

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

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**HDC-2023-00004**

**Address: 735 Oak Street**

**District: Old Allentown Historic District**

**Applicant: Christine Steighner, Suntuity Solar**

**Proposal: Install solar panels**

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**Building Description:**

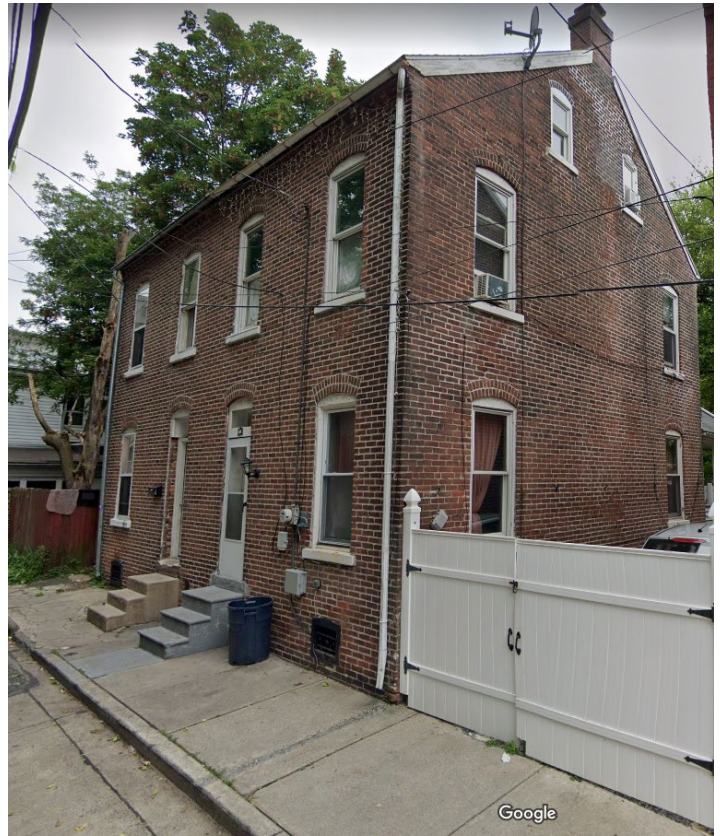
This two-story brick twin house, ca 1891, is Eastlake in style. The gable roof has asphalt shingles, a dentilated cornice, and a single chimney with drip ledges. The side yard has an iron fence. [Staff notes that the fence has been replaced prior to 2019, presumably without a COA.] The windows are 1/1 sash with Eastlake frames. The main entry is a single door with Eastlake transom. The building features a concrete stoop with a decorative basement window grille. A semi-enclosed porch exists at the rear.

**Project Description:**

This application proposes to install solar panels on the roof of the property at 735 Oak Street. The two-and-a-half-story twin building has a gable roof and is separated from the property to the east by a private driveway. The rear of the property is not visible from a public right-of-way. A six-panel solar array is proposed at the front slope of the roof, with a four-panel array proposed at the rear. The disconnect would be located at the front with the utility meter.

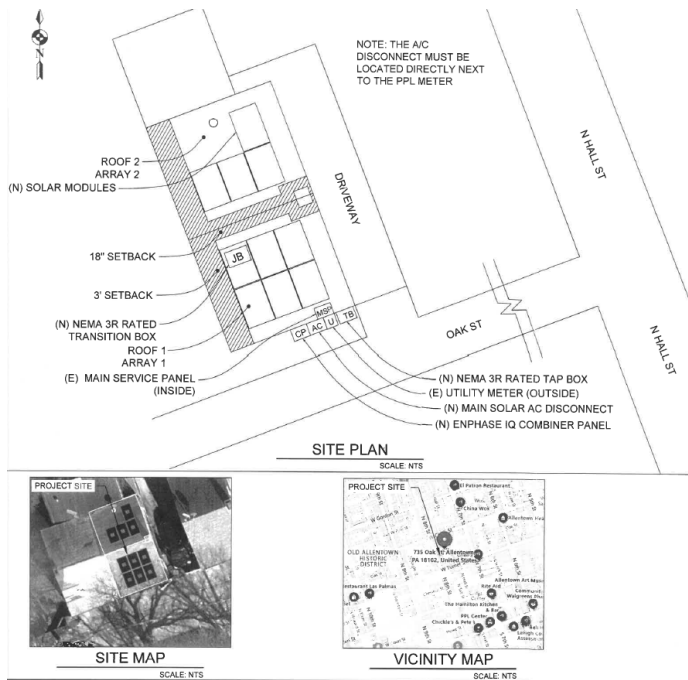


**Front façade of 735 Oak Street, 2019.  
(Google StreetView)**

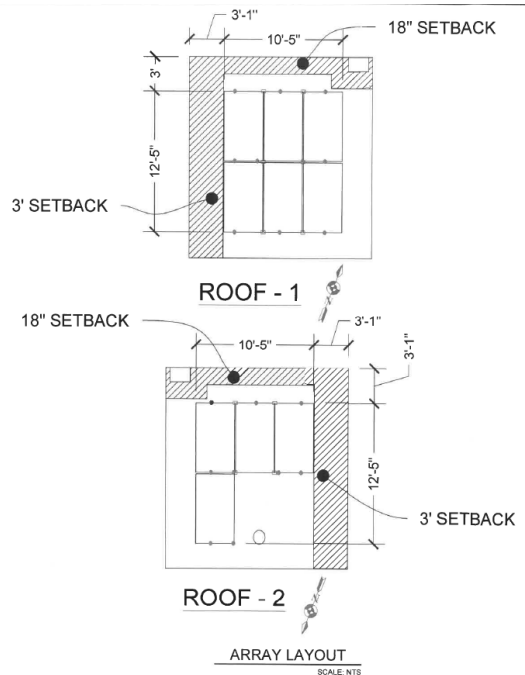


**Front and side of 735 Oak Street, 2019.  
(Google StreetView)**

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Site plan.  
(Applicant)



Array layout.  
(Applicant)

## Applicable Guidelines:

### Chapter 3.10 – Solar Energy and Energy Improvements

**3.10.3** Minimize visibility of solar panels, mounting equipment, and necessary mechanical equipment from the public right-of-way. For pitched roofs, locate solar collectors on rear roof slopes whenever possible. For pitched roofs where all slopes are visible, locate collectors as far back from the street as possible. For flat roofs, locate collectors as far back from the top of street-facing facades as possible.

**3.10.4** Attach solar collectors or other equipment in the least invasive method feasible so that the alteration is reversible in the future.

**3.10.5** Install solar collectors or equipment as flat as possible to the surface where they are installed. Placement parallel to the roof surface is encouraged. If a horizontal or vertical tilt is required for functionality, adjust the pitch to use the smallest angle possible.

**3.10.6** Choose energy systems, mounting equipment, and necessary mechanical equipment in a color compatible with existing roof materials whenever possible and with non-reflective finishes.

## Observations & Comments:

The 6-panel solar array at the front slope would have a 5'-9" setback from the front façade with a 3' setback from the side façade where the private driveway is located. The solar panels would project 6" off the roof and would likely be visible from Oak Street. Staff recommends installing a mock-up of the proposed array at this location to determine visibility. The solar panels should be inconspicuous from the public right-of-way to comply with the guidelines. Staff also suggests that the disconnect and associated utilities be moved off the front façade to a less conspicuous location, if possible.

Staff finds that the solar array proposed at the rear would not be visible from a right-of-way and complies with the guidelines.

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### **Staff Recommendation:**

Approval, provided a mockup shows that the array on the front roof slope is inconspicuous from Oak Street, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.10 Solar Energy and Energy Improvements.

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### **HARB Discussion:**

Mr. Jordan agreed with the staff recommendation, adding that there is no guidance in the guidelines about installing solar arrays on historic slate roofs, though he noted that that is not a consideration in this application. He then commented that staff suggested moving the utilities to a secondary façade, though it was not in the actual recommendation. He asked whether the HARB would be interested in pursuing that option. Mr. Huber affirmed that the utilities should be moved but contended that the HARB cannot require that existing utilities be moved. Ms. Keller stated that the disconnect for the solar panels needs to be installed with the existing utility meter, adding that utility companies can move meters off building facades and that she could write a letter to make the request. She then clarified that the HARB cannot explicitly regulate utility meters, so if the utility company is unwilling or unable to relocate the meters, the disconnect associated with the solar panels would need to be installed on the front façade. The HARB agreed.

The HARB discussed having the applicant install a mockup for staff to review for visibility of the panel proposed for the front roof slope.

### **Action:**

Mr. Hart moved to approve with conditions the application presented on 2/6/2023 for the installation of solar panels at 735 Oak Street, as agreed to by the applicant and with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.10 Solar Energy and Energy Improvements, provided the utility meters are moved to a secondary façade and a mockup shows that the solar panels proposed at the front slope are inconspicuous from the right-of-way. Mr. Huber seconded the motion, which carried with unanimous support.