

HDC-2022-00074**Address: 1024 W. Chew Street****District: Old Allentown Historic District****Applicant: Jessica Cancel****Proposal: Install vent at Howard Street elevation; repoint brick****Building Description:**

This 2½-story brick row house, ca 1883 is Eastlake in style. The gable roof has asphalt shingles, single chimney and dentilated cornice. The 1st floor windows are 1/1 sash and the 2nd floor are 2/2 sash with incised Eastlake lintels. The window frames have the hardware for shutters. The main entry is a single glazed door with transom and there are 2 basement window grilles visible. The concrete stoop has a pipe railing.

Project Description:

This application proposes to install a metal vent for an existing wood-burning stove along the Howard Street façade. The vent would be punched through the masonry wall and would extend up the brick façade. Eight wall brackets would tie the vent to the wall. As part of the work, the wall would also be spot pointed where the mortar is currently failing.

The applicant revised the application to show that the vent would penetrate the wall at approximately the height of the adjacent window sill to avoid creating an obstruction at the sidewalk.



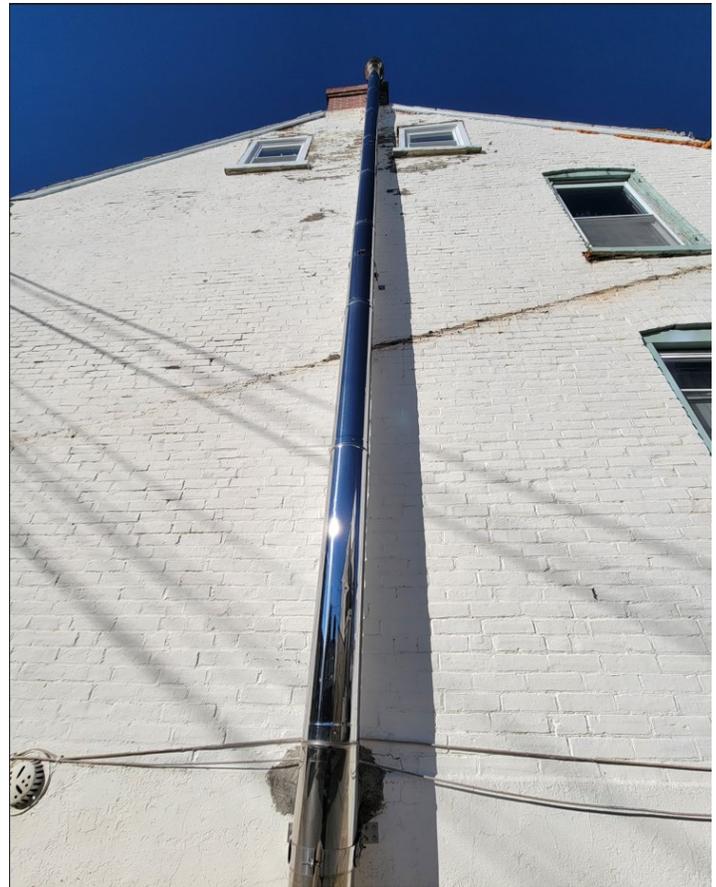
1024 W. Chew Street, 2019.
(Google StreetView)



Original proposal: Red line showing roughly where the vent would be located.
(Applicant photo; staff added line)



Revised location of vent.
(Applicant; staff added line)



Example of vent.
(Applicant)

Applicable Guidelines:

Chapter 3.3 – Masonry

3.3.4 Repoint brick and stone masonry with a compatible and historically appropriate mortar that matches the original in composition, strength, hardness, and texture. Match new mortar joints to surrounding areas in width, tooling profile, and color. Cut back and repoint mortar joints using hand tools only; mechanical grinders and similar power tools are not recommended as they can lead to excessive damage.

Chapter 3.8 – Mechanical & Utility Equipment

3.8.7 Limit the number of new penetrations when designing a new or updated system. Penetrations, whether located on a roof or exterior wall, increase the risk of water infiltration and damage to the building envelope. Properly flash and waterproof all new penetrations.

3.8.8 Minimize the visibility of vents and penetrations at primary facades and from the public right-of-way. Locate rooftop vents and penetrations on rear roofs, rear or non-visible roof slopes, or conceal behind chimneys. Minimize the visibility of vents in eave soffits or wall penetrations through sensitive placement, material and color selection, and painting. Place ground-level pipes and vents in rear yards and along non-visible facades.

3.8.9 Consider reusing existing lines and vents when designing or upgrading the system, if there is sufficient capacity. Using existing vents reduces the disturbance of historic materials and avoids unnecessary penetrations in the building envelope.

Observations & Comments:

The proposed vent would be located on a highly visible contributing secondary façade and does not comply with the venting guidelines in Chapter 3.8 of the historic district guidelines, which recommend minimizing the visibility of vents and penetrations from the public right-of-way.

The applicant noted in the application that the existing chimney line was previously assessed and determined to be insufficient in size. With this condition, the proposed use of an exterior vent may be considered consistent with Guideline 3.8.9. An alternative vent design, similar to a direct vent (horizontal) type, would be less visually intrusive than a full height vent, provided that it complies with required codes. Painting the exterior vent to blend into the exterior brick wall would help the proposed work comply with Guideline 3.8.8.

Spot pointing is recommended to prevent further deterioration of the masonry wall. The mortar should be compatible in composition, strength, hardness and texture, and should match the surrounding mortar to comply with Guideline 3.3.4. Note that staff can approve pointing that meets the Guideline.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval of the masonry pointing, provided an appropriate mortar is used, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.3 Masonry, and denial of the installation of the exterior vent, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.8 Mechanical & Utility Equipment.

HARB Discussion:

Mr. Jordan asked whether the same chimney design and material as the HARB previously reviewed are still proposed, noting that the revision shows that the exterior vent would start between the first and second story. Property owner Jessica Cancel affirmed, adding that the vent would penetrate the wall higher than previously proposed to avoid obstructing the sidewalk. She argued that the existing chimney was improperly constructed in the past and cannot be safely used to vent the wood stove.

Contractor Michael McDermott explained that the first course of action is always to reline the existing chimney. In this case, he continued, the chimney is too narrow and cannot be relined. He explained that the proposal involves installing a secondary chimney to bypass the original to allow safe ventilation.

Mr. Jordan questioned whether the HARB made any previous recommendations. Ms. Keller stated that Easton Architects had provided information on a direct wall vent and that information was offered to the applicant. Mr. Jordan commented that the applicant seems willing to conceal the vent in some way, such as by painting to match the masonry, but that the design guidelines do not support the installation of the vent in the location proposed. Mr. McDermott responded that he would need to research whether the manufacturer provides guidance on painting the stack vent. Mr. Jordan questioned the process for providing a conditional approval based on whether the manufacturer recommends painting. Ms. Keller replied that the HARB could move to approve the exterior vent with the condition that staff review details so that she can confirm that the vent would be concealed to the greatest degree possible. She added that the HARB could consider offering a second option to approve the unpainted vent in the event that the manufacturer advises against painting.

The HARB discussed the design guidelines and concluded that the exterior vent in the location proposed does not comply with the guidelines. The HARB also noted that staff can approve the repointing work, assuming an appropriate mortar is used.

Action:

Mr. Huber moved to approve the masonry pointing, provided an appropriate mortar is used, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.3 Masonry, and to deny the installation of the exterior vent at the Howard Street façade, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.8 Mechanical & Utility Equipment. Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which carried by a vote of 3 to 1. Mr. Jordan dissented.