

HDC-2022-00035

Address: 811 W. Gordon Street

District: Old Allentown Historic District

Applicant: Tim F. Driscoll, Owner

Proposal: Reconstruct side and rear walls of rear ell

Building Description:

This 2½-story frame twin house, ca. 1870, is a Federal style home. The building had been covered with aluminum siding and all details had been hidden. Removal of the siding revealed a wood construction home with clapboard siding and wood fishscale shingles on the front gable and a decorative band between the first and second floors. The gable roof has shingles and a shared chimney. The windows are 1/1 sash, there are no visible lintels. There is a basement window grille visible. The main entry for 809 is a ¾-glazed single door with a transom and storm door. The front entry door for 811 is a wood 6-panel door. The transom windows over the entry are currently missing. The stoop for 809 has concrete bull-nosed steps and a wood front porch has been partially removed.

Project Description:

This application expands on work previously reviewed by the HARB at its December 2021 meeting. At that time, the HARB approved the following scope:

- Clean, repair, and paint existing wood siding to match 809 W. Gordon. Any additional siding needed to complete the repairs will match the original wood in dimension and style.
- Install new custom window and door surrounds, constructed of pine, at all openings. Surrounds will include new wood hood (lintel), sill, and casing. Recycled material to be used as possible. The submitted “Window Trim Sample_811 W. Gordon” photograph is understood to be a sample already on the building. The new lintel profile matches the evidence of the original lintels on the siding. New surrounds will be painted to match 811 W. Gordon.
- Install new wall sconce to match 809 W. Gordon.
- Demolish existing wood stairs and railing. Construct a new tandem stair (shared landing) with 809 W. Gordon. New stair to be concrete with bullnose treads faced in brick and new wrought iron railing with straight balusters. Railing details to be round or square with closer spacing.
- Replace existing door with new 6-panel wood door to match 809 W. Gordon.
- Install new transom window above front door in the existing opening.

Related work at this property was also previously reviewed by HARB in November 2020. HARB approved the following scope relevant to the rear of the property:

- 1. The existing aluminum siding on the entire house will be replaced smooth wood or smooth fiber-cement siding with a 4” reveal. [Siding scope amended per December 2021 COA].
- 2. The existing rear-side door on N Refwal Street will be closed in and a new door on the rear of the building created. The step at the old door location on N Refwal Street will be removed.
- 3. The new door will be a single light wood or smooth fiberglass door with 2 lower panels.

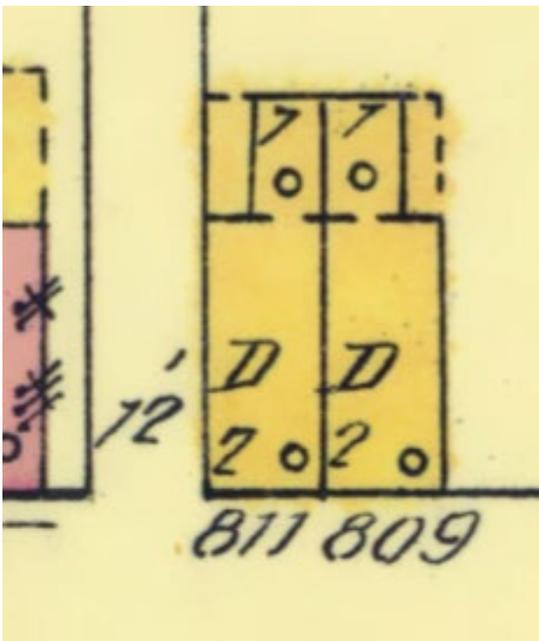
This application proposes to demolish and reconstruct the one-story rear ell. The applicant contends that the existing condition of the rear ell is beyond repair and requires reconstruction. The photograph provided by the applicant showing the existing conditions appears to illustrate that the ell has already been partially reconstructed with a new slab foundation, rafters, and plywood covering the walls. The floor plan indicates that one door will be installed in the rear wall with no other openings proposed. One boarded opening is shown in the photograph on the Refwal Street elevation. The staff questions whether the two other openings on the Refwal Street façade will be reconstructed.



Front façade of the twin at 811 W. Gordon Street in December 2021. (HARB files)



Existing condition of rear ell facing Refwal Street. (Applicant)



1891 Sanborn map showing the frame structure with rear ell.



Photo of the rear ell following the removal of the siding. (HARB files)

Applicable Guidelines:**3.2 – Wood Siding & Trim**

3.2.5 Replace deteriorated materials in-kind if repair is infeasible. New materials should replicate the original as closely as possible in material composition, size, profile, shape, pattern, and appearance. If historic wood siding or trim was an identifiable or visually distinctive species, it is recommended that the same species be used for the replacement.

3.5 – Windows

3.5.8 Replace windows in-kind if original windows are deteriorated beyond feasible repair. Wood is the preferred material for most replacement windows. Replacement windows should match the original as closely as possible in material, size, type, operation, profile, and appearance. Replicate the existing dimensions of glazing, configuration of muntins, or unique decorative lites. Match sash and frame thickness and window depths. For existing non-original windows, it is preferred to replace with wood windows rather than new alternate materials.

3.5.10 Preserve the ratio of window openings to solid wall surfaces. Increasing or reducing openings can impact the proportions of a façade and can look out of place within the larger streetscape. Changing the size of openings will also require a Building Permit because it changes the amount of enclosed space on a façade.

3.15 – Demolition

3.15.8 If demolition is proposed because the City's Building Inspector has declared a clear and present danger, provide official documentation with the application. The Building Inspector may determine that a building is in a state of collapse or has deteriorated to such a point that it is a public safety concern. This finding should be supported by documentation from a licensed structural engineer.

Observations & Comments:

The staff has requested additional information to determine whether the reconstruction of the ell is appropriate. Specifically, staff has requested elevation drawings or annotated photos with all exterior dimensions to show the proposed appearance of the ell; details and measurements of each building feature; a list of materials/features to be salvaged and reinstalled; and details on proposed windows, doors, and any new materials. Staff requested photos to illustrate the conditions and the necessity for reconstruction. The photos submitted appear to show a new condition rather than the deteriorated condition of the ell.

With sufficient evidence, the staff may find that reconstruction is appropriate. If more documentation is provided and it is found that reconstruction is necessary, the staff recommends that the reconstructed ell replicates the building's original appearance and complies with the previously approved work related to the door relocation and installation of new siding matching the original wood in dimension and style. The staff recommends that the applicant follows the original approvals (as detailed above) in replicating the historic windows, doors, and siding and that the dimensions, profiles, materials, locations, and proportions of all historic features are maintained.

Staff Recommendation:

Denial, owing to incompleteness.

HARB Discussion:

MK supplied the HARB members with the most recent information received today for the proposed application. TD provided drawings including an elevation confirming the addition of two new windows on the rear ell addition.

HARB Vice Chair AJ invited the applicant to comment on the additional information provided.

MK clarified prior COA approvals exist for the property dating from 11/2020 and 12/2021 showing the rear ell wall as solid without fenestration. The applicant is seeking to add two windows as shown on the submitted drawn elevation.

AJ stated this application is missing information on the proposed materials, MK stated the prior approval granted in 11/2020 provided materials, applicant confirmed the materials approved in 2020 will be used.

The 11/2020 COA approved replacement vinyl windows for the original portion of the house, AJ questioned if approving vinyl windows for the rear ell, for which this application is being presented, is appropriate, referencing the Guidelines.

Discussion between HARB members determined the ell is an addition to the original house and appears to have been expanded and modified over time, supporting the argument for approving vinyl windows in the rear ell in keeping with the vinyl windows in the main volume of the house since the ell is linked to the original by an internal space, the result will be consistent.

Action:

HARB member Glenn Lichtenwalner made a motion to approve the application presented on *09/12/2022* for the reconstruction of the rear ell at *811 W. Gordon Street* as submitted with vinyl windows based on prior COA approval for the main volume, establishing a precedent for approval and finds that the application is in compliance with the following sections of the Guidelines for Historic Districts: Chapter 3, Section 3.2 Wood Siding & Trim, Section 3.5 Windows, Section 3.15 Demolition, and finds that the circumstances unique to the property are the addition is part of a larger whole. HARB member Phillip Hart seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.