



**CITY OF ALLENTOWN**

**30718**

**RESOLUTION**

**R167 – 2023**

***Introduced by the Administration on October 18, 2023***

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**Certificate of Appropriateness for work in the Historic Districts:**

- 619 N. Park St.
- 918 W. Chew St.
- 614 N. 5<sup>th</sup> St.

***Resolved by the Council of the City of Allentown, That***

**WHEREAS**, Certificates of Appropriateness are required under the provisions of the Act of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania No. 167, June 13, 1961 (P.L. 282) and City of Allentown Ordinance No. 12314; and

**WHEREAS**, the following properties whose respective owners applied for and were granted approval by the Allentown Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) to undertake specific exterior alterations on said properties as indicated in the attached Final Review Reports, which form part of this resolution:

- 619 N. Park St. (Luis Rodriguez & Suzana Romero, Owners) – Legalize porch posts and railings (violation correction)
- 918 W. Chew St. (Chelsea Capital Group LLC, Owner) – Replace slate shingles with asphalt shingles
- 614 N. 5<sup>th</sup> St. (Flor Velez, Owner) – Replace wood porch columns with fiberglass columns; reinstall window sashes with spandrel glazing or solid wood panel.


**WHEREAS**, on October 2, 2023, the Allentown HARB recommended approval of the above applications, or offered modifications which were subsequently accepted by the property owners, to City Council; and

**WHEREAS**, after reviewing the attached final review reports, it is the opinion of City Council that the proposed work is appropriate.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** by the Council of the City of Allentown that Certificates of Appropriateness are hereby granted for the above referenced work.

	Yea	Nay
Candida Affa		
Ce-Ce Gerlach	X	
Cynthia Y. Mota	X	
Santo Napoli	X	
Natalie Santos	X	
Ed Zucal	X	
Daryl Hendricks, President	X	
TOTAL	6	0

***THIS IS TO CERTIFY, That the above copy of Resolution No. 30718 was adopted by the City Council of Allentown on the 18<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2023, and is on file in the City Clerk's Office.***

  
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 City Clerk

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**HDC-2023-00065**

**Address: 614 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street**

**District: Old Fairgrounds Historic District**

**Applicant: Robert Velez, owner**

**Proposal: Replace wood porch columns with fiberglass columns; infill opening**

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**Building Description:**

This 3-story brick row house, c. 1900, is a porch house with Edwardian influences. The mansard roof has asphalt shingles, dormers, a single chimney and a two-story turret, no roof. The windows are 1/1 sash and there are visible basement window grilles. The main entry is a double-glazed door with transom on a wooden porch, the wood columns are on pedestals and a wooden balustrade railing. There are side porches, no detail.

**Project Description:**

The owner is currently working with Building Standards to address several property maintenance issues. The application includes a large scope of work to bring the property into compliance, and staff has approved some work to allow the owner to complete repairs and comply with building code requirements. The scope of work for review by the HARB includes the replacement of two wood columns at the front porch with PermaCast fiberglass columns, and the infilling of a second-story window at the side porch.



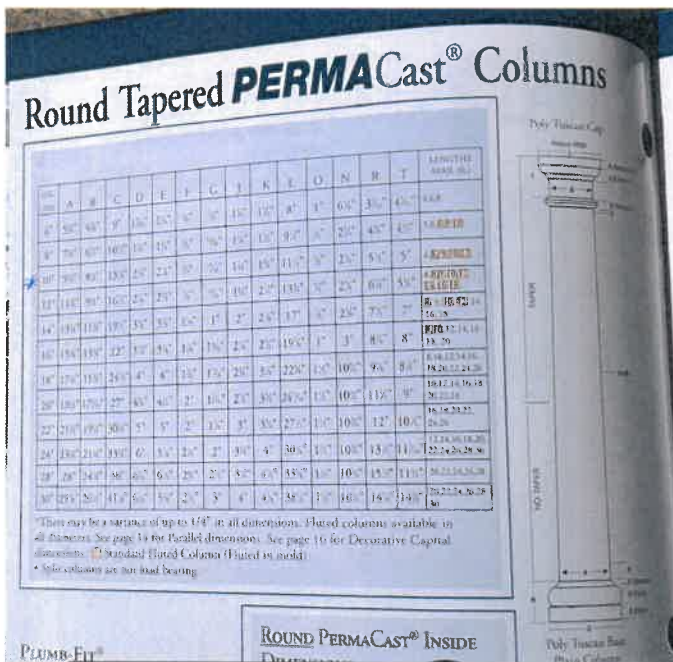
**Front façade of 614 N. 5<sup>th</sup> Street, 2021.  
(Google StreetView)**



**Porch column to be replaced, 2023.  
(Applicant)**



**Previous porch configuration, 2019.  
(Google StreetView)**



**Altered porch with new railings, 2023.  
(HARB files)**

**Applicable Guidelines:**

**Chapter 3.5 – Windows**

**3.5.7** Repair, restore, and reuse original windows prior to replacing them. Where one component of a window is deteriorated or broken, repair or replace the individual piece rather than replace the entire window unit. Repair or selectively replace in-kind existing hardware to ensure window operability, including sash cords, weights, and pulleys. Repaired windows have been shown to achieve energy performance levels comparable to replacement windows.

**3.5.8** Replace windows in-kind if original windows are deteriorated beyond feasible repair. Wood is the preferred material for most replacement windows. Replacement windows should match the original as closely as possible in material, size, type, operation, profile, and appearance. Replicate the existing dimensions of glazing, configuration of muntins, or unique decorative lites. Match sash and frame thickness and window depths. For existing non-original windows, it is preferred to replace with wood windows rather than new alternate windows.

**3.5.9** Replace windows with alternate materials if in-kind replacement is not feasible. Replacement windows must match the original as closely as possible in type, size, operation, profile, appearance, and configuration of lites and muntins. Aluminum-clad wood windows are an appropriate alternate because they can replicate the original appearance and material. Composite wood or fiberglass windows with paintable exterior surfaces can be appropriate alternates if they match the original appearance, but are not recommended from a sustainability perspective. Vinyl windows are not appropriate due to short lifespan, poor performance, and inability to match historic profiles.

**3.5.10** Preserve the ratio of window openings to solid wall surfaces. Increasing or reducing openings can impact the proportions of a facade and can look out of place within the larger streetscape. Changing the size of openings will also require a Building Permit because it changes the amount of enclosed space on a facade.

**3.5.11** Retain the historic pattern of window openings (fenestration pattern), especially on primary facades. Avoid inserting new windows into a facade or infilling existing windows. The position, number, and arrangement of windows defines the rhythm of a facade and can be a character-defining feature of an architectural style or a type of building use. If

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creating new openings or infilling existing ones is necessary for a project such as an adaptive reuse, locate openings on side or rear facades.

### **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.

**3.7.4** 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.

**3.7.7** 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.

### **Observations & Comments:**

Building Standards has inspected the property and determined that two porch columns are rotted and require replacement. The owner has provided staff with specs on matching columns in fiberglass (PermaCast) and wood. The owner noted that the wood columns are hollow, though loadbearing, and that he prefers the fiberglass columns. The proposed columns have a tapered shaft and matching components. While a material change, they would replicate the appearance of the historic. Staff finds that the columns do not comply with Guideline 3.7.4 because of the material change, but do comply with Guideline 3.7.8. Despite the material change, staff finds the proposed alternative to be compatible and acceptable.

The application also proposes to legalize an infilled second-story window along the Page Street façade, though no details have been provided. Staff considers the Page Street elevation to be a contributing secondary façade and should comply with the guidelines, which recommend against infilling openings. The owner has noted in conversation with the staff that a shower exists behind the window, and that it cannot be reopened. In conversation, the owner has suggested infilling the window with brick veneer. Because infilling the window with brick would not comply with Guidelines 3.5.10 or 3.5.11, staff suggests that a fixed double-hung sash window with opaque glass (e.g., spandrel glass) be considered to better maintain the appearance of the window and ratio of openings.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Approval of the replacement of the wood porch columns with fiberglass columns, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, but denial of the infilling of the window with brick veneer, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.5 Windows.

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### **HARB Discussion:**

The HARB discussed and agreed that the materials and appearance of the proposed fiberglass columns were appropriate. Ms. Keller then suggested spandrel glass be used to replace the glazing of the second story rear window so the window unit would not have to be replaced. Mr. Huber suggested an alternative option of inserting a wood panel behind the glass and painting it a dark gray color to give a background to the glass.

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**Action:**

Mr. Lichtenwalner moved to approve with conditions the application presented on 10/2/2023 to replace wood porch columns with fiberglass columns and to reinstall window sashes at an infilled second-story opening, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.5 Windows and Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, provided that the reinstalled window sashes have either spandrel glass or a painted panel behind the window. Mr. Huber seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.

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**HDC-2023-00063**

**Address: 619 N. Park Street**

**District: Old Fairgrounds Historic District**

**Applicant: Luis Rodriguez, owner**

**Proposal: Legalize installation of porch header, posts, and railings**

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**Building Description:**

This 3-story brick row house was constructed c. 1890. The mansard roof has slate shingles, a single dormer with two 1/1 sash windows. The first- and second-story windows are 1/1 double hung sash with segmentally arched brick lintels. Brick corbeling and a dentilated cornice separate the second and third stories. The main entry has a paneled door with a transom. The porch is concrete with metal posts and railings. There are bull-nosed concrete steps, and a basement window with a metal grille.

**Project Description:**

On August 30, 2023, a city inspector contacted staff about alterations to the front porch of the property at 619 N. Park Street. The inspector noted that the porch header, posts, and railings were recently replaced without permits. Such an alteration is structural and requires both a building permit and a certificate of appropriateness. Staff also notes that the porch has been carpeted. A formal notice of violation has not been issued to the owner, because the owner completed an application to obtain a certificate of appropriateness. This application proposes to legalize the porch header, posts, railings, and carpet.



**Front façade of 619 N. Park Street, 2018.  
(Google StreetView)**



**Metal posts and railings prior to replacement, 2018.  
(Google StreetView)**

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**Porch following replacement of the posts and railings, 2023.  
(Applicant)**



**Rear of 141 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street following removal of the porch roof, 2023.  
(HARB files)**

**Applicable Guidelines:**

**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.

**3.7.4** 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.

**3.7.8** 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 applicant purchased the property in June 2023 and contends that the work was done prior to the sale. The historic wood porch had been altered at some point in the past and metal posts and railings were installed, and the porch floor was changed from wood to concrete. The current alteration removed the inappropriate metal railings and posts. Three of the metal posts were replaced with wood, and one metal post remains. The railings were replaced with wood pickets. While the work does not replicate the historic appearance of the porch, the guidelines recommend but do not require a full



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restoration to the porch's original appearance. Guideline 3.7.6 states that applicants should “*consider* restoration of previously altered porches with historically appropriate elements.” Staff finds the installation of wood to be more appropriate than metal but contends that the materials do not reflect the architectural style of the building. The guidelines advise against altering the architectural style of the porch (p. 67). Staff suggests installing turned wood columns and balusters, and installing post brackets that approximate the porch's historic appearance and better relate to the style of the original porches in the row.

The carpet does not comply with Guideline 3.7.8 and should be removed.

### *Revisions Submitted for October 2, 2023 Meeting:*

The applicant has revised the application and is proposing to correct some of the work completed without permits by the previous owner. The application proposes to replace the railings with more appropriate wood railings and to install brackets at the top of the posts to approximate the brackets at the adjacent properties. The applicant is requesting to leave the existing wood posts in place rather than replacing them for a more appropriate post. Staff notes that the porch post shared between 619 and 621 N. Park Street was existing and matches the new posts installed at two locations within the porch of 619 N. Park Street. Staff further notes that the southernmost column was not recently replaced and is metal.

Staff contends that because the porch posts do not currently match, installing two more appropriate posts would not improve the overall appearance of the porch and would result in three different types of posts. Staff recommends installing only the proposed wood railings to legalize the work. Staff further suggests that the brackets and decorative elements proposed to be installed at the existing posts be left out of the scope, since those details are intended for turned wood columns and not the existing utilitarian posts.

Staff notes that the applicant previously agreed to remove the carpet.



**Proposed spindles for the porch railings.  
(Applicant)**



**Proposed brackets for the porch posts.  
(Applicant)**

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**Staff Recommendation:**

Approval of the proposed wood railings and legalization of the existing columns, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps.

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**HARB Discussion:**

Mr. Lichtenwalner stated that this issue with the railings is similar to another property where that property owner installed similar railings that caused the violation. In that case, he continued, the HARB allowed the owner to turn the railings around to create a different look. He asked that the existing spindles be inserted into the top rail. He then suggested that the applicant replace the metal post with a wood post to match the others that were installed. He also added that the carpet would need to be removed to correct the violation. Mr. Huber agreed with Mr. Lichtenwalner's suggestion, adding that the applicant would need to purchase a top and bottom rail, and then insert the existing spindles into them.

**Action:**

Mr. Lichtenwalner moved to approve with conditions the application presented on 10/2/2023 to legalize the installation of the porch header, posts, and railings, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.7 Porches & Steps, provided the following:

- The corner metal porch post is replaced with a solid wood post;
- The existing spindles are reused and inserted into the top and bottom rails;
- The top rail is of an appropriate size and form to fit the spindles as presented in the application;
- All wood elements are painted; and
- The carpeting is removed to expose the concrete porch floor.

Mr. Encelewski seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.

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**HDC-2023-00070**

**Address: 918 W. Chew Street**

**District: Old Allentown Historic District**

**Applicant: Francisco Lopez, Contractor**

**Proposal: Remove slate shingles; install asphalt shingles**

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**Building Description:**

This 2½-story brick row house, c. 1879, is a Federal style house. The slate gable roof has a single dormer, a double brick chimney with drip ledges and snow catchers on the roof. All the windows are 2/2 sash and the brickote has covered the lintels. The main entry is a single glazed door with a double-glazed transom.

The front porch across the entire breadth of the house has a gently curved Allentown Porch roof. The porch is wooden with wooden railings and square wooden posts. A ventilated area under the porch is screened and accessible. Case #90-54 approved the screens to be replaced with tongue and groove wood panels. There is a wooden slatted grocer's alley door next to the porch.

The Allentown Porch roof has a concave profile, covers full width of house, it is 1 of 3 adjoining Allentown Porch roofs, there are simple wood brackets with hidden rafters and asbestos shingles.

**Project Description:**

This application proposes to replace the historic roofing at the property at 918 W. Chew Street. The property retains its historic slate at the main roof, dormer roofs, and dormer cheek walls. The applicant proposes to install GAF Slateline asphalt shingles in antique slate.



**Front façade of 918 W. Chew Street, 2023.  
(Google StreetView)**



**Detail of roof, 2023.  
(Applicant)**

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**Rear roof of 918 W. Chew Street, 2023.  
(Applicant)**



**Condition of rear roof, 2023.  
(Applicant)**

**Applicable Guidelines:**

**Chapter 3.1 – Roofs**

**3.1.3** Repair and restore original and historic roofing materials whenever possible. Evaluate the condition and cost of repair of original materials before removing and replacing them. Targeted areas of repair or localized in-kind replacement may be the most effective and low-cost solution.

**3.1.6** Replace historic roofing materials in-kind whenever possible if severe deterioration makes a full replacement necessary. Replacement material should match the original in material, dimension, shape, profile, color, pattern, exposure, and overall appearance.

**3.1.7** If in-kind replacement is not feasible, replace historic roofing materials with alternate materials that resemble the original as closely as possible. Roof replacement should be sensitive to the original appearance. Replacement materials should match roof slopes or shape.

**Observations & Comments:**

The applicant contends that the existing slate roof is failing and in poor condition. Photographs show that there are displaced shingles throughout the roof. The applicant has temporarily tarped the roof to prevent water infiltration.

The application proposes to install GAF Slateline shingles, which are an appropriate alternate that generally matches the existing slate in dimension, shape, profile, color, exposure, and overall appearance. Staff finds that the proposed shingle complies with the guidelines in Section 3.1 Roofs.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approval, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.1 Roofs.

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**HARB Discussion:**

The HARB discussed the shape of the proposed GAF Slateline asphalt shingles and what appeared to be an exaggerated taper, which the design guidelines discourage. However, the HARB agreed that previous approvals had been given to similar applications for the same shingle and that the shingle is an appropriate replacement for historic slate. would need to be removed to correct the violation. Mr. Huber agreed with Mr. Lichtenwalner's suggestion, adding that the applicant would need to purchase a top and bottom rail, and then insert the existing spindles into them.

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**Action:**

Mr. Jordan moved to approve the application presented on 10/2/2023 for removing slate shingles and installing asphalt shingles at 918 W. Chew Street, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.1 Roofs. Mr. Huber seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.