

**Historical Architectural Review Board  
COA Final Review Sheet**

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**HDC-2023-00079**

**Address: 201 N. 10th St**

**District: Old Allentown Historic District**

**Applicant: Nelson Diaz, owner**

**Proposal: Apply stucco to brick wall at side of property**

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**Building Description:**

This 3-story brick commercial building, ca 1871 has a store on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and multiple apartments on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors. The front has an extended bay window with two center windows, all four windows are 6/1 sash. There is a total of five entrances to the building, no other information given on the survey. You cannot see the details of the Turner Street elevation, but lots of windows are visible.

**Project Description:**

This application proposes to apply Premix type S, natural Portland grey stucco with a Deco sealer over exposed brick on the north side of the building. Wire mesh will first be fastened through the existing mortar joints, and the stucco will be applied over the mesh system.



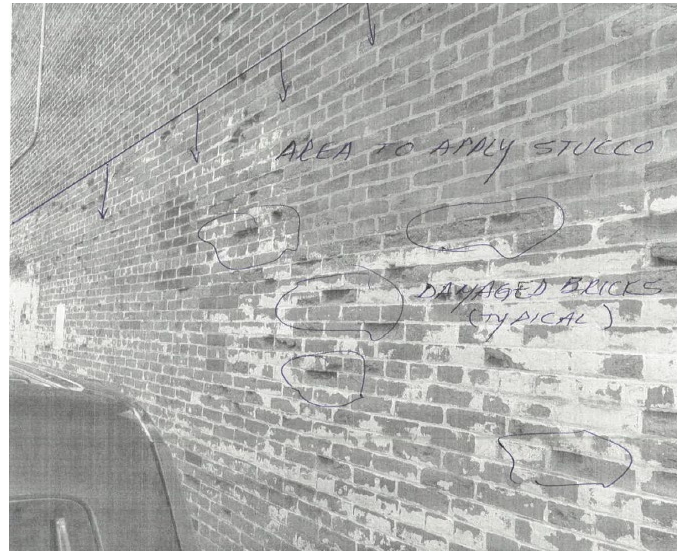
**Turner and 10<sup>th</sup> Street elevations of 201 N 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 2021.  
(Google StreetView)**



**North façade of 201 N 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 2019.  
(Google StreetView)**



Detail of north façade of 201 N 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 2023.  
(Google StreetView)



North façade of 201 N 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 2023.  
(Applicant)

**Applicable Guidelines:**

**Chapter 3.3 – Masonry**

**3.3.2** Repair and restore brick masonry whenever possible. Attempt to repair deteriorated or damaged areas prior to replacement. Appropriate repairs include repointing (repairing mortar joints), crack repair, brick stitching, and select area replacement. Avoid removing excess material or a larger area than is required to complete the repair. New bricks should match the existing in color, profile, dimension, surface texture, and composition and physical properties.

**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.

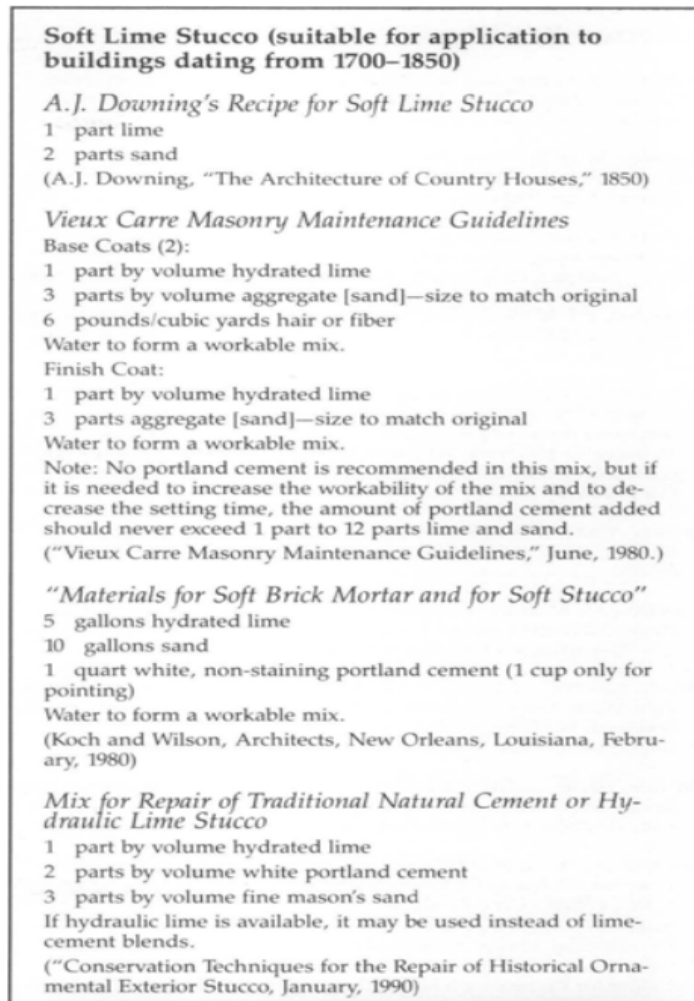
**3.3.7** Avoid painting, sealing, or coating historically unpainted brick masonry. Adding exterior coatings can trap moisture and cause deterioration of masonry walls. It also detracts from a building's architectural character.

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**Observations & Comments:**

A building historically stood on the adjacent property at 203 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street and was demolished at some point in the past, leaving the two adjoining party walls exposed to the elements. Owing to the exposure, the north elevation of 201 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street contains soft, porous brick that has been deteriorating since the demolition of the adjacent structure. To stabilize the brick, the applicant is proposing to apply stucco over reinforced wire mesh fastened to the mortar joints. While Guideline 3.3.7 advises against painting, coating, or sealing historically unpainted brick, staff notes that party walls are an exception, since the brick of these walls was never intended to be exposed to the elements. The brick at party walls is significantly weaker than the high-fired brick of a typical building façade. Because of the susceptibility of the brick to deterioration, staff finds coating a portion of the wall to be an appropriate intervention, provided the stucco is compatible. Staff further notes that the exposed party wall at 205 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street has already been stuccoed.

An appropriate stucco should be softer than the brick to avoid exacerbating the deterioration. Staff recommends using a lime-based stucco and points to guidance provided in a National Park Service Preservation Brief regarding the preservation and repair of historic stucco, see Figure 1 below:



**Figure 1 (Anne Grimmer, U.S. Department of Interior National Park Service Preservation Assistance Division, The Preservation and Repair of Historic Stucco, 1990)**

Staff also advises against painting or sealing the stucco to avoid trapping moisture, which can lead to further deterioration.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approval, provided the stucco contains a sufficient amount of lime so that it is softer than the brick, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.3 Masonry.

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**HARB Discussion:**

The HARB agreed that the party wall was deteriorating and that stucco would be an acceptable intervention to address the loss of material. Mr. Jordan questioned whether the applicant would be able to meet the staff's recommendation to install a softer stucco. Ms. Keller explained that the stucco needed to be softer than the brick to avoid damaging the brick further. She stated that all coats of the stucco should have lime and be softer than the brick. Mr. Diaz agreed to install a softer stucco to comply with the guidelines.

Mr. Huber raised an issue with a past outstanding violation and asked Mr. Diaz if he is aware of the violation. Mr. Diaz replied that he was not. Mr. Huber stated that the violation relates to the storefront entrance door and the slider window.

**Historical Architectural Review Board**  
**COA Final Review Sheet**

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He asked that the issues be addressed to bring the property into compliance. Ms. Keller stated that she would review the violation, but that it would need to be reopened since the violation is several years old.

**Action:**

Mr. Encelewski moved to approve the application presented on 11/6/2023 for the installation of stucco over the brick party wall of 201 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.3 Masonry, provided that a softer, more compatible stucco be used. Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.