

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF ALLENTOWN
November 1, 2021
FINAL REVIEW

Property located at: 301 N 9th St.

Agenda Item: #2.c

Historic District: Old Allentown

Case: HDC-2021-00025

Meeting date: November 1, 2021

Property Owner: MGR Real Estate LLC

Applicant: Nathaniel Carrasco

Building description, period, style defining features:

This 3-story brick end of row building, ca 1890. It is used for both residential and commercial purposes. There are three floors with a flat roof. There is a single chimney. The windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors are 6/1. The 2nd and 3rd floors are brick; the 1st floor commercial use area has a pent roof running along the front and side facades above the 1st floor. There is a single glazed door with a stoop constructed of concrete with metal tube railings.



Proposed alterations:

1. Installation of three new window signs and review of security camera location.

Staff Approvals: None

Violations:

2013: Sign without COA

2018: Illuminated window sign and satellite dish

Prior COA(s):

1997: Window signs and temporary banner.

2006: Installation of 6/1 off-white vinyl windows on 2^d and 3rd floors, capping of the window trim on the upper windows with aluminum to match the windows; installation of aluminum framed, tinted glass commercial windows on the 1st floor, installation of 4 aluminum framed commercial glass doors on the 1st floor, restoration of the ½ glazed wood residential door on 9th st., installation of 6-panel wood or steel residential door on Chew St.; removal of the wood paneling and restoration of the brick on the 1st floor; installation of black slate line shingles on the pent roof; and reconstruction of the pent roof soffit with new plywood to be painted.

2008: Installation of handicapped ramps for the two commercial units, both ramps on Chew Street side, the ramp to be made of concrete, the pipe railings to have ball joints and be painted to match the design of the existing railing on the 9th Street side.

2009: Installation of 2'x4' sign of vinyl lettering directly to the window glass.

Secretary of Interior Standards:

Rehabilitation Standard 2: The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

Design Guidelines-Section 11: Signs

Signs located in designated historic districts must be compatible with and appropriate for the style and character of the historic buildings. The material and style used for a sign should be compatible with the building's historic character. When mounting signs on masonry walls, anchors should be placed in mortar joints instead of in brick, stone or other historic masonry.

- ✓ Window lettering, wall signs, hanging or projecting signs, window awnings and portable signs are acceptable options for signage.
- ✓ Commercial storefronts with long horizontally proportioned signs above are appropriate.
- ✓ Residential structures should use smaller signs placed beside entry doors.
- ✓ Lighting for signs should be external white light from projecting lamps at the top of the sign and all wiring should be discrete and concealed. Gooseneck style lights are historically appropriate.
- Internally illuminated LED or neon "OPEN" signs are appropriate if there are no illuminated borders (straight or arched), they do not blink or flash and they have a black or clear background. "OPEN" signs require staff approval.
- Signs should not cover or conceal architectural features or ornament and signs should be mounted in a way that does not damage historic materials.
- All signs must also comply with the City's zoning ordinance, which regulates, among other things, the size of the sign.

Design Guidelines-Section 15: Mechanical, Electrical and Communications

Mechanical, electrical, and communications equipment and devices such as ventilation louvers, fans, alarms, cable boxes, utility meters, intercoms, satellite dishes and security cameras should be mounted on secondary facades. Equipment and devices should be mounted in an unobtrusive location or painted to minimize their visual impact.

- Mounting mechanical, electrical, and communications equipment and devices on a primary façade is not appropriate.
- Equipment such as a satellite dishes should not be mounted on sloped roofs visible from the public Right-of-Way on which the building fronts.

Evaluation of Proposed Project:

The proposed signage consists of two window signs placed on the storefront windows, one at each façade, and one at the door. The proposed location of exterior security camera(s) was not indicated in the application. The storefront materials are not original, and it is not architecturally distinctive, therefore the proposed signage will not negatively impact historic fabric. The proposed window signs are applied lettering and the business' logo with a high amount of transparency, which can reduce the overall impact of the bright color proposed.

Historic District Impact:

The proposed signs will have a minor impact to the surrounding historic district because they are visible changes at a corner building. As applied window signs, the impact of the proposed work can be considered reversible, which is encouraged. The replaced commercial storefront does not contribute to the district's historic architectural character and the proposed signage appears to have only a minor potential impact.

HARB Discussion

HARB suggested painting the security cameras and wiring to blend better with the surrounding architecture.

Applicant requested installing an "open" and "closed" illuminated sign, it was stated that this signage can be approved at staff level.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that the applicant indicate the proposed location(s) and number of exterior security cameras that are part of the application. It is generally recommended to reduce the visibility of exterior equipment as much as possible.

Action

A motion to approve the application as proposed with the recommendation that the security camera and wiring be painted to match the soffit was made by HARB member Ellen Roberts, motion was seconded by HARB member Michelle Olson. Motion carried with unanimous support.