

**HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD  
CITY OF ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA  
October 4, 2021  
FINAL REVIEW**

**Property Location:** 342-344 N. 9<sup>th</sup> St.

**Agenda Item:** 2.e.

**Case:** HDC-2021-00022

**Meeting Date:** October 4, 2021

**Property Owner/Applicant:** Tim Driscoll

**Building description, period, style defining features:**

**342:** This 3-story brick row house, ca 1889, is a porch house with Eastlake influences. The 3<sup>rd</sup> floor dormer has a finial on its peak, the mansard roof is covered with slate, there are projecting eaves. There is a single chimney on the left side of the roof. The porch has an Eastlake type peak over the steps with a double-glazed door which has decorative moldings and a transom, the 1<sup>st</sup> floor windows are 1/1 sash. The porch has wooden turned columns, railings, balusters and frieze. There are 2 basement window grilles visible.

**344:** This 3-story brick end of the row house is a Queen Anne porch house with Eastlake influences. ca 1889, the mansard roof has scalloped slate. It displays a dormer that has a bracketed gable roof, scalloped slate in the peak of the gable and a finial atop the peak. There is also a small window to the left of the dormer. There is a bracketed projecting eave between the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> floors that has a decoratively stenciled frieze. A dormer on the side of the house is also visible. There also appears to be a side porch with 2 stories above it.

The windows are 1/1 sash set into segmental brick arches. The window openings are topped with segmental brick arch lintels. The main entry is a single modern door with projecting moldings. The porch has been enclosed with brick and glass blocks. The concrete steps have a wrought iron railing with a peak roof over them. There are 2 basement window grilles visible



**Proposed alterations:** *Violation Correction*

1. Front porch disassembled and removed. To be reassembled using:
  - Original decorative elements
  - Pine 1x6 beadboard porch ceiling
  - Roof material to be determined, proposed as shingles or torch down rubber
  - Southern Yellow Pine 1x4 tongue & groove porch deck
  - New wood railing with details to be determined.
2. Cornice disassembled and removed. To be reassembled using the same decorative elements with select pieces being custom fabricated due to damage including brackets. More details should be provided by applicant.

**Evaluation of Proposed Project:**

The porch disassembly and partial removal has significantly impacted the historic building and the proposed reconstruction as submitted will negatively impact the building. The proposal to reconstruct the porch roof with wood and install beadboard at the ceiling are appropriate choices of materials. Reuse of original woodwork is encouraged and appropriate. The scope of work at the porch deck, railing, and brick base is insufficiently explained. The submitted elevation drawing of the proposed porch railing differs significantly from the existing design of the porch and is not appropriate. The porch floor level appears to be dropped below either the existing brick base or a new wall. The proposed railing is a capped picket with no columns; the existing railing is a two-level wood railing with molded caps and the porch columns are ornate turned wood over fluted bases that are key elements of the porch's design and match the adjoining building. The treatment of the brick base is unspecified. Tongue-and-groove wood boards are proposed for the porch deck, which is an appropriate material selection. However, the existing condition of the porch deck appears to be in fair condition and may not warrant full replacement; the reason for replacement should be discussed, including any life safety or code requirements. The columns and railing also appear to be suitable for repair and reuse, and a code-compliant design could be achieved.

There is insufficient information to fully evaluate the proposed reassembly and restoration of the cornice. Reuse of the original decorative elements and custom fabrication of replacement elements to match the originals is encouraged and would be appropriate as a general approach.

**Historic District Impact:**

The proposed porch reconstruction negatively impacts the surrounding historic district by altering one of its dominant character-defining features of the street. The full impact will depend on the final design of the project. Front porches are distinctive features of the individual building and historic district, especially with intact decorative woodwork. Preservation and reuse of existing original materials has the potential to have a possible impact. Significant removal of original materials and replacement with new designs will negatively impact the district.

## **HARB Discussion**

KF noted the incompleteness of the application materials provide, hence the HARB consultant's recommendation below. There was extensive discussion between the owner, contractor and HARB members about the appropriate approach and design intent. HARB requested additional materials be provided including a materials list, drawings and photos illustrating the level of detail to be employed on the project. HARB agreed to allow the proposal to move ahead, providing the detailed information was provided by the owner as put forth in the motion to approve (see below under Action). In an attempt to allow the owner to proceed with certain work, KF suggested the owner create a separate application for the porch decking that can be approved at staff level as they await the COA for the remainder of the project which will be presented to City Council on October 20<sup>th</sup>.

## **Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that the HARB advise the applicant on appropriate materials and design features, particularly for the porch railing, and that additional drawings detailing the proposed scope of work are submitted for review.

Select recommendations include:

- Shingle roof material is recommended over torch-down rubber (both options are currently proposed).
- All original wood components should be retained and reused to the greatest extent possible, including but not limited to the porch columns, the railing, the entrance pediment, and any elements that have already been removed and are planned for reinstallation.
- Provide information on how the new porch roof will be properly flashed into the brick masonry façade and what drainage is proposed.

For the cornice scope of work, documentation of the salvaged cornice pieces and their condition, drawings of the size and profile of the pieces to be replicated, and information about how the cornice will be reinstalled into the brick masonry facade are suggested details to be provided by the applicant.

## **Action**

Motion to accept the application with the stipulation that all original wood components be retained and reused to the greatest extent possible, like for like materials be used for replacement components; the owner and contractor provide photos for reference from the side of the building, showing details to be replicated on the front of the building; provide photos for the cornice and drawings for the rafter tails, provide materials list, remove the porch topper railings, provide 5" ½ round gutters and 3-tab asphalt roof shingles. The owner and contractor to provide a bracket

and cornice panel mockup to KP for review. The motion as stipulated above was made by HARB Chair Dave Huber, motion was seconded by HARB member Patricia Jackson. Motion carried with one vote in opposition from HARB member AJ Jordan on the basis that a more detailed application be presented prior to HARB approval.