

# Historical Architectural Review Board COA Final Review Sheet

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**HDC-2023-00036**

**Address: 449 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street**

**District: Old Allentown Historic District**

**Applicant: Muhammad Aqib Zafar, owner**

**Proposal: Reconstruct masonry fire escape**

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## **Building Description:**

The building is a two-and-a-half-story, mixed-use corner row house. It was constructed ca. 1885 and is late Federal in style with Eastlake-influenced details. The building is painted brick laid in running bond and has a side-gable roof with a prominent single dormer. The roof and dormer are clad in asphalt shingles, and there is a bracketed cornice with low-relief decorative frieze panels. There is a side chimney along the Liberty Street façade. The windows are 1/1 sash at the second and attic stories, with a ground-story storefront window. Second story windows have projecting sills and rectangular lintels with incised carving. The main commercial entry has been inserted at the corner and features a paneled door with an infilled transom. The Liberty Street façade features a storefront window, and the remainder of the elevation contains many one-over-one single and tripartite windows. The first-story contains two sets of stairs and three door openings.

## **Project Description:**

In June, a city inspector inspected the property and determined that the rear fire escape was unstable and a portion needed to be demolished and rebuilt. The owner notified staff and submitted an application for a certificate of appropriateness to demolish and rebuild the fire escape in kind. Because of the urgency of the repair, staff approved the application and requested that the applicant return with a restoration plan that may need to be reviewed by the HARB. This application proposes to rebuild the fire escape to its former appearance, though the walls would be frame with a masonry veneer rather than load-bearing masonry.



Front and side façades of 449 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 2023.  
(Google StreetView)



Liberty Street fire escape before demolition, 2021.  
(Google StreetView)

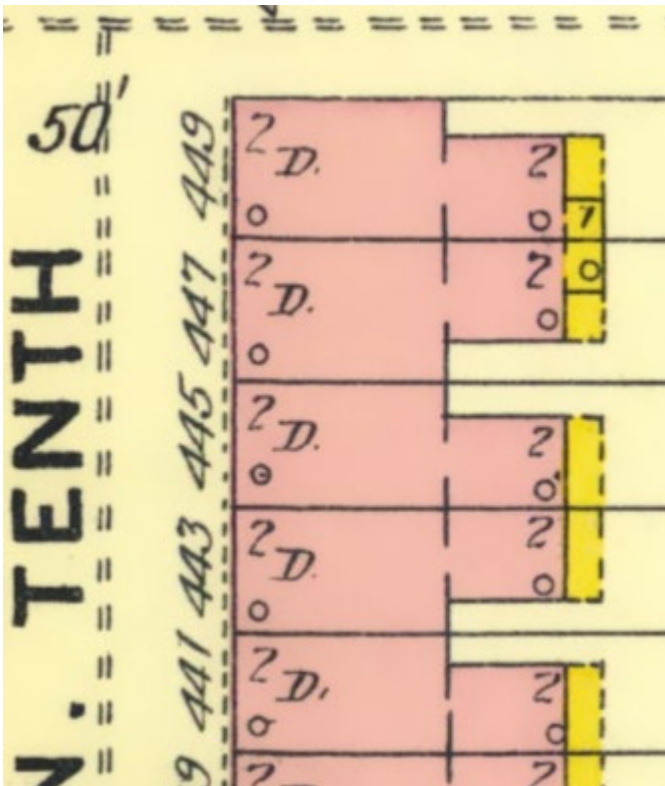
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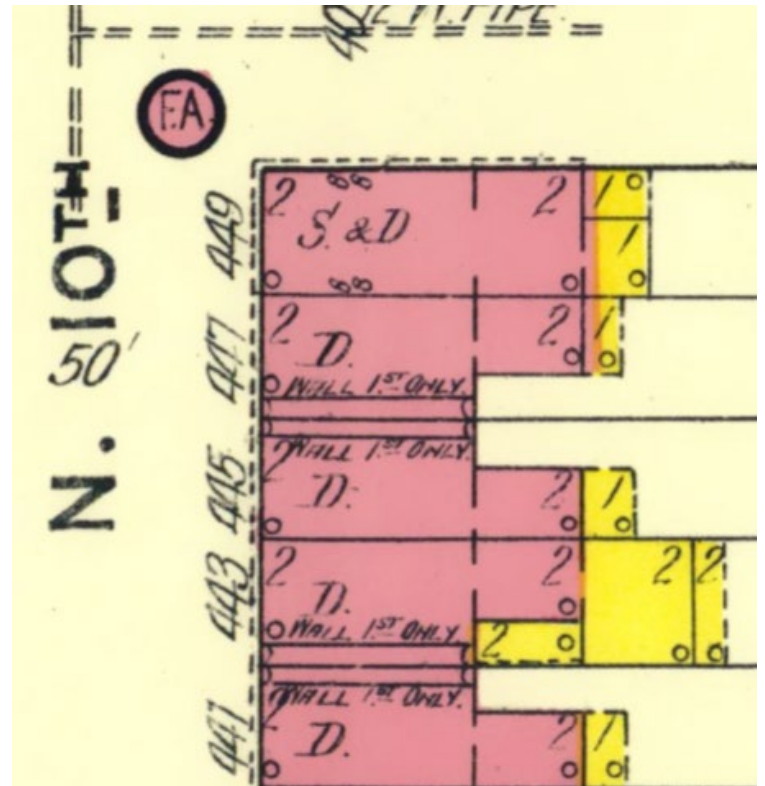
Liberty Street fire escape after demolition, 2023.  
(Google StreetView)



Liberty Street façade and fire escape before demolition, 2021.  
(Google StreetView)



1897 Sanborn map showing that the building was originally two stories.  
(Pennsylvania State University Libraries)



1911 Sanborn map showing that the building remained two stories.  
(Pennsylvania State University Libraries)



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Building Standards and Safety determined the fire escape to be unsafe and required that the structure be partially demolished and reconstructed. While staff approved a certificate of appropriateness to reconstruct the rear ell in-kind, the application proposes to change the upper portion of the fire escape to wood frame construction with brick veneer. The brick would match the dimensions of the existing masonry and would be painted to match the building's facades. Staff is requesting that the HARB review the application, owing to the material change.

Staff finds that the fire escape, as a later addition, is not a character-defining feature of the property and contends that maintaining the appearance of the original fire escape, despite the material change, would largely comply with the guidelines in Section 3.3 Masonry, provided that the brick veneer matches the dimensions, texture, bond pattern, and joint dimensions of the existing masonry.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Approval, provided the brick veneer matches the dimensions, texture, bond pattern, and joint dimensions of the existing masonry, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.3 Masonry.

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### **HARB Discussion:**

The HARB discussed the appropriateness of rebuilding the masonry fire escape using thin brick and found that if the brick matches the historic appearance, then it would be appropriate. The HARB noted that there is some irregular coursing and other issues in the photos of the proposed thin brick and noted that the existing would need to be matched in dimensions, coursing, and texture. The HARB also concluded that the façade should be painted to match the rest of the building.

The applicant noted that an additional load-bearing beam would be installed at the fire escape and would be visible from the exterior. The HARB found the additional beam to be acceptable.

### **Action:**

Mr. Hart moved to approve the application with conditions presented on 9/5/2023 to rebuild the masonry fire escape at 449 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.3 Masonry, provided the brick veneer matches the dimensions, texture, bond pattern, and joint dimensions of the existing masonry. Mr. Encelewski seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.