

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

May 3, 2021

FINAL REVIEW

Case # HDC-2021-00014

Property Address: 23 N. West St.

Proposal: Replacement of slate roof shingles with new slate shingles (or recommended alternative product) new flashing, new EPDM roofing for flat roof as well as replacement of wooden fascia with new vented aluminum soffit. New side entrance basement door to replace existing plywood “door”.

Historic District: West Park

Property Owner/Applicant: Shantay McPherson

Building description, period, style defining features:

This three-story brick end of the row This 3-story brick/stucco single house, ca 1900 is a Colonial style. The flat roof has turret with slate shingles and a single chimney. There is an iron fence along the length of the brick porch which wraps around the west (front) and south (side) facades of the building. The windows are seventeen 6/6 sash, brick lintels and a bay window with transom. The main entry is a double door on a brick porch.



Proposed Alterations:

1. Replacement of existing plywood basement door with a salvaged wooden door.
2. Demolition of brick side porch and installation of new stairs to access existing French Doors. Alternatively, complete reconstruction of porch.
3. Replacement of slate shingles on the turret with new slate shingle and new flashing.
4. Replacement of flat roof material with new EPDM or Owens Corning Shingle.
5. Replacement of rotten wooden fascia with new wooden fascia and aluminum soffit.

Evaluation of Proposed Project:

Two treatments are proposed for the side porch: the first is demolition and construction of a new independent stair to the existing French doors on the side (secondary) façade; the second is demolition and reconstruction of the side porch. The brick side porch does not appear to be an original feature of the building. Sanborn map research indicates that the original configuration was a full-width wood front porch and no side porch; the brick side porch and possibly brick front porch base appears to have been installed after 1950. No historic photographs have been found.

Evaluation of the first proposal requires more information about the treatment of the building. The porch and railing are not original, nor significant features of the building and removal could be considered acceptable. The following questions should be answered:

1. Once the side porch is removed, what is the proposed treatment to the portion of the house that will be left exposed?
2. How will the front porch edge be terminated? Where is the dividing line between the side porch and the front porch?
3. Does the existing porch act as a retaining wall above the basement door? How will landscaping and any site or structural issues be addressed?
4. What are the proposed materials and design of the new side stairs?

Evaluation of the second proposal requires more information about the reconstruction. The following questions should be answered:

1. What are the materials to be used for the porch and railing?
2. What is the proposed design of the porch and railing? Is the current proposal based on an exact reconstruction of the existing porch?

Either scope of work will impact the historic building. The first proposal has the potential to return the building closer to its original appearance; however, there may be insufficient documentation existing about the building's original design to support this claim.

The new door proposed at the basement entrance is appropriate and is only partially visible from the street. The proposed use of a salvaged wood door is encouraged and appropriate.

Replacement will be a positive impact on the building and improvement over the existing plywood door.

The proposed roof work includes replacement of deteriorated slate at the turret roof, replacement of the low slope building roof, and in-kind replacement of the deteriorated wood fascia and installation of a vented aluminum soffit. The low slope roof work is acceptable and does not require HARB review on its own per the Guidelines. Replacement of deteriorated wood trim with wood is acceptable; the new fascia should match the original in size, profile, dimension, and appearance. Vented soffits are effective solutions for air and moisture circulation and can be minimally visible. The soffit should be painted to match the wood trim.

The Guidelines allow for the replacement of natural slate with composite slate products. The use of natural slate is generally recommended because it is a like-for-like replacement of historic materials and has a long lifespan. However, composite slate products are available that mimic natural slate and are less expensive. Composite slate products will deteriorate faster than natural slate and will have to be replaced sooner. Composite slates are thicker than asphalt-based 3-tab or architectural shingles and mimic the appearance of natural slate better. The key factors in slate

replacement are to match the original shingle size, shape, pattern, color, and exposure (the amount of each tile visible). The existing slate should be salvaged.

Historic District Impact:

The subject building is a corner building located on the southern boundary of the West Park Historic District. The proposed roof, slate, and trim work will not substantially alter the building's architectural character nor the character of the surrounding block. The proposed porch work will have an impact on the surrounding district. The first proposal will alter the building more, but as stated above, it has the potential to return the building to a more original appearance, which could be an overall positive impact to the district. The second proposal would retain the non-historic porch but can be considered a like-for-like replacement of a building feature that was (likely) intact when the district was designated.

HARB Discussion

Board unanimously agreed that the restorative approach to the porch reconstruction was appropriate and retained as much original historic fabric as possible and the proposed replication of the details for components that cannot be reused was acceptable. Board members suggested using a Slateline or three-tab shingle for the roofing and the owner/applicant was receptive to this suggestion. The owner asked for guidance on paint colors and was referred to the Old Allentown Historic Preservation Association for recommended, historically appropriate colors. It was also discussed and agreed that painting the color to match the existing porch color was appropriate and in keeping with the existing colors of the house trim.

Recommendation(s):

Part 1-Porch: The application does not contain sufficient information to recommend approval of either scope of work proposed for the side porch: demolition and new stair construction or demolition and reconstruction. It is recommended by HARB that the owner engage a professional to determine the scope of work demolition and construction of new stairs versus demolition and reconstruction to assist the applicant in project planning. It is recommended that the porch portion of the application be tabled for future consideration and to incorporate HARB's opinion. Drawings and detailed description of the proposed scope of work, including materials to be used, should be submitted. It is understood that the applicant has consulted with a mason. A description of current conditions from the mason, or the mason's attendance at a HARB meeting, would be beneficial to better understand the need for demolition.

Part 2: Roof, flashing, soffits, and trim: The proposed use of an EPDM roof on the flat, non-visible portion of the roof is acceptable. The proposed slate, and wood trim work on the turret roof is recommended for approval. True slate materials are recommended in locations of deteriorated slate with Ecostar Empire Slate or Majestic Slate as approved alternatives. Alternate slate should match the original shingles in size, thickness, shape, and color as closely as possible. The new slate should be installed in the same pattern and with the same exposure (the amount of each tile visible) as the existing roof. In this case, the fishscale shape is a key factor. The ridge caps and finial are to be retained and restored if possible or replaced in kind. New material shall match existing in shape, profile dimension and composition. The wood trim and soffit details

should be replicated to match the existing out of wood materials and it is not advisable to add soffit venting.

Part 3: The basement door as proposed with raised rail panels and two glass lites at the top is acceptable and should be painted to match the color of the house and existing door frame which is to remain.

Action

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