

**HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA**

**May 3, 2021
FINAL REVIEW**

Case # HDC-2021-00015

Property Address: 1507W. Turner St

Proposal: Partial reconstruction of existing front porch including new roof, additional support columns and replacement of rotted modillions.

Historic District: West Park

Property Owner/Applicant: Stephanie Kocher

Building description, period, style defining features:

This brick 3-story end of row house, ca 1911 is a Colonial Revival. The mansard roof has red slate shingles, a large dormer with 8/2 sash window, projecting cornice and spire roof with a finial. The 2nd floor has a projecting cornice with brackets and a bay window with 1/1 sash windows, glass transom and a wooden keystone over the windows. The 1st floor has a picture windows with beveled glass transom and brick lintels. The wooden porch has a single beveled glass door, transom, and projecting moldings as well as wrought iron columns and railing and bull-nosed concrete steps and wrought iron railings. There is a visible basement window grille. The rear of the property has a wooden fence and gate with porches; the 1st floor is enclosed with siding and the 2nd porch has square columns, wrought iron railing and a door.



Proposed Alterations:

1. Partial reconstruction of existing front porch including new roof, additional support columns and recapping of rotted portions of dentil molding.

The proposed scope of work at the porch support columns is not appropriate as proposed. There is insufficient information in the application to fully evaluate the proposed alterations and materials.

As proposed, one non-historic metal support (at center) will remain; one non-historic metal support (at corner) will be replaced with a 6x6 post; and the one wood half pillar (at the shared entrance) will be removed and replaced with a full-height 6x6 post. The 6x6 posts will be “padded out to receive new PVC material to finish off the posts.” PVC cladding is not an appropriate material. There is no information about the finished appearance, shape, or size of the new columns. Removal of the existing wood half column is not justified. Removal of historic material should be avoided whenever possible. Installation of a new (half) column at the shared entrance will change the appearance of the building. There is precedent for a shared column within this block of houses. A shared column may have existed originally. However, the shared columns are *all* half columns supported by a base integrated with the shared railing.

It is not appropriate or recommended to cover the new exterior beam or the fascia with PVC product. As proposed, the “existing dentil pieces will be removed and recapped.” The dentil modillions should be retained and repaired or replaced like-for-like with wood to match existing. Dentil modillions should not be capped.

Replacement of the deteriorated porch ceiling with new triple 2” beaded soffit to replicate existing is appropriate. Applicant to confirm that proposed new soffit material is wood. The proposed re-roofing does not appear to be visible from the street. The proposed EPDM rubber roofing over insulation board, aluminum drip edge and aluminum downspout (white to match existing trim) is acceptable.

Historic District Impact:

As proposed, the alterations to the porch supports columns will negatively impact the surrounding historic district. The subject building is the end of a long block of attached houses. This block is united visually by a continuous row of front porches with similar wood columns, railings, and pediments above the shared entrances. The proposed changes will not fully reverse the inappropriate metal supports and will result in the removal or inappropriate of original porch features. Replacement of the two non-original metal columns with appropriate columns would benefit the surrounding district.

HARB Discussion

The application as presented does not appropriately address the historic architectural fabric of the front porch. The HARB expressed their concerns to the owner that the proposed scope of work to leave the metal vertical supports in place. The applicant expressed her position that she

was not intending to replace the metal vertical supports as part of the scope of work but rather add additional wood 6 x 6 posts. This brought up the topic of the structural stability of the roof which the HARB recommended be assessed by a professional engineer to make the determination. If the structure is determined to be acceptable to support the existing roof loads, then the metal supports can remain, if it is determined that additional structural supports are required then all metal members must be replaced with new round wood columns to match the extant column on the porch and the adjoining houses in the row lining the street.

The use of 6 x 6 wood posts and PVC to cap existing wood details and trim are not appropriate nor acceptable. The applicant was encouraged by the HARB to replace the roof as proposed with a roll down rubber roof, replace the downspout with a round one, replace deteriorated or missing wood details with new to wood to match existing.

Recommendation(s):

The recommended scope of work is full replacement of all inappropriate metal elements with new supports to match the extant tapered round columns at the adjoining buildings should the determination by a structural engineer determine the need for additional support. Porch details—including the fascia and dentil modillions—should be repaired or replaced like-for-like and no elements shall be capped with PVC. It is recommended that the applicant submit drawings, graphic representations of the scope of work, and product data for proposed materials. The recommendation is to advise applicant on the appropriate scope of work and not approve the application as submitted.

Action

Motion to approve the application as per the above recommendations was made by HARB member Shane Fillman, motion was seconded by HARB member Ellen Roberts Motion carried with unanimous support.