

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

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**HDC-2023-00031**

**Address: 449 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street**

**District: Old Allentown Historic District**

**Applicant: Muhammad Aqib Zafar, owner**

**Proposal: Replace windows and doors**

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**Building Description:**

The building is a two-and-a-half-story, mixed-use corner row house. It was constructed ca. 1885 and is late Federal in style with Eastlake-influenced details. The building is painted brick laid in running bond and has a side-gable roof with a prominent single dormer. The roof and dormer are clad in asphalt shingles, and there is a bracketed cornice with low-relief decorative frieze panels. There is a side chimney along the Liberty Street façade. The windows are 1/1 sash at the second and attic stories, with a ground-story storefront window. Second story windows have projecting sills and rectangular lintels with incised carving. The main commercial entry has been inserted at the corner and features a paneled door with an infilled transom. The Liberty Street façade features a storefront window, and the remainder of the elevation contains many one-over-one single and tripartite windows. The first-story contains two sets of stairs and three door openings.

**Project Description:**

On May 9, 2023, Planning & Zoning staff received a change of use application for the first-story retail space. Staff reviewed the plans, which included no work to the exterior except the replacement of a light fixture over the main entry door. Staff then received a complaint from a member of the public about unpermitted work at the property. Staff learned that the owner installed vinyl windows, new storefront windows, and new doors. While a violation has not formally been issued, the applicant is seeking to obtain approval for the work that has been completed.



**Front façade of 449 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 2019.  
(Google StreetView)**



**Liberty Street façade, 2021.  
(Google StreetView)**

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**Aluminum entry door.  
(Applicant)**



**Aluminum storefront window.  
(Applicant)**



**Fiberglass door at Liberty Street façade.  
(Applicant)**



**Vinyl windows at Liberty Street façade.  
(Applicant)**

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### 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.

**3.5.15** Replace deteriorated window trim or decorative elements only as necessary to match the size, profile, and material of the original elements. For window lintels or hoods that project from the façade plane and are vulnerable to water collection, consider installing metal drip edges to shed water away from windows. Copper is recommended and should be left to weather naturally; aluminum is acceptable and should be painted to match surrounding materials. Avoid encasing wood sills with metal or vinyl, as they will trap moisture and may cause more damage.

#### **Chapter 3.6 – Doors**

**3.6.5** Repair and restore historic doors whenever possible rather than replace them. Historic doors include front doors, rear doors, and grocer's alley doors. Original materials should not be discarded. If repair and reuse is not possible, salvage may be an option and the existing feature used as a template for replication.

**3.6.6** Repair, restore, and reuse existing door frames, jambs, threshold, fixed transoms, and similar components. Existing components are usually historic wood. Replace in-kind if existing materials are severely deteriorated. Replicate the profile and width of door frames, jambs, and transoms in order to preserve the solid-to-void ratio of the entrance.

**3.6.8** Replace doors in-kind if repair is not feasible. Replacement doors should duplicate the original in material, design, size, profile, and operation. Original doors may be used as a template for replication. Wood is the most appropriate material for residential doors. Paneled wood doors should have the same number, size, and profile of panels as the historic door. If the original design is unknown, the building's style and date of construction should inform the appropriate replacement.

**3.6.9** Replace with durable alternate materials if in-kind replacement is not feasible. Composite wood doors and fiberglass doors are acceptable replacements if new doors match the original in size, style, configuration, detail, and appearance. However, these products are not recommended from a sustainability perspective. They have shorter lifespan and deteriorate when exposed to moisture, weathering, and temperature variation. For replacement doors, avoid metal doors (including metal doors that imitate paneled wood), as they do not have the same appearance and texture of historic wood. Avoid pre-hung doors (doors that are purchased already installed in a frame) when replacing a door, because these require the removal of historic fabric and can change the size of the opening.

**3.6.10** Preserve the size of the existing door opening. New doors should be custom sized if necessary. Avoid enlarging or filling in original door openings to fit new stock sizes. This alteration will impact the historic character of the building. This action will also require a Building Permit because it changes the amount of enclosed space on a façade.



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### Chapter 3.13 – Commercial Storefronts

**3.13.2** Preserve the historic pattern of the storefront and façade, such as the location of the entrance, the size and number of display windows, configuration of display windows and transoms, and recessed entrances.

**3.13.3** Repair and restore historic storefront materials and features whenever possible.

**3.13.4** Replace in-kind any materials, features, or components of storefronts that are irreparably damaged or missing. In-kind replacements should match the original in material, size, profile, and appearance.

**3.13.5** Consider removing non-historic alterations that are not consistent with the original design of the storefront and overall architectural style. Consult available information such as historic photographs to inform the restoration of a façade.

**3.13.9** Where a historic storefront no longer exists, greater flexibility in design and materials is possible. An alternative design that is a contemporary interpretation of the historic storefront may be considered. A new storefront should be compatible with the historic building and the streetscape. Simple designs that respond to the rhythm and proportion of the building façade and/or interpret visible patterns on the block are usually the most appropriate. Consider referencing the surrounding context and related architectural style of the building with regards to proportion, placement, and scale.

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### **Observations & Comments:**

The property at 449 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street historically functioned as a residence. Over time, it was converted into a corner commercial property, and numerous ground-story alterations were made to accommodate the commercial use. The rear roof slope was removed, and a large three-story addition was constructed at the rear of the building along Liberty Street at some point in the past, likely in the mid-twentieth century. Further alterations to the storefront are visible through the installation of infill panels above the existing storefront windows, and the infilled transom above the main entry door. In 2017, the City of Allentown pursued a violation for alterations to the storefront windows, which included the modification of a single pane to the four-pane configuration. The violation went to court but was never corrected. The series of alterations have left the building with relatively low historic integrity.

#### *Storefront Windows:*

Staff finds the proposed configuration to be appropriate, given that the window openings are highly altered and have no historic significance. Staff also finds aluminum to be acceptable because of the size, location, and commercial purpose of the windows. Because of the significant build-down and infill, staff considers the historic storefront to have been removed and notes that Guideline 3.13.9 allows for greater flexibility in design and materials. Staff finds the new configuration to be consistent with other storefronts in the immediate area.

#### *Storefront Door:*

The previous door system included a wood paneled door with non-original trim and an infilled transom that extended over the top rail of the door. The new aluminum door system has been moved forward to align with the infill panel above. Staff questions whether the historic transom remains behind the infill panel. If no transom exists, staff finds the new configuration to be acceptable. However, if the transom does exist, staff recommends installing a wood door that matches the replaced door and that is installed in the plane of the historic transom.

#### *Liberty Street Door:*

One pre-hung fiberglass door was installed on the Liberty Street façade. The design guidelines advise against pre-hung doors because they build down openings. Staff recommends installing an appropriately-sized (not pre-hung) six-panel door in wood, composite wood, or fiberglass to comply with Guideline 3.6.9.

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### *Liberty Street Windows:*

The vinyl windows on the Liberty Street façade are inappropriate and do not comply with Guideline 3.5.9. Staff also notes that the mullions in the tripartite windows should be wood. Owing to the expense of complete replacement, staff suggests that a compromise be reached. Staff recommends that the HARB consider one of the following options:

1. Allow a phased replacement program to be implemented, where the first-story windows are replaced within one year, the second-story windows are replaced within three years, and the third-story windows are replaced within five years. Replacement windows should be wood, aluminum clad wood, or a composite.
2. Require the first-story windows to be replaced with wood, aluminum clad wood, or a composite, while the upper-story windows remain in violation with the note that any future replacement will need to be wood, aluminum clad wood, or a composite.

### **Staff Recommendation:**

Approval of the storefront windows, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.13 Commercial Storefronts; denial of the vinyl windows with the suggestion that a phased replacement program be explored, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.5 Windows; denial of the Liberty Street door, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.6 Doors; and approval of the storefront door, provided the historic transom no longer exists, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.13 Commercial Storefronts.

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### **HARB Discussion:**

The HARB discussed the vinyl windows along the Liberty Street façade, contending that the vinyl windows do not comply with the design guidelines in Section 3.5. The HARB noted that the staff presented two options for legalization, including a five-year phased approach, which would offer the applicant ample time to replace the windows and bring the building into compliance.

Mr. Zafar expressed concern over the financial impact of having to replace the newly installed vinyl windows. He stated that he obtained building permits for all work requiring permits. Ms. Keller noted that a certificate of appropriateness is required for all exterior work to properties in historic districts, though that work may not require a building permit. She commented that window replacement generally does not require a building permit from Building Standards and Safety, provided the dimensions of the opening do not change, but it would still require a certificate of appropriateness.

The HARB reviewed the Liberty Street door and found that the door also does not comply with Section 3.6 of the guidelines, since the guidelines do not permit pre-hung doors that build down openings. The HARB contended that the door would need to be replaced with an appropriately-sized door.

The HARB found that the commercial storefront windows and door comply with the guidelines, since the openings were highly altered in the past.

### **Action:**

Mr. Lichtenwalner moved to approve the application presented on 6/5/2023 for the legalization of the storefront windows, storefront door, and Liberty Street windows and door at 449 N. 10<sup>th</sup> Street, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.5 Windows, Section 3.6 Doors, and Section 3.13 Commercial Storefronts, with the following conditions:

- The transom at the storefront door is investigated to see if there was a historic transom and that it be replaced with a new transom to match the aluminum door system.
- The vinyl windows along Liberty Street be replaced with wood, aluminum-clad wood, or composite windows under a phased program in which the owner must replace the first-story windows within one year, the second-story windows within three years, and the third-story windows within five years.
- The pre-hung door at the Liberty Street elevation be removed and a new door that meets the design guidelines be installed within the original opening.

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