

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

HDC-2023-00033

Address: 941 W. Turner Street

District: Old Allentown Historic District

Applicant: Tim Driscoll, Owner

Proposal: Convert enclosed porch to open porch

Building Description:

This 3-story brick row house, c. 1897 is a Porch House. The mansard roof has roll roofing, dentilated cornice, a double dormer with scalloped wood in the peak of the gable roof and a single chimney. The windows are 1/1 sash with brick lintels. The main entry is a single door. The wooden porch is enclosed with wood and glass with asphalt shingle roof. There is an iron fence in the rear. The pommel has a finial at each end of the house which is ornate with raised butterfly molding. There is an iron fence in the rear.

Project Description:

This application proposes to demolish the existing enclosed porch at 941 W. Turner Street and install new columns, railings, and balusters that would approximate the porch's assumed original appearance. The application provides a photograph of porch railings and columns, but does not include a demolition plan, photos of the existing façade wall to be exposed, or details of each element to be installed.

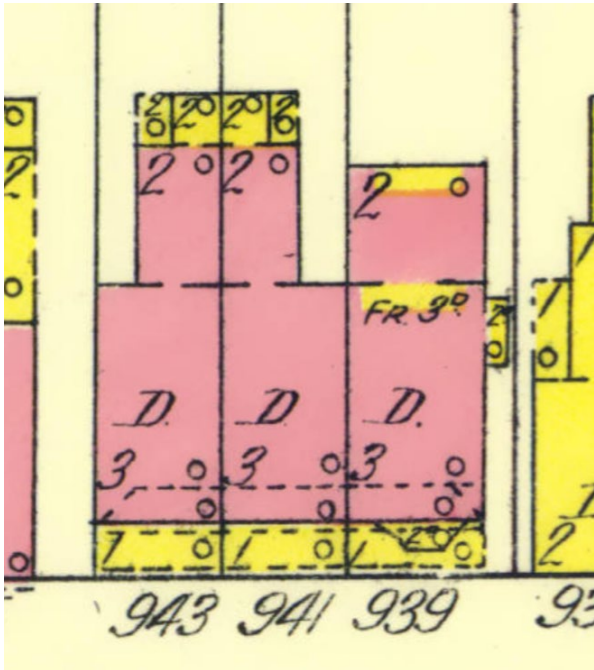


**The front façade of 941 W. Turner Street in 2021.
(Google StreetView)**

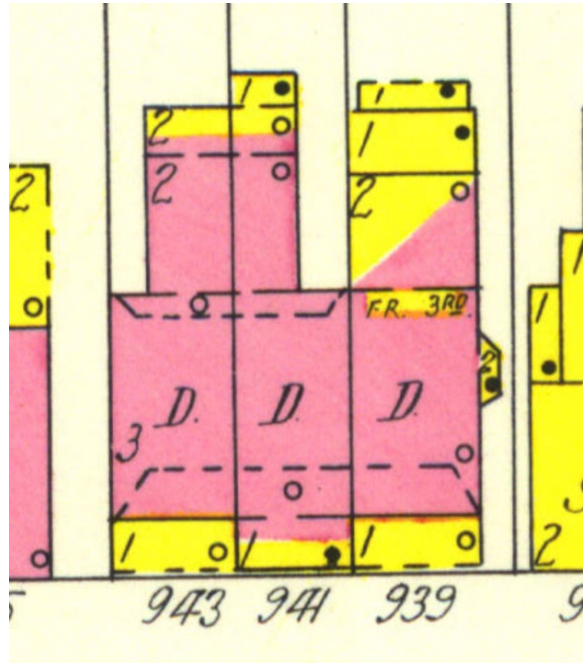


**The enclosed porch at 941 W. Turner Street.
(Applicant)**

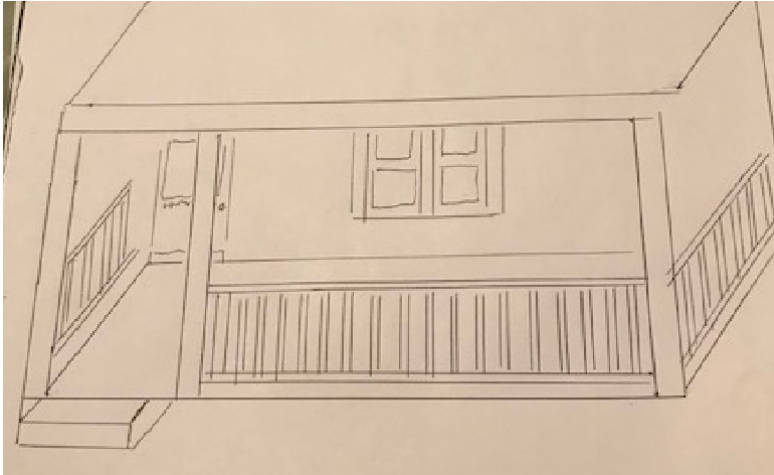
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1911 Sanborn map showing that the porch at 941 W. Turner Street was open.
(Pennsylvania State University Libraries)



1932 Sanborn map showing that the porch at 941 W. Turner Street was enclosed between 1911 and 1932.
(Pennsylvania State University Libraries)



Drawing of proposed porch.
(Applicant)



Example of proposed railings.
(Applicant)

Historical Architectural Review Board

COA Final Review Sheet

Applicable Guidelines:

3.7 – Porches & Steps

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 designed together, consult nearby buildings for examples.

3.7.7 Replace porches only if repair and select replacement is not feasible. A full demolition and rebuild is rarely necessary except in cases of severe deterioration and life safety concerns. Replicate the original design as closely as possible, allowing for structural and code requirements. Install flashing and waterproofing at all connections between the porch and main building.

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.

3.7.10 Avoid removing a historic porch roof or full porch. Removal will negatively impact the building's historic character. Consult with Planning Staff and HARB about the reason for removal (i.e. cause of deterioration). A porch that was added after the original construction of a building may have gained significance in its own right. Porches can be appropriate for the building as a reflection of its development over time and as an expression of a later architectural style.

Observations & Comments:

No photographic documentation of the porch (or adjacent porches) prior to the enclosure exists to show the original design; however, based on the building's architectural style and similar buildings in the district, the porch likely had turned wood columns with brackets, as well as turned wood balusters. The porch roof was historically slate, though it was altered to a composite material when the porch was enclosed. According to Sanborn maps, the porch was enclosed between 1911 and 1932. The exterior walls of the enclosed porch have been altered over time. Alterations include replacement of the door slab, infilling of the fanlight over the door, infilling of the side windows, and replacement or modification of the wall below the windows, which were paneled in the past. The HARB needs to consider whether the enclosed porch has acquired historic significance and should be preserved, or if it has lost enough integrity that it holds no historical significance.

Staff finds that the existing enclosed porch has lost enough integrity that it no longer holds historical significance and supports the conversion of the porch to its original open configuration. However, staff finds that the application lacks the information necessary to understand the scope of work. Staff requests the following: a demolition plan showing all elements to be removed; photos of the existing masonry façade wall, windows, and door that will be exposed following the porch removal; specs on flooring, roofing, balusters and railings, posts, brackets, and any other elements to be installed; dimensions on the submitted plan; and a scaled section drawing showing the existing façade and proposed porch.

Staff Recommendation:

Denial, owing to incompleteness.

HARB Discussion:

Ms. Keller noted that the applicant provided further details on the railings, porch columns, and door several hours before the meeting. She stated that the staff's recommendation for denial was based on the incomplete application, adding that staff supports reopening the porch, provided enough details are supplied by the applicant. She commented that she still has questions about the extent of demolition.

Historical Architectural Review Board
COA Final Review Sheet

Mr. Driscoll clarified that the existing porch roof would remain in place, as well as the ceiling and masonry wall that would be exposed. The HARB observed that the wall is currently painted gray and suggested painting it a brick color once it is exposed. Mr. Driscoll explained that he plans to install a flat wood railing system and wood floorboards on the porch floor.

Action:

Mr. Huber moved to approve the application presented on 6/5/2023 for the opening of the enclosed porch at 941 W. Turner Street, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, with the provision that the applicant may also replace the porch flooring with wood tongue and groove flooring. Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.