

Historical Architectural Review Board

COA Final Review Sheet

HDV-2022-00003

Address: 1118 W. Turner Street

District: Old Allentown Historic District

Applicant: Ramie Batihk

Proposal: Legalize PVC pipes at Poplar Street façade (Violation Correction)

Building Description:

This three-story brick row house, ca. 1910, is Edwardian in style. The mansard roof has slate shingles, projecting eaves which have been covered with aluminum, a turret and tent roof. The first floor has a picture window with stained glass transom. There is an aluminum covered oriel window and 1/1 sash windows on the second and third floors. A concrete stoop which has been covered with stonecote leads to a single-glazed main door.

Project Description:

This application proposes to legalize the installation of PVC pipes on the Poplar Street façade of 1118 W. Turner Street. The pipes were installed to ventilate a basement heating system. While the contractor obtained a building permit to install the heating system, the permit application failed to note that any exterior alteration would be required. The contractor did not apply for the required Certificate of Appropriateness for the exterior alteration. Staff contacted the owner on May 6, 2022 via email to inform him that such an alteration is inappropriate and requires a COA. After no action was taken, staff sent a Notice of Violation on November 15, 2022.



Poplar Street elevation of 1118 W. Turner Street, 2019.
(Google StreetView)



PVC pipes installed at 1118 W. Turner Street, November 2022.
(Staff)

Applicable Guidelines:

Chapter 3.8 – Mechanical & Utility Equipment

3.8.7 Limit the number of new penetrations when designing a new or updated system. Penetrations, whether located on a roof or exterior wall, increase the risk of water infiltration and damage to the building envelope. Properly flash and waterproof all new penetrations.

3.8.8 Minimize the visibility of vents and penetrations at primary facades and from the public right-of-way. Locate rooftop vents and penetrations on rear roofs, rear or non-visible roof slopes, or conceal behind chimneys. Minimize the visibility of vents in eave soffits or wall penetrations through sensitive placement, material and color selection, and painting. Place ground-level pipes and vents in rear yards and along non-visible facades.

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3.8.9 Consider reusing existing lines and vents when designing or upgrading the system, if there is sufficient capacity. Using existing vents reduces the disturbance of historic materials and avoids unnecessary penetrations in the building envelope.

Observations & Comments:

The PVC pipes were installed in a highly visible location on a contributing secondary façade. Staff recommends considering alternative venting solutions, such as venting through the roof or at the rear of the property. If the pipes cannot be relocated, staff recommends considering a flush vent painted to match the masonry. The current venting configuration does not comply with the venting design guidelines in Chapter 3.8 of the historic district design guidelines, which state that “gooseneck exhaust pipes or similar should not be located on visible facades and roof slopes” (page 70).

Staff Recommendation:

Denial, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.8 Mechanical & Utility Equipment, with the recommendation that more appropriate venting options be explored.

HARB Discussion:

Mr. Jordan stated that at the last meeting, the HARB considered various venting options and found that most were infeasible. He noted that the most likely possibility would be a flush vent option, adding that there was debate over whether it would meet code.

Ms. Ibrahim responded that the contractor evaluated the chimney and determined it was not healthy and could not be used to vent the heating system. She commented that the contractor submitted a photo of a low exterior vent that could be installed in place of the PVC pipes, but that it may not meet code and could lead to ice on the sidewalk. She contended that the most feasible option would be to run pipes at the interior of the building and install a vent through the wall where the existing PVC pipes vent.

Mr. Jordan commented that a low vent could be installed where the pipes are currently punched through the building, adding that it may or may not meet code, or the pipes could be vented higher as Ms. Ibrahim mentioned. He advocated for the HARB to approve two options based on what code allows: one being a low flush-mount vent just above the building's base, and the second being a flush-mount vent located further up the wall. Mr. Huber agreed with the two options.

Ms. Keller remarked that if the HARB approves the two options and the applicant must remove the PVC pipes and install a flush-mount vent above the current penetration that the applicant patch the existing hole with masonry to match the brick rather than cementing or patching the hole with an inappropriate material.

Action:

Mr. Jordan moved to approve with conditions the application presented on 2/6/2023 for the legalization of the PVC pipes at 1118 W. Turner Street, as agreed to by the applicant and with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.8 Mechanical & Utility Equipment, provided the following:

- A flush-mount vent in a color to match the surrounding masonry is installed at the current penetration;
- Or that the pipes are installed at the building's interior and a flush-mount vent in a color to match the surrounding masonry is installed at the appropriate venting height, with the current penetration to be infilled with appropriately matched brick and a compatible mortar.

Mr. Jordan noted that there are unique circumstances owing to the unique sidewalk conditions on Poplar Street. Mr. Huber seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.