

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF ALLENTOWN
November 12, 2021
FINAL REVIEW

Property located at: 322 N 8th St

Agenda Item: #2.a

Historic District: Old Allentown

Case: HDC-2021-00029

Meeting date: November 1, 2021; November 12, 2021

Property Owner/Applicant: Michael Brack

Building description, period, style defining features:

This 3-story Philadelphia brick row home, ca. 1887, in the Eastlake style. The mansard roof displays scalloped slate and 2 dormers. The 1/1 sash in the dormers have projecting moldings. The small peak of the gable roof on each dormer is incised with an Eastlake pattern. Between the 2nd and 3rd floors is a bracketed cornice with a stenciled frieze. The 1/1 sash on the 2nd floor have arched frames incised with a geometric design. The window openings are topped by large segmental brick arches with brick panel of drape is shown at the sides of the arch and is part of the lintel. The 1st floor window consists of two 1/1 sashes with a projecting molding as a divider. Both windows are set into 1 arched and incised frame. The segmental arch lintel with the corbelled panels is the same as the smaller lintels on the 2nd floor. This same ornate style lintel and arched frame tops the paneled double door and transom. Projecting moldings are seen on the door frame. The slatted grocer's alley door has a small transom. It is set into a curved and incised frame with a small segmental brick lintel. The stoop and steps are made of bricks and have a wrought iron railing. There are 2 basement window grilles visible.



Proposed alterations:

1. Replacement of existing slate roof with new asphalt shingles (two-proposed options)

Proposal Background (11/12/21): At the 11/01/21 meeting, HARB discussed repairing with slate and an honoring the original material as opposed to replacing with an asphalt shingle. Staff described previous correspondence with applicant and manufacturers and current manufacturing shortages. HARB suggested looking into alternative slate materials such as those made by EcoStar (Empire Slate or Majestic Slate) which

make a beveled tile that appears to closely match the original in size and configuration. Consultant provided Staff with additional alternative manufacturers.

Staff Approvals: None

Violations:

2008-2011: Cornice removal

Prior COA(s):

1979: Replacement of existing door with double oak door, removal of concrete steps and replacement with brick, “hit n miss” spruce siding with battens in the rear, installation of new three panel horizontal window in the rear first story, installations of a second story window in the rear, installation of 8’ fence constructed of wood in the rear around the perimeter of the property.

1980: Installation of new light fixtures and new entry door.

2000: Removal of “hit n miss” siding, repair and repointing of brick, cover only concrete block with horizontal 4” vinyl siding of Dutch-lap or clap board style, no brick covered and removal of existing laminated door at the rear 3rd floor mansard roof and replacement with full glass French door.

2009: Installation of flat panels, denitlated molding to match adjoining property and simulate the same detail above the third-floor dormer windows. Slate shingles on the mansard roof to be replaced with scalloped (fishscale) shingles.

Secretary of Interior Standards:

Rehabilitation Standard 5: Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

Rehabilitation Standard 6: Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

Design Guidelines-Section 3: Roofing

Historically, non-combustible materials such as slate, terra-cotta and metal were the preferred materials for roofing. Historic roofing materials significant to a building’s architectural character and visible from the public Right-of-Way should be preserved. Retaining a building’s historic roof through repair is encouraged. Roofing that cannot be repaired and requires replacement should replicate the historic roofing in the shape of the shingle, color and material. Flat roofs do not require approval or HARB review.

Slate Shingle: The most cost effective and appropriate way to preserve a slate roof is through regular maintenance. After each winter season a slate roof should be inspected and cracked, broken, or missing slates be replaced. This is generally a relatively inexpensive project to undertake if done on a yearly basis.

- ✓ Replacement of deteriorated slate shingles with new slate shingles through regular maintenance is recommended.
- ✓ Preservation, reuse or in-kind replacement of rolled ridge caps and finish is strongly recommended (see features in images below.)
- Replacing slate shingles with asphalt shingles on a gable or hipped roof is not recommended but may be acceptable on a case-by-case basis when the slate or fasteners have reached the end of their serviceable life. A pre-application review is recommended when considering replacing slate roofing with alternate materials (See alternate material section on pg 14).
- Replacement of slate shingles with asphalt shingles on a mansard roof is typically not necessary. The steep slope of a Mansard roof helps to preserve the roofing material and prolong the life span of the slate.

Evaluation of Proposed Project:

The proposed roof replacement will have a negative impact on the historic building because it is the removal of a distinctive original material. The slate mansard roof with a geometric scallop profile is a character-defining feature of the building and contributes to its historic character. Repair of the existing slate roof is preferred over replacement, including new or repaired fasteners and select slate shingle replacement where a shingle is missing. However, the poor condition of the roof can make repair infeasible. Replacement in-kind would also be preferred but it is understood this may be infeasible due to cost. The proposed replacement options are an architectural shingle product and a 3-tab shingle product, both in black/charcoal grey colors. The architectural shingles are rectangular with a slightly scalloped profile.

Historic District Impact:

The proposed roof replacement will have a negative impact on the surrounding historic district. It is a highly visible change and slate mansard roofs are prevalent in Allentown's historic districts, even though replacement has been a common occurrence. Slate roofs should be preserved when possible. The adjacent rowhouse has already replaced its slate roof with black 3-tab shingles.

HARB Discussion

Historical Preservation Planning Officer Kaitlin Piazza (KP) reviewed the discussion from the last meeting and informed the HARB that the applicant stated that due to cost constraints and difficulty finding a contractor the applicant wished to go to City Council with the application as presented knowing that the HARB would recommend that the application be denied.

HARB discussion ensued with HARB Chair David Huber (DH) asking what alternatives the applicant found. Staff stated the only alternative that met the criteria to match the original in shape, configuration, texture and color was EcoStar synthetic slate. The applicant does not wish to pursue use of this product. KP offered the two options the HARB had to either deny or approve without establishing precedent due to current manufacturing shortages. DH clarified that the only reason for not accepting the recommendation was cost and the inability of the applicant's contractor to install it as stated by the applicant.

Recommendation(s):

(Updated 11/12/21): Repair and replacement in-kind of the natural slate shingles are the recommended preservation treatments. If those are infeasible, alternate material can be considered. Alternative slate products (also known as engineered slate) that match the original in size, thickness, shape, and configuration as closely as possible are a recommended alternative. Alternative slates can be manufactured with scalloped or beveled edge profiles. For asphalt-based roof materials, architectural shingles (also known as dimensional or laminate shingles) are typically higher quality than 3-tab shingles. Usually, architectural shingle products perform better over time and carry longer warranties. The proposed architectural shingles (with the rectangular and scalloped edge profile) have a more dimensional appearance that resembles the existing slate shingles more closely than the 3-tab shingles do.

Action

Motion to deny the roof replacement with the statement that the application would be approved if the applicant followed the recommendation that an appropriate replacement material be presented and a new contractor who could complete the installation of an appropriate alternative be used was made by HARB member AJ Jordan, motion was seconded by HARB member Glenn Lichtenwalner. Motion carried with unanimous support.