

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

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**HDC-2023-00048**

**Address: 205 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street**

**District: Old Allentown Historic District**

**Applicant: Nelson Castro, Owner**

**Proposal: Legalize installation of carport at rear driveway; replace porch floorboards**

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**Building Description:**

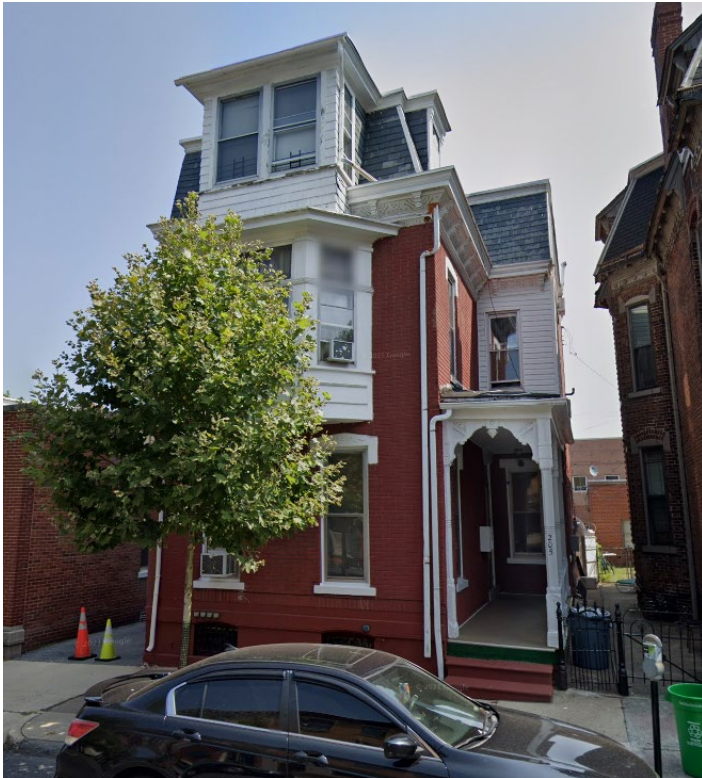
This 3-story brick/stone single house has an office on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor, the rest of the building is residential, ca 1886, is in Eastlake style. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor bow window has three stained glass transoms over the 1/1 sash windows. All windows are 1/1 sash with carved Eastlake lintels that are similar to a label or drape. There is a Queen Anne window displayed on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor side of the house.

The mansard roof has large flat top dormer on 9<sup>th</sup> Street elevation and a single flat top dormer on the side of the house. This house has an elaborate dentilated cornice that has carved brackets and an intricately carved frieze with slate shingles and a single chimney.

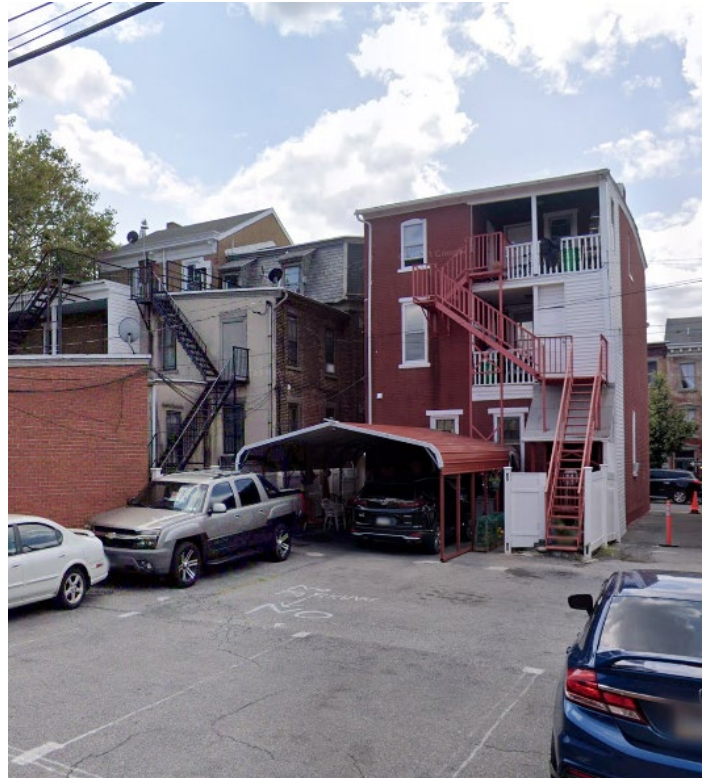
The main entry is a double door off the porch. The wooden porch is heavily carved and has wooden balustrades, turned wooden posts with carved fan brackets. There are Eastlake decorations on the eaves of the porch and cornices on entire house. There is a wrought iron fence fronting the side yard. There are also two basement window grilles visible.

**Project Description:**

This application proposes to legalize a metal carport installed at the rear driveway without a certificate of appropriateness. The application also proposes to remove the existing floorboards at the front porch and install composite decking.



Front façade of 205 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 2021.  
(Google StreetView)

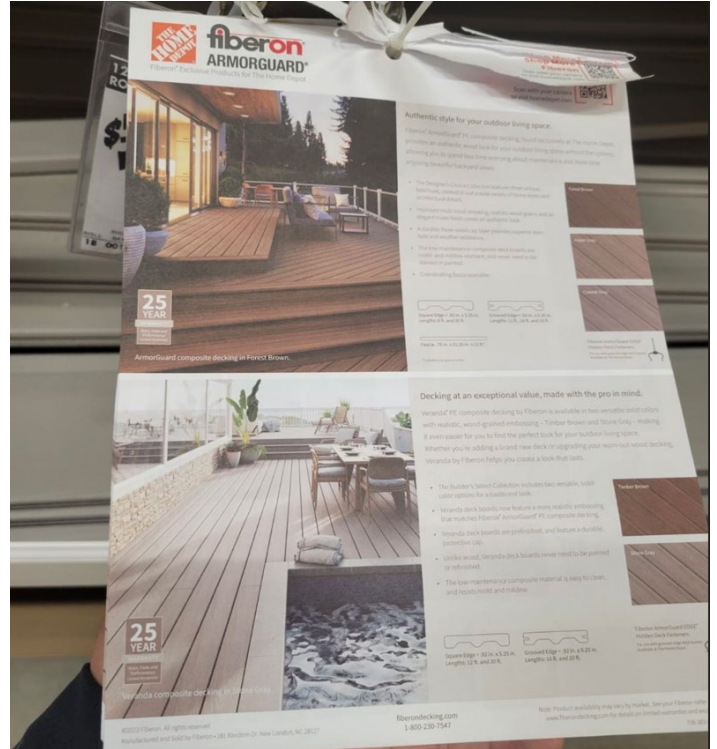


Rear of 205 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street showing the canopy, 2023.  
(Google StreetView)

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Aerial of 29 N. 12<sup>th</sup> Street, outlined in red, 2021.  
(City of Allentown)



Proposed porch floorboards.  
(Applicant)

## Applicable Guidelines:

### Chapter 3.7 – Porches & Steps

**3.7.3** Repair and restore existing porches and steps whenever possible. Salvage, repair, and reuse existing components including deck floor boards, railings, balusters, posts, and decorative trim. Repair and restore basement level windows or metal grates that are part of the porch base.

**3.7.4** Replace individual deteriorated components in-kind with new materials matching the original in material composition, size, shape, profile, dimension, appearance, and finish. Custom fabrication is encouraged and may be necessary to provide an exact match. Where an exact match of the historic element cannot be found or fabricated, the new element should match the original as closely as possible.

**3.7.5** Retain and repair original handrails or railings. Replace in-kind if repair is not feasible. Replacement handrails should match the existing in material, size, and appearance as closely as possible. Installation of handrails where they did not previously exist is generally not recommended due to the visual and physical impact on historic fabric; however, installation of a simple, compatible design may be acceptable for the purpose of safety and ease of access.

**3.7.6** Consider restoration of previously altered porches with historically appropriate elements. Consult historic photographs to identify the original appearance. If the building is part of a pair or an attached row that was designed together, consult nearby buildings for examples.

**3.7.8** If in-kind replacement is not feasible, replace with appropriate alternate materials that respect the original appearance and are durable. Composite wood decking is an appropriate alternate for tongue-and-groove wood floors if boards are similar to the original dimensions. Ceramic, tile, carpet, or cementitious coatings over wood are not appropriate floor materials. Steel, iron, and aluminum railings are acceptable replacements. Vinyl railings and trim are not appropriate alternate materials for wood elements. Use of dimensional lumber for visible parts of a porch is not appropriate.

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### Chapter 5.2 – New Accessory Buildings

- 5.2.1** Keep the height of the new accessory structures lower than the height of the main building.
- 5.2.2** Match the height of nearby accessory structures, especially in highly visible streets or alleys.
- 5.2.3** Use simple rectangular volumes rather than elaborate forms to complement the main building's massing.
- 5.2.4** Reflect the massing and roof types of nearby accessory structures.
- 5.2.5** Scale accessory structures to have a compatible scale that does not overwhelm the main building. Avoid a structure that is taller than the main building or historic additions and that obstructs views of the historic building from the public street.
- 5.2.6** Locate accessory structures at the rear of a property and preserve the primacy of the main building. Minimize visibility from the public street.
- 5.2.7** Avoid interrupting established setbacks in the surrounding area, whether the setback in relation to the main building or to the street. The network of secondary streets and alleys formed around historic stables and rear structures in Allentown is a character-defining feature of the historic districts. New accessory structures should consider this setting and blend into the block.
- 5.2.8** Respect the overall proportions of the main building. The proportion of building features, such as doors and windows, should be consistent across the new accessory structure and with the proportions of the main building.
- 5.2.9** Design accessory structures to be compatible with the main building's design. Consider using materials that are found on the main building or are common within the historic district, such as brick, stone, and wood.
- 5.2.10** Avoid vinyl materials, plastics, non-durable materials and materials that are not considered appropriate alternatives for historic materials within these Guidelines.
- 5.2.11** Respect the main building's architectural style and details. The new structure should be subordinate to the main building and any historic additions and should not detract from the original design. Consider simplified details or interpretations of historic features on the main building.
- 5.2.12** Respect the size, shape, and solid-to-void ratio of the main building's windows and doors.
- 5.2.13** Avoid oversized windows and doors that are out of character with the main building and/or nearby accessory structures that contribute to the character of secondary streets and alleys.

### **Observations & Comments:**

The owner contends that a medical condition has necessitated the installation of a carport to eliminate the need to remove snow and to avoid slippery conditions around his car. The structure is located immediately behind the building and is highly visible from Nagle Street, a service alley at the rear of the property. The carport has a metal roof, stands approximately six feet in height, and is open at the sides.

Staff comments that the carport meets some but not all of the guidelines in Section 5.2 New Accessory Buildings. The structure meets the guidelines for its height, massing, size, and scale, but does not comply with the guidelines related to proportion, materials, detailing, and fenestration. Staff notes that the carport is defined in the ordinance as a structure but not as a building. Because the carport is not defined as a building and is easily reversible, staff argues that it should be generally compatible with the district but may not need to meet the specific requirements and details of a typical accessory building, such as a garage. Staff contends that the structure does not have an adverse impact on the district, since it is reversible and located on a service alley.

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For the floorboard replacement at the front porch, staff notes that Guideline 3.7.8 allows for composite wood decking, provided the boards are similar to the original dimensions. Staff questions whether the proposed decking matches the dimensions of the historic floorboards and recommends a product that replicates the tongue and groove construction and dimensions more closely.

#### **Staff Recommendation:**

Approval, provided tongue and groove floorboards of an appropriate size are used at the front porch, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps and Chapter 5, Section 5.2 New Accessory Buildings.

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Mr. Franzone questioned whether the carport was impeding any egress and whether it is anchored to the ground to prevent uplift. Mr. Castro replied that the carport does not prevent any access to or from the building and that it is currently anchored to the ground but can be moved. The board discussed the need for the applicant to obtain building and zoning permits.

Mr. Castro stated that he is handicapped and cannot lift heavy objects or risk falling on the ice and has a medical condition that requires him to have the structure. Mr. Jordan argued that the structure is similar to an ADA ramp since it is not necessarily historic, does not attach to the historic building, and falls outside those guidelines.

Mr. Lichtenwalner commented that he understands the arguments that the owner needs the carport for medical reasons and added that he does not feel strongly that it needs to be removed. He opined that the structure is at the rear of the building and questioned whether it is detrimental to the neighborhood.

Mr. Huber commented that similar past applications have been denied because the structures do not respect the historic building or neighborhood. He stated that wood structures with flat shed roofs resembling the construction of garages have been permitted, because they are more appropriate and more complementary to the district.

Several board members agreed that the carport does not have an adverse impact on the historic district.

Regarding the front porch, Mr. Huber stated that the proposed material is decking but that a porch floorboard with solid nosing should be used. He added that the HARB regulates integral color and would need to know what color is being used. The applicant responded that he would like to use red. Mr. Lichtenwalner stated that red, gray, or grayish-tan would be appropriate.

The HARB discussed the how the floorboards would be installed around the columns and fencing. Mr. Franzone advised against cutting out the floorboards below the columns and that the new material be installed according to manufacturer's specifications.

#### **Action:**

Mr. Jordan moved to approve the application presented on 12/4/2023 for the legalization of the carport at the rear driveway and replacement of porch floorboards at the property at 205 N. 9<sup>th</sup> Street, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps and Chapter 5, Section 5.2 New Accessory Buildings, with the following conditions:

- The carport must receive zoning approval;
- The carport must be appropriately secured to the ground to prevent uplift;
- The porch floorboards may be composite and of a red, gray, tan, white, or similar color; and
- The floorboards should be installed according to the manufacturer's specifications without altering the porch posts or railings.

Mr. Jordan noted that the application presents unique circumstances, because the carport is considered a nonpermanent structure installed for ADA purposes and does not impact the integrity of the existing historic structure. Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which passed by a vote of 5-1. Mr. Huber dissented.