

**HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF ALLENTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA
September 5, 2019
FINAL REVIEW**

Item #1 - Case # HDC-2019-00034 – Proposal to install solar panels

Property located at: 130 N 15th Street
Agenda #1
Historic District: Old Allentown
Case # HDC-2019-000034
Meeting date: September 5, 2019

Property Owner: David Treatman
Owners Address: 130 N 15th St.,
Allentown, PA 18102
Applicant: Same
Applicant's Address: Same

Building description, period, style defining features: This structure is a 2 story detached tan and brown brick dwelling with a gable roof, large front facing gabled “dormer” with broad overhanging eaves with support brackets, 6 over 1 double hung windows, half round attic windows, brown asphalt shingled roof, and a full-front porch with square brick posts. The house is Arts and Crafts in style and dates from c.1920. The building has a high level of historic integrity.







Proposed alterations: It is proposed to install solar panels. 26 solar panels will be installed on various locations on the roof mostly on the higher lower sloped dormer roofs

Staff Approvals: 3/12/2014 – Replace concrete steps and like for like replacement of porch floor.

12/9/2008 – Like for like replacement of rotted gable ends.

5/27/2015, HAD-2015-00027, Replace existing 4 foot wood picket fence with wood shadow box fence, 6 feet high at rear of property.

Background: n/a

Violations: n/a

Guideline Citation: SIS 6 Deteriorated features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.

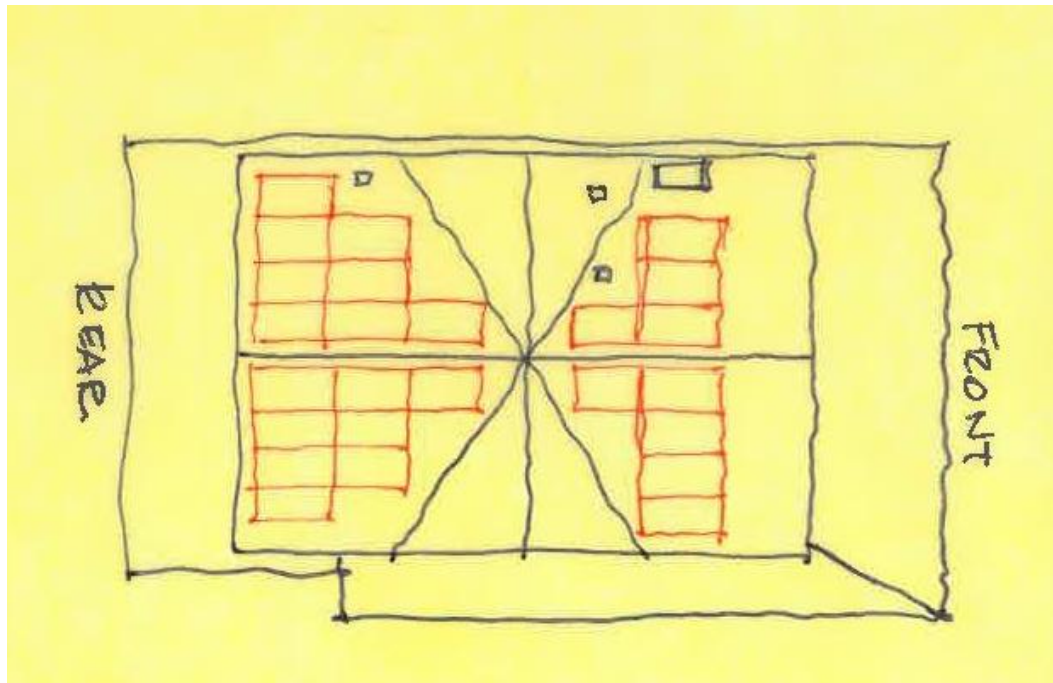
SIS 9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment **Allentown Guidelines for Historic**

Districts: 5. Guidelines for Existing Buildings and Structures, 1. Repairs, Replacement and Alternative Materials, 14. Solar Installations and Energy Efficiency

Evaluation, effect on historic district, recommendations: The solar panels are not historically appropriate as proposed (locations), but if repositioned, some or all of the units may be possible. From the guidelines: *“Sloped roof - On sloped roof structures, solar devices should be mounted on rear roofs that are part of secondary facades. The solar panels should be flush mounted on sloped roofs if possible”.*

The upper roofs have a low slope and are not highly visible at the rear and only partially visible from the front. The Tesla solar panels are shown flush with the roof in image below. If flush to the roof and moved to the back gable and away from the front edge of the front roof, the installation would be close to meeting the design guidelines. (See sketch) The other modification that would reduce the visibility of the installation would be to replace the roof shingles with new shingles a dark gray color that blended with the color of the panels. below is an image of Tesla solar panels: Powerwall (interior installation assumed):





Discussion from 8/5/19 meeting: The discussion focused on alternate locations for solar panels proposed for the front upper section of the roof. Since the applicant revealed he also owns the garage behind the house, placing them on the garage was suggested as better than the front of the house. The roof of the rear porch was also studied as an option. There was some concern about visibility from West Park, but otherwise placing the solar panels on rear roofs of secondary facades met the design guidelines. Mr. Kimmerly pointed out that West Park was not technically a public right-of-way even though the public had access to the city owned property. The applicant informed the HARB that a Tesla installer would be on site on Thursday 8/8/19 and it was decided that Mr. Kimmerly would meet with the applicant and installer that day to discuss relocation of the front solar panels to the rear garage roof and rear porch roof.

Discussion: The applicant and representative from Tesla presented a revised proposal for placement of solar panels on the roof. The new proposal was similar to the layout suggested by the Historic Consultant last meeting. The applicants explained that the garage roofs and the rear porch roof would not be good locations for solar panels due to shadowing of adjacent buildings and landscape. Seven panels originally located along the front edge of the front gable roof are proposed to be relocated to rear roofs. There were still concerns expressed by the HARB. The Historic Consultant enumerated several of the unique conditions in the case that might support approval:

- The main mass of the house was set back from homes on either side
- The upper roof had a shallow pitch reducing its visibility
- The gable slopes faced the sides of the house and not the front which is more typical in historic Allentown neighborhoods
- The solar panels were low profile, close to the roof surface, and finished/closed around the perimeter.

Mr. Huber was most worried about setting precedent. He voted yes with the stipulation that this is a TEST case until more detailed, updated guidelines can be adopted, AND, they are located at least 10' behind front wall of house, AND all trim be painted to match the shingle color. Mr. Brobst explained the reason he would vote for the installation. He pointed out that there are many telephone poles, wires, satellite dishes, and other mechanical and electrical infrastructure that distract from historic homes. He pointed out that at the 130 N 15th Street residence one sees power lines, a power pole with 2 signs and a chimney with a TV antenna. It was his opinion that 90% of individuals going by the house would never notice the solar panels.

Regarding future requests, he thought the HARB needed further discussion, but at a minimum the proposals would have to maintain historic details and proportions.

Motion: By means of an electronic vote HARB adopted the proposal that City Council issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed work described herein:

1. The proposal to install solar panels at 130 N 15th Street was represented by David Treatman and Joshua Buck of Tesla.
2. Solar panels will be installed on various locations on the low sloped upper roofs of the front and rear facing gabled “dormers”. There will be a total of 26 panels
3. Seven panels will be moved from the front edge of the front “dormer” roof to the back roofs.
4. The solar panel installation is being approved on front roofs because of the following unique conditions:
 - a. The rear porch and garage roofs are not viable for locations for solar panels due to tree and neighboring building shadowing and resultant reduced efficiency.
 - b. The main building mass is set back from the neighboring buildings
 - c. The upper roofs are very low sloped (approximately 20 degrees) and sloped parallel to the street instead of towards the street resulting in very low visibility from the street
 - d. The solar panels are flat to the roof and are finished on the edges to blend into the roof surface
5. It is recommended that the edges of the solar panels be painted a brown color to match the roofing color.
6. The solar panels will start 10’ back from the front of the house.

Vote: Yes: Huber, Fillman, Roberts, Jackson, Brobst, Sell, Olson