

HISTORIC ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW BOARD
CITY OF ALLENTOWN
November 12, 2021
FINAL REVIEW

Property located at: 231 N 8th St.

Agenda Item: #1.a.

Historic District: Old Allentown

Case: HDC-2021-00030

Meeting date: November 12, 2021

Property Owner/Applicant: Home Investments LLC

Address: 301 E. Hamilton St., Allentown, PA

Building description, period, style defining features:

This 3-story brick building, ca. 1904, shows Romanesque Revival styling. The flat roof has bracketed projecting eaves, dentilated cornice on 1st floor between the picture window and transom. The lintels on the 1st and 3rd floor are full arches made of wood. There are single windows to the left of the projecting bay windows on the 2nd and 3rd floors, all windows have 1/1 sashes. The lintel on the 2nd floor single window has a keystone. There are quoins along the edges of the building.

The main entrance double door is recessed. The foyer has tile walls and marble floors with wood arched moldings to match the 1st floor moldings. There is fan shaped wrought iron grill work on street to protect the basement entrance. There are two basement window grilles visible.



Proposed alterations:

1. Installation of one over one, aluminum clad wood windows where stained glass windows currently exist.

Proposal Background: An application for the proposed alterations was submitted on September 13th at which time no indication was provided concerning the existence of stained glass. Per the request of staff, additional information including photographs of existing conditions were provided. Based on previous reviews and the Design Guidelines staff requested that the applicant contact a stained-glass expert. The applicant forwarded an email on October 27th from Neff-Chattoe Co. that stated replacement rather than repair would be required. Staff requested the HARB consultant find additional stained-glass professionals for a second opinion as well as quotes. On November 3rd staff provided the applicant with an update as well as the contact information for CALV for the applicant to contact for possible funding. The applicant expressed his desire to go before the HARB with the application as submitted.

Staff Approvals: None

Violations:

2020: Removed and replaced windows, including stained glass windows.

2014: Satellite Dish installation.

Prior COA(s):

2020: Installation of a new stained-glass window to replace a previously existing stained-glass window of the same size that was destroyed by a car bomb in 2018.

- Approved

2020: Proposal to remove all windows including stained glass and install new windows.

- **Approved as amended by HARB:** Missing leaded glass arched window sash will be fabricated and installed to match original. The storm window will be removed from the same windows and a new arched storm window will be installed with meeting railed aligning with historic windows. All other windows will remain in place and be painted.

2007: Replacement of stained-glass panel on one of the double front entry doors with clear glass.

- **DENIED**

Secretary of Interior Standards:

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.

Design Guidelines-Section 5: Windows

Replacement: The Replacement of a window refers to the installation of a new custom sized wood window sash into the existing window frame. Window replacement is recommended only for windows with irreparable deterioration. If the repair of a window is not possible and replacement is required, the replacement window unit should match the historic window unit in design, dimension, and pane configuration. The replacement of an historic wood window with a new wood, aluminum clad wood, smooth fiberglass, or wood composite window requires staff approval. In all cases, the appearance of true divided lights on an historic window must be retained through the use of simulated divided lights (SDL) on the new window. All other requests for window replacement require HARB approval.

- Replacement of historic wood windows on a primary facade with a new wood, aluminum clad wood, smooth fiberglass, or wood composite windows may be acceptable depending on the condition of the existing historic wood windows.

- Replacement of historic windows on secondary facades with alternate materials requires staff approval. Specifications of new window must be provided to staff for approval.
- Replacement windows must match the size of the existing historic windows. Reducing the size of the window opening is not typically permitted.
- Improvements in thermal performance can be achieved through repairing historic windows and installing interior or exterior storm windows. The replacement of historic window units with new window units to improve thermal performance is not recommended. (See energy efficiency)

Evaluation of Proposed Project & Historic District Impact:

The proposal does not conform to the guidance within the Historic District Design Guidelines or the SIS. As stated in the 2020 preliminary report the existing stained-glass windows are a unique feature of the building and removal would have a negative impact on the historic district. The windows are in deteriorated condition, but a high amount of original historic material remains intact.

HARB Discussion

Staff Historical Preservation Planning Officer Kaitlin Piazza (KP) provided background information and explained that the application had been submitted in mid-September at which point no indication that the proposal was for replacement of stained-glass windows. Once staff discovered stained glass was involved the applicant was informed. The applicant stated that it wasn't stained glass but rather plastic. Staff sought a second opinion and confirmed that they were stained glass by consulting with the HARB consultant and with an application that was denied by the HARB in 2020 that included the same scope of work but was submitted by the previous owner. It was further explained that staff and the HARB consultant had provided the owner with a stained-glass professional in Allentown who provided an email stating that the glass needed replacement. Subsequently the HARB consultant contacted multiple stained-glass professionals and was in process of putting the property owner in contact when the property owner indicated that due to the change of season he could no longer wait.

The applicant described the history of the property and work that had been done under his ownership. He stated that he had been trying for 6 months to find someone to complete the work and was told it was not possible or would take a year per window. He also stated that the stained-glass professional in Allentown took three months to respond.

The HARB members discussed the application at length including the timeline, previous efforts by the property owner to find someone to complete the work, the condition of the windows and which windows had been evaluated. Discussion of options for sufficient professional assessment and due diligence included site visits, evidence of what information was provided to the professional, removing a window for evaluation at a professional's shop, and evaluation and/or quotes for the work required for each window.

The applicant did not have evidence supporting that each of the windows had been evaluated and which window(s) had been recommended for replacement.

The HARB continued the discussion with the applicant.

KP stated that the HARB needed to first determine if the application was appropriate as presented and if not, what changes could be made to allow the HARB to recommend approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

The HARB reviewed the HARB consultant recommendations prior to making a motion. Staff and the HARB discussed that the application as presented with one over one aluminum-clad wood windows with clear glass would not be an appropriate replacement according to the Design Guidelines, and that an appropriate replacement would be in-kind if the existing windows are determined to be irreparably damaged.

Recommendation(s):

The appropriate treatment is for the existing stained-glass windows to be repaired, restored, and reused. Additional professional assessments and quotes should be completed to determine the feasibility of restoration of the existing stained-glass windows and/or support the finding of irreparable damage and required replacement. Windows that are irreparably damaged should be replaced in-kind.

Action

Motion to deny as no acceptable evidence has been presented to support that all windows are irreparably damaged and that replacement windows should be in-kind made by HARB member Glenn Lichtenwalner, motion was seconded by HARB member AJ Jordan. Motion carried with unanimous support.