

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

HDC-2023-00028

Address: 604 N. 6th Street

District: Old Fairgrounds Historic District

Applicant: Henry and Maria Vargas, owners

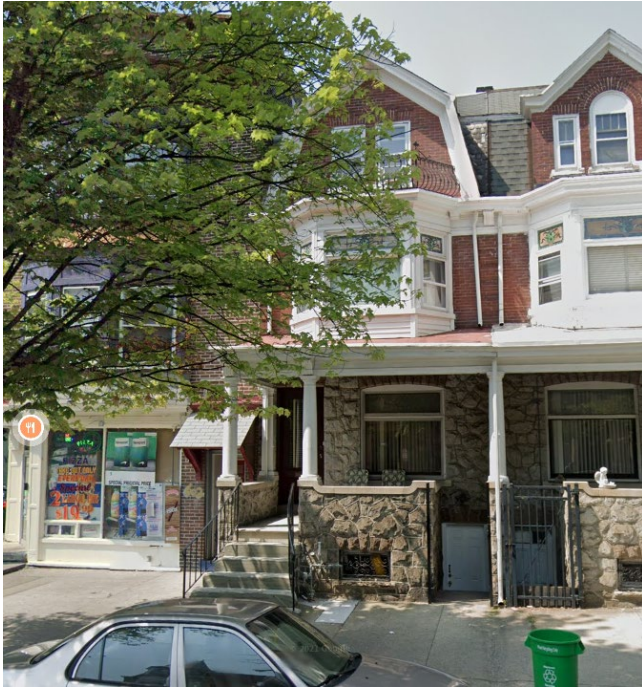
Proposal: Legalize cement repair at steps (violation correction)

Building Description:

This 3-story brick row house, c. 1915 is a porch house. The 3rd floor mansard roof has slate shingles and a shared chimney, there is a projecting gambrel roof line with two 1/1 sash windows with brick lintels and a decorative curved metal railing above the 2nd floor bay window. The bay window has a large center window and two smaller windows with stained glass transoms. The front porch is concrete with stone knee walls and columns. There is a basement window, a below ground grocer's alley door and stone steps with wrought iron railings. There is a single garage at the rear of the property.

Project Description:

On May 12, 2023, staff issued a notice of violation for the cementing of the front stone steps leading to the porch. This application seeks to legalize the cement repair.



**Front façade of 604 N. 6th Street, 2021.
(Google StreetView)**



**Detail of the stone steps prior to the concrete repair, 2021.
(Google StreetView)**



**Photo showing the damage sustained following an accident before the coating was applied.
(Applicant)**



**Detail of the stone steps following the cement repair, 2023.
(HARB files)**

Applicable Guidelines:

Chapter 3.3 – Masonry

3.3.3 Repair and restore existing stone masonry. Attempt to repair deteriorated or damaged areas prior to replacement. Appropriate repairs include repointing, crack repair, Dutchman repairs (in-kind localized patching), and patching with compatible compounds. New masonry unit should match the existing in type of stone, color, profile, dimension, and surface texture.

Chapter 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.

3.7.8 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.

Observations & Comments:

The owner contends that the steps have sustained repeated damage from car accidents and noted that accidents occurred on September 11, 2021, and again on May 12, 2022. In both cases, the accidents resulted in significant damage to the steps and railings. The cementitious coating was applied as an emergency repair to the steps to address localized loss of stone and displacement of the railings.

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The cementitious repair does not comply with the design guidelines. For the type of repair needed to address the damage at the steps, Guideline 3.3.3 advises undertaking either a Dutchman repair, which would be recommended for substantial loss where the railings attach to the steps, or a patch with a compatible compound. Staff suggests testing the feasibility of removing the cementitious coating from the steps to determine whether removal would result in additional damage. If removal is possible, staff recommends a combination of Dutchman repairs and a patching compound such as Jahn Mortar by Cathedral Stone.

Staff Recommendation:

Denial of the legalization of the cementitious coating, provided removal does not result in further damage, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.3 Masonry and Section 3.7 Porches & Steps. If the coating cannot be removed without causing damage, staff recommends approval of the coating, with the stipulation that an appropriate repair be made when the current coating fails; appropriate repairs include installation of Dutchman repairs in a matching stone and patching with a compatible patching compound.

HARB Discussion:

The HARB agreed with the staff recommendation and discussed the feasibility of removing the cement coating from the limestone treads, questioning whether removal would cause damage to the steps. Mr. Vargas stated that a binder was used to adhere the cement to the steps, and the HARB expressed concern that removal would lead to significant damage. The HARB commented that the steps were painted with an inappropriate high gloss paint in a poorly matched color and requested that an appropriate flat paint be used to match the color and texture of the top riser of the steps.

Action:

Mr. Lichtenwalner moved to approve the application presented on 6/5/2023 for the legalization of the cement repair at the steps of 604 N. 6th Street, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, with the condition that the steps be painted with an appropriate paint to match the upper riser. Mr. Encelewski seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.