- Community halls
- Courtrooms
- Dance halls (not including food or drink consumption)
- Exhibition halls
- Funeral parlors
- Greenhouses for the conservation and exhibition of plants that provide public access.
- Gymnasiums (without spectator seating)
- Indoor swimming pools (without spectator seating)
- Indoor tennis courts (without spectator seating)
- Lecture halls
- Libraries
- Museums

**Group B** occupancy includes, among others, the use of a building or structure, or a portion thereof, for office, professional or service-type transactions, including storage of records and accounts. Business occupancies shall include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Ambulatory care facilities
- Animal hospitals, kennels and pounds
- Banks
- Barber and beauty shops
- Car wash
- Civic administration
- Clinic, outpatient
- Dry cleaning and laundries: pick-up and delivery stations and self-service
- Educational occupancies for students above the 12th grade
- Electronic data processing
- Food processing establishments and commercial kitchens not associated with restaurants, cafeterias and similar dining facilities not more than 2,500 square feet (232 m<sup>2</sup>) in area.
- Laboratories: testing and research
- Motor vehicle showrooms
- Post offices
- Print shops

- Professional services (architects, attorneys, dentists, physicians, engineers, etc.)
- Radio and television stations
- Telephone exchanges
- Training and skill development not in a school or academic program (this shall include, but not be limited to, tutoring centers, martial arts studios, gymnastics and similar uses regardless of the ages served, and where not classified as a Group A occupancy).

**Group S-2** occupancy includes Parking Garages, among other Low-hazard storage uses.

### **Scenario 1: Four Story Building**

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“B” occupancy with incidental A-2, A-3 and S-2 occupancies

Construction Type II-A, Sprinkled, 4 stories

Per IBC Table 504.3, the building height is limited to 85’

Per IBC Table 504.4, up to 4 stories are allowed

The allowable area is 514,500 SF (as calculated below), which is greater than the zoning allowable area of 383,640 SF

$$\begin{aligned} A_a &= [A_t + (NS \times I_f)] \times S_a \\ &= 112,500 + (37,500 \times 0.43) \times 4 \\ &= 514,500 \text{ SF} \end{aligned}$$

### **Scenario 2: Ten Story Building**

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Construction Type I-B, Non-Sprinkled

Per IBC Table 504.3, the building height is limited to 160’

Per IBC Table 504.4, up to 11 stories are allowed

Per IBC Table 506.2, an unlimited building area is allowed.

The important conclusion is that building code should not be a constraining factor in developable square footage on the site.

## **10.2 ZONING/ENTITLEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

Perhaps the most significant factor in future potential development is a Zoning determination of whether the site’s building height restriction will be defined by the HARB Zone A limiting it to one story above adjacent structures (4 stories) or the 10-story/120 foot Town Center restriction. This

interpretation could impact developable square footage by approximately 400,000-500,000 SF, representing potentially hundreds of millions of dollars of development potential.

Additional important considerations include the requirement that “where any structured parking located on the same lot with other uses, it shall be designed as a mixed-use building, with storefronts or other business uses on the street level to encourage pedestrian activity and reduce visual impacts.” This requirement would indicate likely ground-floor commercial programming in keeping with the spirit of the Town Center district.

### 10.3 SITE ACCESS CONSIDERATIONS

#### **Construction**

Access to the parking lot portion of the site should not present any significant challenge. However, since literal prison walls surround the prison portion of the site, construction equipment will have to navigate some spatial challenges to access existing structures.

Currently, there is a rear roll-up gate at the rear of the prison yard, opening to Marshall Street. The dimensions of this opening are approximately 15’ high by approximately 18’ wide. The total dimensions should be confirmed. A geotechnical drilling rig was able to enter the site through this gate without any special consideration. Beyond the rear yard, the two side yards of the prison are blocked by arched openings. The openings will likely present access challenges for large construction equipment.



Figure 21. Marshall Street roll-up gate

## 10.4 GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Located within Norristown's Central Historic District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1984, the Airy Street Prison is eligible for various county, state, and federal grant programs supporting historic preservation and infrastructure improvements. The following is a summary of grant programs that should be pursued to support infrastructure improvements outlined in previous sections of this report.

- **Montco 2040 Implementation Grant Program**

The Montco 2040, Implementation Grant program, provides grants to municipalities for projects that support the county's comprehensive plan. The plan focuses on themes like a vibrant economy, sustainable places, and connected communities. Most notably, this program supports projects that enhance the function or prominence of a cultural venue through exterior physical improvements and the preservation of historic properties.

Award Amounts: \$10,000–\$250,000

Application Deadline: Anticipated May 2025

- **Community Development Block Grant Program**

The Montgomery County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program is an entitlement funding from HUD to promote community revitalization throughout the county. CDBG funds may be used for a wide range of community development activities, including acquisition, rehabilitation, disposition, relocation, clearance, demolition, removal of architectural barriers, historical restoration, planning activities, public works projects, infrastructure improvements, public services, housing activities, and economic development.

Award Amounts: Unspecified

Application Deadline: Anticipated September 2025

- **Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program (RACP)**

Administered by the Pennsylvania Office of the Budget, this grant program supports the design, acquisition, and construction of regional economic, cultural, civic, recreational, and historical improvement projects.

Award Amounts: Project cost of at least \$1,000,000

Application Deadline: Anticipated January 2024

- **Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) Keystone Historic Preservation Grants**

The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC) administers multiple grant programs applicable to support the future funding needs of the Airy Street Prison. These programs include the Keystone Historic Preservation Planning and Historic Construction grant programs. Additionally, the Certified Local Government Grant Program (CGL) provides financial support to participating communities to develop the tools, products, programs, and services they need to administer their local preservation programs effectively.

Award Amounts:

- Historic Preservation Planning - \$5,000 to \$25,000
- Historic Construction - \$5,000 to \$100,000
- Certified Local Government
  - Project Grants - \$3,000 to \$25,000
  - Mini-Grants - \$100 to \$7,500

Application Deadlines:

- Historic Preservation Planning - March 3, 2025
- Historic Construction - March 3, 2025
- Certified Local Government
  - Project Grants - February 1, 2024
  - Mini-Grants - Rolling basis

- **Additional Consideration - Tax Credits**

The Federal Historic Tax Credit program could be an option if site restorations lead to income-generating uses (such as commercial or mixed-use development). This program provides a 20% income tax credit for rehabilitating historic buildings.

Pennsylvania also offers a Historic Preservation Tax Credit administered by the Department of Community and Economic Development for up to 20% of project costs (with potential increases to 30% if in connection to workforce housing), or \$500,000 annually per grantee.

- **Additional Consideration - Brownfield Grant Program**

Working with other federal partners and state agencies, the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Brownfields Program provides grants and technical assistance to help communities, states, and tribes assess, clean up, and reuse contaminated properties. The program's goals are to prevent, assess, and safely clean up brownfield sites and make them available for sustainable reuse. Based on the findings and recommendations throughout this report, the Airy Street Prison may be an eligible project site under this program.

## 10.5 SYNTHESIS OF OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS

After reviewing the various data gathered through the investigation, CED found that there is significant development potential on the Airy Street Prison Site that could incorporate elements of the Prison.

Perhaps the most significant factor in future potential development potential is a Zoning determination of whether the site's building height restriction will be defined by the HARB Zone A restriction, limiting it to one story above adjacent structures, or the 10-story/120-foot Town Center restriction. This interpretation could impact developable square footage by approximately 400,000-500,000 SF, representing potentially hundreds of millions of dollars of development potential. At the most generous interpretation of the zoning code, the site could support nearly 1 million square feet of development while still retaining elements of the prison. In general, municipal support is needed for the redevelopment of the property in question, and public sources of money could assist with redevelopment efforts.

As for the prison buildings themselves, the masonry structures have suffered from a lack of maintenance. However, most architectural elements appear to be in fair to average condition, meaning restoration and re-use are possible. Like any historic building in poor repair, there will always be risk of unforeseen conditions. The inability to thoroughly examine high areas in person due to safety concerns adds to this risk, and means that access to remediate and stabilize will make for additional construction work. While remediation and restoration costs will be high, a recreation of the unique architectural elements of the prison – namely, the heavy stone masonry structure, brick barrel vaults, and stone ornamentation – would be exceedingly expensive in the current construction marketplace. Depending on use, the benefits of the unique space could outweigh the cost of remediation. Additionally, re-using existing structures could significantly reduce the carbon footprint of any future development on the site. Several uses have been contemplated for the site through the years that take advantage of the unique nature of the site. Coordinating such a use with a developer/operator's business model will be essential.

While future use is being considered, it is essential to slow decay and make the property safe to the public to preserve the option of future preservation/redevelopment. We recommend a series of immediate interventions below, including ensuring public safety, preventing water infiltration,

removing vegetation, and repairing the building's stormwater system. These interventions will help reduce future costs and the risk of structural degradation. Beyond these intermediate interventions, the above report outlines several additional pre-development recommendations that would be enacted in any future development on the property.

## 11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

CED recommends the following actions to stabilize the existing prison and make it safer for pedestrians.

### 11.1 PRIORITY ACTIONS RECOMMENDED

#### 11.1.1 PUBLIC SAFETY

1. **CED recommends engaging a qualified masonry restoration contractor to evaluate further and implement measures to make the prison wall safe.** The existing prison wall is experiencing spalling and decay, especially along the portion of Maris Street. A piece of rubble could fall off the wall onto the pedestrian or vehicular right-of-way. Potential options to protect pedestrians that may be recommended following a complete evaluation by a qualified contractor include closing Maris Street and the associated sidewalks, erecting protective scaffolding, or installing protective netting.
2. **The retaining wall and stairs along Airy Street should be evaluated and repaired by a qualified masonry restoration contractor.** The retaining wall is in poor condition, and the stairs are in fair condition. However, open masonry cracks and mortar gaps will allow water to infiltrate, which could lead to damage and degradation.
3. **Properly securing the site is recommended to prevent injury or harm to unauthorized individuals on-site.** Additionally, the top of the retaining wall is approximately 7' above the sidewalk and is not properly secured with a guardrail. Pedestrians can easily access the top of the wall, and a tent and mattress were found in front of the prison, indicating that a person is living on the property.

Estimated budget: \$65,000-\$80,000 + \$5,000/yr annual cost for ongoing inspections and repairs.

#### 11.1.2 PREVENT MOISTURE FROM ENTERING THE BUILDING

1. **Erect weatherproof protection over the Phase II roof.** Phase II features a brick vault roof structure that is in generally fair condition. The original wood roof and associated sleepers above the brick vault are currently compromised, with the roof membrane and large portions of roof sheathing/planking missing. These openings allow water to reach the brick vault structure below directly. Continued exposure of the brick to weather will cause the brick's condition to deteriorate and allow for water infiltration into the existing building. Given that the brick vault may be considered an asset for future re-use of the space, it is recommended that some waterproof membrane or structure be installed over the compromised roof area.

Attention should be paid to how and where this intervention drains stormwater. The roofs at Phases I and III should continue to be monitored for leakage as well.

2. **Close all openings in the structure that allow in weather and ensure stormwater is drained away from the structure. Moisture entering the existing structures is causing degradation. A program to seal openings and protect roofs (see above) would assist with maintaining the Prison buildings' physical condition. Additionally, the building's original stormwater systems are compromised, allowing water to enter the building and degrading masonry.** Providing a clear stormwater path away from the masonry construction will help preserve both the interior and exterior of the building.

Estimated budget: \$300,000-\$450,000

#### 11.1.3 REMOVE VEGETATION

1. **Vegetation on-site (and in the building) should be removed, and further growth should be prevented.** The various forms of masonry construction in all phases of the Prison are threatened by heavy vegetation close to, and in some cases, rooted in the masonry walls. Vegetation growing from masonry joints has already displaced some of the heavy masonry. While many of the walls are relatively plumb and salvageable at this point, continued growth will rapidly degrade their structural condition. Additionally, vegetation grows in gutters and downspouts, contributing to the compromised stormwater system described above.

Estimated budget: \$25,000-\$50,000

#### 11.1.4 PREPARE FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. **Procure an ALTA Survey for the Parking Lot site, and ensure clear title for all property.** Regardless of whether the prison is preserved, if future development is intended at the Prison and Parking lot sites, full understanding of easements, deed restrictions, etc. will be essential.
2. **Procure a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment for the entire site.**
3. **Work with authorities having jurisdiction to clarify building height limit.** The most important non-physical element to be determined for future development is allowable height. Indicating direction to future private developers will greatly inform their decision-making on how to engage with the property.

Estimated Budget: \$20,000 - \$30,000

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# Appendices

## Appendix A | Geotechnical Report

## Appendix B | Historic Preservation Assessment

## Appendix C | Site / Civil Feasibility

## Appendix D | Structural Definitions and Photographs

## Appendix E | Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment

## Appendix F | Masonry Mortar Analysis



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