**Tito House**  
1817 Fifth Avenue  
1818 Colwell Street

**Historic Nomination**

**Owner:**  
James A. McGuire  
Sal and Irene Williams

**Ward:** 3rd

**Lot and Block:** 11-E-93, 11-E-91

**Nominator:**  
Brittany McDonald

**Inspector:**

**Council District:** 6th

**Nominations Received:** 10/1/21

**National Register Status:**  
Listed: Eligible:

**Proposed Changes:** Nomination for historic designation.

**Discussion:**

1. Ms. Quinn gives a short presentation on the property. She states that the nominator found that the property is significant under **Criterion 1**, location as a site of a significant historic or prehistoric event or activity, **Criterion 2**, identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the cultural, historic, architectural, archaeological, or related aspect of the development of the City of Pittsburgh, State of Pennsylvania, Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, **Criterion 3**, exemplification of an architectural type, style or design distinguished by innovation, rarity, uniqueness, or overall quality of design, detail, materials, or craftsmanship, **Criterion 7**, association with important cultural or social aspects or events in the history of the City of Pittsburgh, the State of Pennsylvania, the Mid-Atlantic region, or the United States, and **Criterion 10**, unique location and distinctive physical appearance or presence representing an established and familiar visual feature of a neighborhood, community, or the City of Pittsburgh. She states that the property retains integrity and recommends that the Commission provide a determination of positive viability based on **Criteria 3, 7, and 10**.

2. Dr. David Rotenstein makes a presentation on behalf of the nominator, Dr. Brittany McDonald, supporting the nomination based on the criteria for nomination including **Criteria 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, 9, and 10**.

3. Ms. Aguirre asks for additional public comment. She acknowledges for the record the letters of support and in opposition received by email.

4. Ms. Donna Brusco speaks as one of the grandchildren of the Tito family. She speaks in support of the nomination.
5. Ms. Dev Meyers speaks in opposition to the nomination.

6. Mr. Patrick Rega speaks as council for the owners of the Fifth Avenue property. He outlines the owners’ opposition to the nomination.

7. Ms. Melissa McSwigan speaks in support of the nomination.


9. Ms. Rona L. Pekich speaks as a descendant of the family. She speaks in support of the nomination.

10. Ms. Aguirre asks for additional public comment; there is none. She asks for comments and questions from Commissioners.

11. Mr. Hill asks if the buildings can be voted on separately.

12. Ms. Quinn clarifies that the nomination is for a site, which includes both buildings.

13. Mr. Hill states that the story is compelling, but overall he is not sure if he agrees that the nomination criteria apply. He addresses Criterion 3 and states that it is true that the house is the only home of that nature left on the part of Fifth Avenue. He states that he could also see a state historical marker commemorating the story rather than designation of the whole site.

14. Ms. Loysen agrees that the story is compelling, and wonders if the significance is the story or the building.

15. Ms. Quinn clarifies that if the story can be connected to the building, than the building is significant, which is part of the National Park Services’ criteria.

16. Mr. Green states that he doesn’t have anything to add at this time.

17. Mr. Falcone states that he has a lot of concerns about the nomination and does not feel that he is in a place to support it. He states that he understands Ms. Loysen’s comments about the story, and he states that this story involves both positive aspects of the community and also negative aspects, such as the crime that would have had an effect on the community that would not always have been positive. He states that his family is not from Pittsburgh but is Italian, and he can recall stories of people in the neighborhood that had very bad experiences with what they are addressing today as numbers running and bootlegging but what was experienced as extortion and ugliness. He states that he is not comfortable with moving the nomination forward without that being addressed as part of the story. He also states that they have heard a lot of support for the nomination, but he feels that the voice of an Italian-American group is missing from the discussion.

18. Mr. Snipe states that he did listen intently to the testimony that was given today. He agrees that it is a good story, but states that a lot of the story has not been told. He states that he was offended by the presenter’s use of Black history to purify the
Tito history, which he feels is not history to be honored. He states that he cannot support the nomination.

19. Ms. Aguirre states that she has read everything that has been submitted and presented. She agrees that it is a very colorful history, which comes through in the 120 page nomination. She states that it outlines aspects of local and American history that were new to her. She states that she would like to see the building preserved to tell the story rather than just a historic marker, which is something that is put up when the historic fabric is already gone. She also supports the comments of Mr. Falcone and Mr. Snipe, as she initially saw the nomination as emphasizing the benefits of the Tito family to the Italian-American community, potentially on the backs of the African-American community. She also addresses the organized crime aspect and how that may have affected members of the community that were not involved. She states that they have received additional information on those aspects today, as requested at the first hearing in November.

20. Ms. Loysen states that she is concerned about how this nomination fits into the community's plans for development.

21. Ms. Aguirre addresses comments that were made about development and properties that have been left to deteriorate in order to sell later. She states that there have been a lot of things torn down, and she feels that this is an opportunity to preserve some of the history of the neighborhood. She feels that the complicated history of the property will help diversify the city's landmarks while telling a story that adds richness and depth to the city as a whole. She also wants the Commission to consider the ten Criteria for Designation as part of the discussion. She states that for her, Criteria 2, 7, and 10 are the strongest, with other Criteria as possibilities.

22. Ms. Loysen agrees that the building is significant for the story and not for the architecture of the building.

23. Mr. Hill states that after the discussion of the Criteria, he could agree with Criterion 10 but is leaning towards no for the rest.

24. Mr. Falcone states that with his concerns about the nomination he can’t find any of the Criteria applicable or make a positive recommendation to City Council.

25. Mr. Snipe agrees that he cannot support any of the Criteria or the nomination.

26. Mr. Green states that he will be abstaining.
Motion:

1. Mr. Snipe moves to **not provide** a positive recommendation to City Council.
2. Mr. Falcone seconds.
3. Ms. Aguirre asks for a vote; Mr. Falcone, Mr. Hill, Ms. Loysen, and Mr. Snipe are in favor, Mr. Green abstains and Ms. Aguirre is opposed. Motion carries.