

**Historical Architectural Review Board  
COA Final Review Sheet**

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**HDC-2022-00071; Amendment**  
**Address: 346 N. 8th Street**  
**District: Old Allentown Historic District**  
**Applicant: Andrew Ardizzoia, owner; Tom Weidner, contractor**  
**Proposal: Reconfigure and replace front steps; install railing**

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**Building Description:**

This 2-story painted brick row house ca. 1890 is of plain style. The 1<sup>st</sup> floor is fixed like a shop and was used for that purpose. There is a dentilated cornice over the front door. The 2<sup>nd</sup> floor windows are 1/1 sash with three small panes on top. The 1<sup>st</sup> floor windows are large store front flat windows, with a awning over the 1<sup>st</sup> floor. There is brickote and white shingles covering the rear. Wood German siding is on the side walls of the front building. There is a fake top, gabled parapet roof on front. The main door is a ¾-glazed door with a dentilated cornice over it. There is a curved brick stoop of three steps in front and a porch in the rear.

The front building and back building look like two separate units. During the 1860s the shop was moved to its present site, the front yard of 346 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The rear building was used as the living quarters for the baker and the front shop used as the bakery with Victorian Commercial façade. The front building may have been used as a speakeasy during the 1930s; based on the number and variety of bottles found during the restoration.

**Project Description:**

This application proposes to amend a previously approved application to demolish the existing circular brick steps at the front of the building and to replace them with rectangular bluestone slab steps. The applicant is returning to the HARB to seek approval for modification to the dimensions and appearance of the steps, owing to code compliance issues, and to install new metal and wood handrails.

The current frame building was relocated from elsewhere in the city and has been altered over the years. The date of the steps remains unknown, but they are not an original feature of the property.

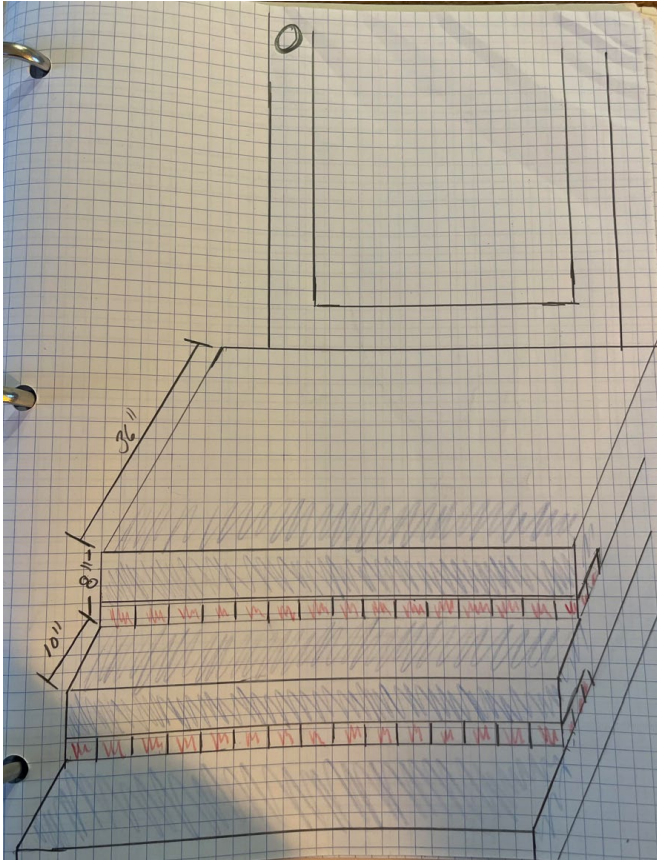


**Front façade of 346 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, 2022.  
(Applicant)**

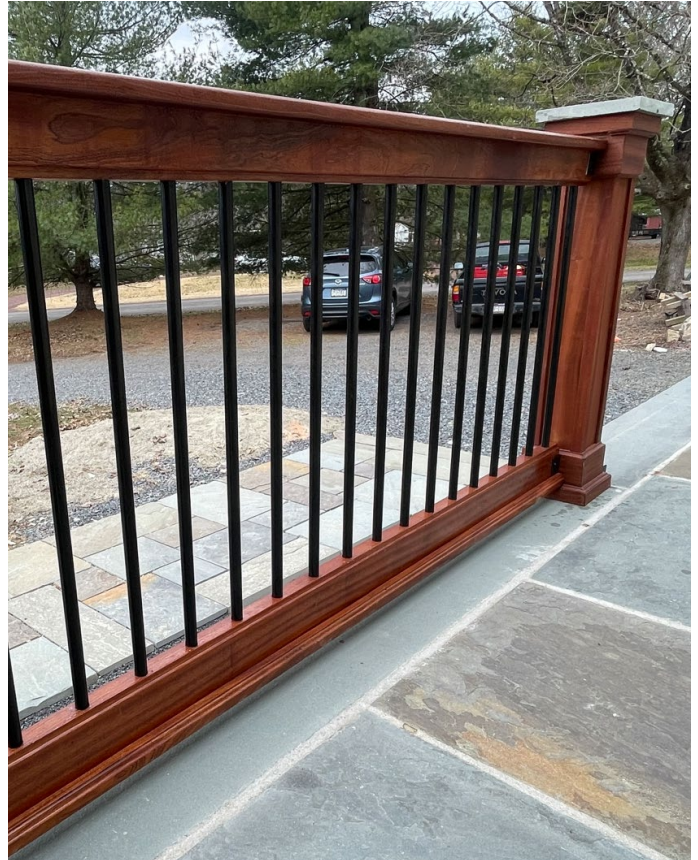


**Existing steps at 346 N. 8th Street.  
(Applicant)**

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**Revised proposal for front steps.  
(Applicant)**



**Proposed wood and metal railing.  
(Applicant)**

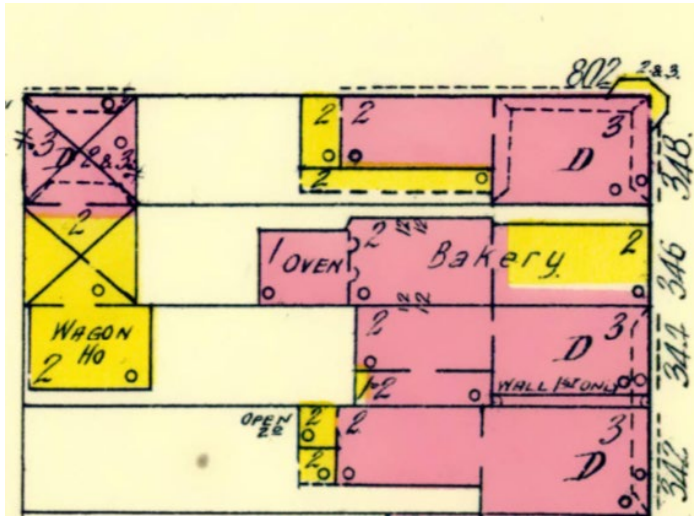


**Previous proposal approved by HARB.  
(Applicant)**

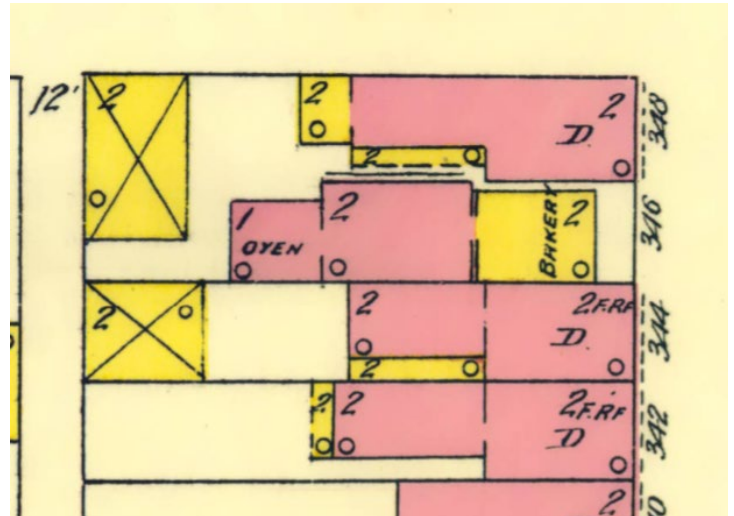


**Circular brick steps at 346 N. 8th Street, 1995.  
(Planning & Zoning files)**

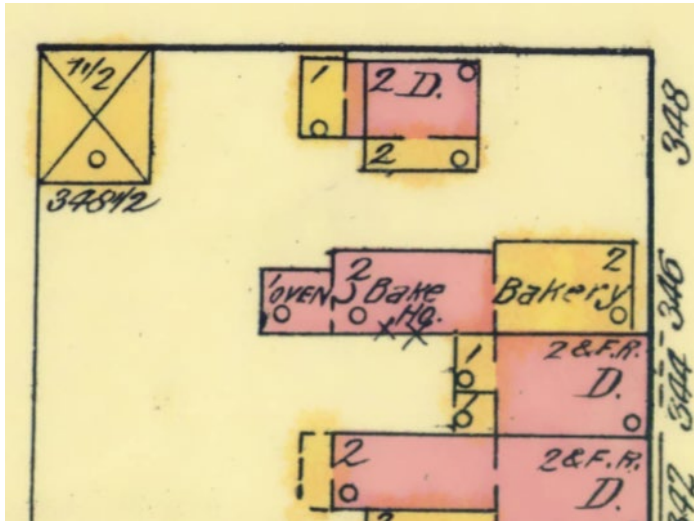
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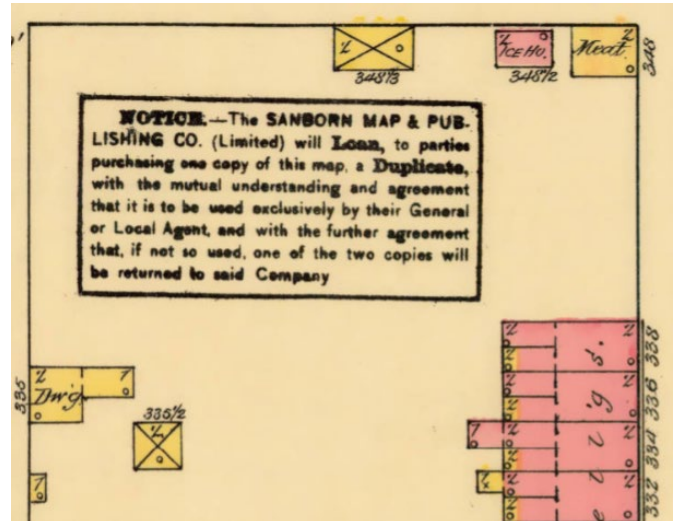
1911 Sanborn map.  
(Penn State University Libraries)



1897 Sanborn map.  
(Penn State University Libraries)



1891 Sanborn map.  
(Penn State University Libraries)



1885 Sanborn map, suggesting that the site had not been developed.  
(Penn State University Libraries)

**Applicable Guidelines:**

**Chapter 3.7 – Porches & Steps**

**3.7.4** Replace individual deteriorated components in-kind with new materials matching the original in material composition, size, shape, profile, dimension, appearance, and finish. Custom fabrication is encouraged and may be necessary to provide an exact match. Where an exact match of the historic element cannot be found or fabricated, the new element should match the original as closely as possible.

**3.7.5** Retain and repair original handrails or railings. Replace in-kind if repair is not feasible. Replacement handrails should match the existing in material, size, and appearance as closely as possible. Installation of handrails where they did not previously exist is generally not recommended due to the visual and physical impact on historic fabric; however, installation of a simple, compatible design may be acceptable for the purpose of safety and ease of access.

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### Observations & Comments:

#### *Comment on original design:*

From 8<sup>th</sup> Street, the building appears as a two-story detached or semi-detached frame structure with a parapet and former commercial storefront and differs from the block's two- and three-story brick rowhouses. Sanborn maps show that the rear portion of the building is brick. According to a 1982 clipping in the Planning & Zoning property files, the brick portion of the building was constructed in the 1860s, and the wood structure was moved to the site from elsewhere in the city and placed in front of the brick building to function as a bakery. The 1891 and 1897 Sanborn maps show that the building was originally set back from 8<sup>th</sup> Street, and by 1911 it had been expanded to align with the fronts of the adjacent buildings. Because of the building's move and expansion, it is likely that the steps were rebuilt several times. The difference in the brick of the building's foundation and the circular steps suggests that the brick steps are a later addition, constructed after the c. 1911 expansion. Staff finds that the circular brick steps are not in character with the wood structure and have not acquired significance in their own right.

Since no documentation exists of the historic steps, staff supports the proposed configuration, which is typical of many historic rowhouses and most of the buildings on this block of 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The proposed configuration is consistent with Guideline 3.7.4 as a replacement that is historically appropriate in material and design in the absence of historic documentation. Staff suggests that a veneer on the cheek walls be avoided and recommends laying slab steps over curbing, such as in the image below. The steps should overhang the cheek walls by one or two inches. If the application is revised to include the suggested detailing, the application will comply with Guideline 3.7.4.



Partial construction of stone steps showing construction method.  
(<https://clsupplies.com/product/granite-fillers/>)



Image showing detailing with steps overhanging cheeks.  
(Google StreetView)

#### *Comment on Revised Design:*

The application has been revised to comply with building code and avoid impeding in the right-of-way. According to the applicant, using standard stone slabs would require an additional step and would increase the projection into the right-of-way. The applicant further noted that custom stone slabs would be prohibitively expensive. The solution the applicant devised to meet building code is to include one course of bricks below each slab to raise the height of the step and eliminate the need for the additional step in the right-of-way. Staff finds the proposal acceptable since the steps are not intended to replicate an original condition. Steps at neighboring properties include a combination of slate treads and brick risers. Staff questions whether the combination of slate treads and brick risers would be more appropriate.

The proposed railings would consist of wood top and bottom rails with metal spindles and a wood newel post. Because the building is frame construction, staff finds the combination of wood and metal acceptable. Staff recommends anchoring the railing to the ground rather than the stone slab steps, since anchoring directly into the steps can accelerate deterioration.

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### **Staff Recommendation:**

Approval, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps. Staff notes that the property presents a unique circumstance because it has been moved, expanded, and its historic steps replaced in the past.

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### **HARB Discussion:**

The contractor and owner are agreeable to following the building code and HARB recommendations. Building Standards and Safety recommends a riser height of 8 ¼ inches for the steps.

### **Action:**

Mr. Huber moved to approve the application presented on 5/1/2023 for the reconfiguration and replacement of front steps and installation of railings at 346 N. 8<sup>th</sup> Street, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, with the comment that the applicant may also consider a railing design consisting of all metal or all wood. Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.