

Historical Architectural Review Board COA Preliminary Review Sheet

HDC-2024-00087

Address: 1118 Chew Street

District: Old Allentown Historic District

Owner: Johnny Ibraheem

Applicant: Madrag LLC DBA 101 Mobility

Proposal: Vertical platform lift and porch overbuild.

Building Description: This 2½-story brick row house, ca 1892 is Eastlake in style. The gable roof has a dormer with scalloped wood above the window, asphalt shingles and a single chimney. The windows are 1/1 sash with Eastlake lintels and a fan shape of bricks topping the lintels. The main entry is a single modern door. The front porch is wood on concrete with metal railing and shingle roof.

Project Description:

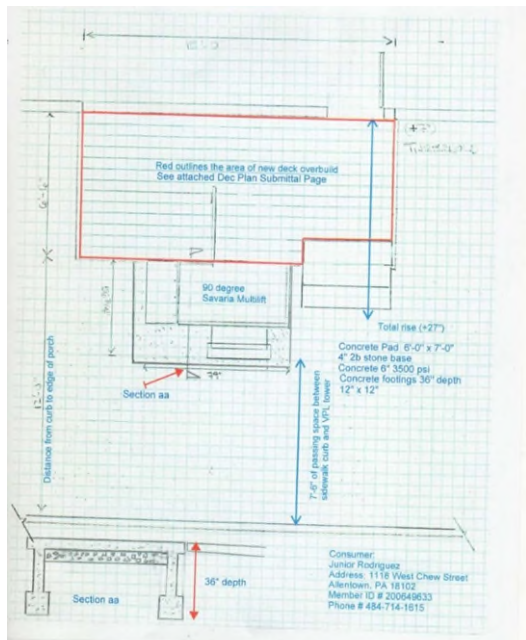
The application is for modifications at the front of the house to create an accessible entry, including the installation of a vertical platform lift, porch overbuild, and concrete pad.



Front Elevation (Applicant)



Existing Entry (Applicant)



Proposed Plan (Applicant)



Proposed Lift (Applicant)

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Applicable Guidelines:

Section 3.7 – Porches & Steps

3.7.3 Repair and restore existing porches and steps whenever possible. Salvage, repair, and reuse existing components including deck floor boards, railings, balusters, posts, and decorative trim. Repair and restore basement level windows or metal grates that are part of the porch base.

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.

3.7.6 Consider restoration of previously altered porches with historically appropriate elements. Consult historic photographs to identify the original appearance. If the building is part of a pair or an attached row that was designed together, consult nearby buildings for examples.

3.7.7 Replace porches only if repair and select replacement is not feasible. A full demolition and rebuild is rarely necessary except in cases of severe deterioration and life safety concerns. Replicate the original design as closely as possible, allowing for structural and code requirements. Install flashing and waterproofing at all connections between the porch and main building.

3.7.8 If in-kind replacement is not feasible, replace with appropriate alternate materials that respect the original appearance and are durable. Composite wood decking is an appropriate alternate for tongue-and-groove wood floors if boards are similar to the original dimensions. Ceramic tile, carpet, or cementitious coatings over wood are not appropriate floor materials. Steel, iron, and aluminum railings are acceptable replacements. Vinyl railings and trim are not appropriate alternate materials for wood elements. Use of dimensional lumber for visible parts of a porch is not appropriate.

3.7.9 Avoid enclosing historically open porches on primary and highly visible facades. Enclosure with glass or screens at rear or non-visible features may be acceptable. Enclosure with walls or opaque materials is not recommended. Avoid removing, altering, or covering historic details.

3.7.10 Avoid removing a historic porch roof or full porch. Removal will negatively impact the building's historic character. Consult with Planning Staff and HARB about the reason for removal (i.e. cause of deterioration). A porch that was added after the original construction of a building may have gained significance in its own right. Porches can be appropriate for the building as a reflection of its development over time and as an expression of a later architectural style.

Observations & Comments:

This application began as a staff review. Given the modifications proposed to the porch on the primary façade, staff recommended HARB review to come to appropriate solution that assists in creating barrier-free access to the entry.

Providing an accessible entry at the primary entrance to the building is appropriate and recommended. The existing railing is called to be removed to accommodate the lift installation, and the applicant noted that the railing will be salvaged and reused. 1"x 4" pressure treated decking with dimensional framing below is proposed to raise the existing porch height to be in line with the doorway and lift. Guidelines Section 3.7.8 says "composite wood decking is an appropriate alternate to tongue and groove wood floors... Use of dimensional lumber for visible parts of a porch is not appropriate."

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The proposed 1"x4" pressure treated decking would not be appropriate per the Guidelines. Salvaging and reinstalling the existing porch decking would be most appropriate. Alternatively, composite decking to match the original profile and dimension as closely as possible would be appropriate.

Reinstalling the existing railing is appropriate and maintains the historic character of the primary façade and porch. Reinstalling the railing to maintain the existing dimension from top of porch to top of railing would be appropriate.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommend approval with the following conditions:

- The existing porch decking is removed and reinstalled at the new raised height. Alternatively, composite decking to match the original in dimension as close as possible would be appropriate.
- The existing railing is reinstalled at the new raised height to maintain the existing dimension of railing height relative to the porch floor.

Presenters:

- Ms. Baade presented the application to HARB
- Michel Ragland and Lauren Ragland represented the application.

Discussion:

The applicant noted that they would prefer to use the composite decking, rather than reusing the existing decking, since they do not know the current condition.

Mr. Jordan noted that the HARB is not ruling on the lift itself, but rather the impact of the existing structure. The applicant noted that the decking will need to be raised in height to be flush with the door threshold. A railing will also be installed at the new height.

The applicant noted that this is a service they are providing for Pennsylvania Medicaid, who will also review whatever is decided.

Mr. Jordan asked if ramping was explored, but the applicant noted that a ramp was not feasible given the rise. Mr. Huber asked if any other solution was explored that might not impact the historic materials. Many alternative options were discussed in lieu of the proposed design. Ms. Baade recommended removing the entire section of railing, rather than altering the railing in one small section. In preserving as much of the existing historic material as possible, maintaining the existing railing at the existing height, and removing only the section required to accommodate the liftgate was viewed as the best solution.

If height of handrail needs to be extended, a simple handrail extension behind the historic railing at the appropriate height that could be removed at a later date.

Actions: Mr. Jordan made a motion to approve, with conditions, the application presented on November 4, 2024 for the front porch modifications to accommodate an accessible lift at 1118 Chew Street, with the following conditions agreed to by the applicant, following sections of the Guidelines for Historic Districts: Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches and 3.14 Accessibility and Code Required Work, and find no circumstances unique to the property:

- A composite decking to match the original in dimension be installed without affecting the surrounding railings.
- The existing configuration and materials of railings outside the liftgate entrance be preserved.
- Any code-required handrail height adjustment be addressed through the installation of a simple, reversible handrail extension mounted to on the porch-side of the existing railing and be submitted for staff review and approval based on Guidelines Chapter 3, Section 3.7-Porches and Steps.
- The composite decking material sample submitted for review and approved by staff based on Guidelines for Historic Districts Chapter 3, Section 3.7-Porches and Steps.

Mr. Hart seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.