

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

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**HDC-2023-00058**

**Address: 932 W. Gordon Street**

**District: Old Allentown Historic District**

**Applicant: Shaadi Elias, owner**

**Proposal: Legalize vinyl siding**

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**Building Description:**

This two-story end-of-row frame house, c. 1890 is a federal house. The gable roof has asphalt shingles, a dormer, and projecting eaves. The windows are 1/1 sash with no lintels, and the main entry is a single-glazed door with transom. There is a shared grocer's alley. The concrete porch is enclosed with wood & glass, the concrete steps have a railing, the front has asbestos shingles and the back has additions with a variety of brick, asbestos siding and brick-like shingles.

**Project Description:**

On August 18, 2023, staff received a complaint about work underway to install vinyl siding at the property at 932 W. Gordon Street, made a site visit, and asked the workers to stop work. No formal notice of violation was issued, but the owner complied with the request to stop work. At the time of staff's request, work was almost completed. This application proposes to legalize the vinyl siding installed on the building.



**Front façade of 932 W. Gordon Street, 2019  
(Google StreetView)**



**Front façade of 932 W. Gordon Street after work, 2023.  
(Applicant)**

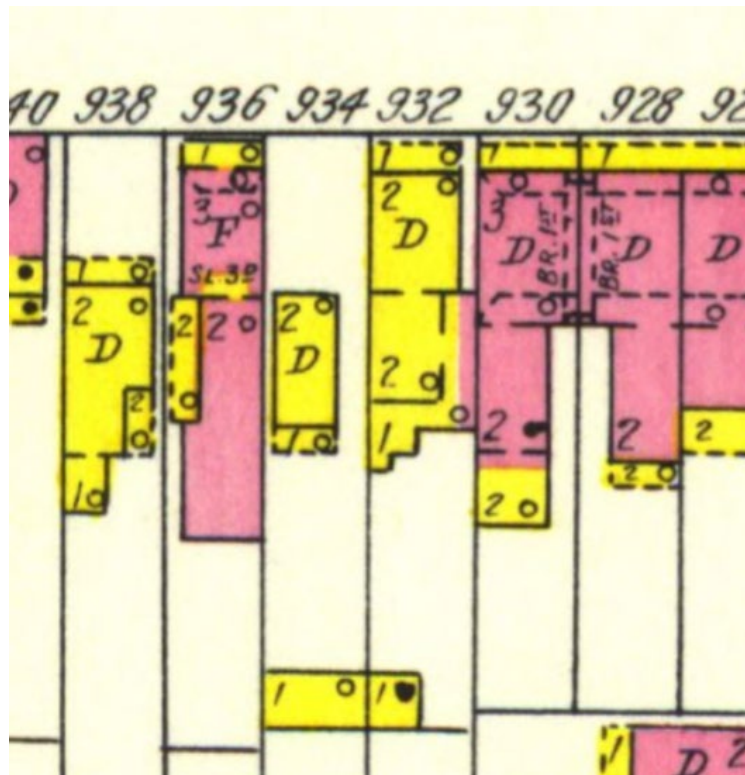
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Front façade showing vinyl siding being applied, 2023.  
(HARB files)



Side façade after siding was installed, 2023.  
(applicant)



1932 Sanborn map.  
(Pennsylvania State University Libraries)

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### Applicable Guidelines:

#### **Chapter 3.2 – Wood Siding & Trim**

**3.2.5** Replace deteriorated materials in-kind if repair is infeasible. New materials should replicate the original as closely as possible in material composition, size, profile, shape, pattern, and appearance. If historic wood siding or trim was an identifiable or visually distinctive species, it is recommended that the same species be used for the replacement.

**3.2.6** Avoid installation of aluminum, vinyl, or synthetic materials that were unavailable when a building was constructed. Aluminum, vinyl, fiber-cement, or other synthetic cladding are not appropriate for historic properties because of their visual impact and because their installation can cause other deterioration problems. It is not appropriate to cap or cover existing wood with these types of materials. It is not appropriate to remove original wood cladding or trim features and replace them with aluminum, vinyl, fiber-cement, or synthetic materials.

**3.2.7** Consider removal of existing aluminum, vinyl, or synthetic cladding over building features. Historic materials sometimes remain intact below this type of cladding and can be restored. In-kind replacement of existing non-historic siding that was in place before the historic district was designated may be allowed in some cases. Consult with Staff and HARB during early project planning stages. Provide photographs or documentation of existing conditions and wall materials below non-historic siding to help determine the appropriate treatment.

### Observations & Comments:

The building was clad in asbestos siding prior to the work being undertaken and prior to the designation of the Old Allentown Historic District. Guideline 3.2.7 allows for some flexibility with in-kind replacement of non-historic materials. However, in this case, the asbestos siding was replaced with vinyl, which is a change in both material and appearance. Staff contends that, because asbestos siding may no longer be used, the HARB may consider allowing the use of a more appropriate alternate material, such as fiber cement clapboard siding. Fiber cement clapboard siding is closer in appearance to wood and is more appropriate than vinyl.

### Staff Recommendation:

Denial, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.2 Wood Siding & Trim.

### HARB Discussion:

Attorney Ron Corkery explained that a city housing inspector provided an initial inspection report, and the property failed nearly every inspection at the time owner Shaadi Elias purchased the property. He contended that the inspector gave Mr. Elias permission to install the vinyl siding. Mr. Elias elaborated that he worked with the inspector to correct the issues with the property, and the siding was already about 93% installed when the project was stopped by HARB staff. He stated that he spent \$4,200 to \$4,600 on materials and approximately \$15,000 on labor to install the siding.

Mr. Jordan stated that the HARB would not be able to recommend legalizing the vinyl siding since it does not comply with the guidelines. He added that the only possible path toward an approval would be to propose a new material. Mr. Corkery questioned whether the owner could leave the vinyl siding on the three sides of the building, arguing that they are not visible from a right-of-way and only replace the small section of siding at the second story of the front façade.

Several HARB members noted that the adjacent building is set back significantly, and the west elevation is highly visible from Gordon Street. Mr. Elias stated that he would be interested in working with the city to modify the front. The HARB contended that the board could not approve the existing siding at the front or west façade, since both are highly visible and the siding would need to be replaced in both locations.

### Action:

Mr. Hart moved to deny the application presented on 10/2/2023 to legalize the vinyl siding installed at 932 W. Gordon Street, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.2 Wood Siding & Trim. Mr. Huber seconded the motion, which carried by unanimous support.