

Historical Architectural Review Board

COA Final Review Sheet

HDC-2023-00045

Address: 449 N. 10th Street

District: Old Allentown Historic District

Applicant: Muhammad Aqib Zafar, owner

Proposal: Install signage at storefront

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:

This application proposes to install two non-illuminated 2-foot by 4-foot vinyl signs above the storefront windows of the property at 449 N. 10th Street.



Front façade of 449 N. 10th Street, 2019.
(Google StreetView)



Proposed location of signage.
(Applicant)



Proposed signage.
(Applicant)

Applicable Guidelines:

Chapter 3.13 – Commercial Storefronts

3.13.12 Locate new signs in historically appropriate locations, such as the sign band directly below a cornice or the ends of a façade at the second story.

3.13.14 Attach signs in a method that does not damage historic materials. For signs attached to a masonry façade, anchors should be placed in mortar joints, not in the masonry unit. Installations should be reversible and should only require minor repairs or patches if removed in the future.

3.13.15 Scale signs to be compatible with the proportions and scale of the storefront and building. Compatible proportions should minimize the visual impact of the sign when looking at the building or streetscape. Small signs are usually the most appropriate. The size of signs and lettering should prioritize pedestrians rather than vehicles. Text heights between 6 and 12 inches is generally recommended.

3.13.16 For wall or projecting signs, use simple shapes and profiles such as ovals and rectangles. Shaped signs that relate to the business use may be appropriate on a case-by-case basis but are usually not recommended.

3.13.18 For window signs (surface-applied or painted), maintain the transparency of the window by using lettering and/or logos without a solid background. High transparency lettering and window-applied signage helps to minimize the visual impact to the building and street. Solid backgrounds are not encouraged but are not prohibited. An advantage to windows signs is that they are easily reversible and do not damage historic materials.

3.13.21 Use high-quality and durable materials. Wood was the most common material historically for signs, especially projecting and hanging signs, and is appropriate. Metal brackets and hardware are appropriate. Metal lettering and signs,

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pigmented glass, and painted lettering are also appropriate. Box signs are not recommended, and internally-illuminated box signs are not permitted by the Zoning Ordinance. Avoid vinyl and plastic lettering and signs.

Observations & Comments:

At its June 21, 2023 meeting, City Council adopted the HARB's recommendation to legalize the storefront windows and door, and to require a phased replacement program of the vinyl windows at the Liberty Street façade. The applicant is returning to get approval for signage to be installed above the storefront window at the N. 10th Street façade.

The proposed signs comply with Guidelines 3.13.12, 3.13.14, 3.13.15, and 3.13.16, because they would appropriately located above the storefront windows, would be easily reversible with no damage to historic fabric, and are of a size and scale that are appropriate for the building. However, the signs, proposed to be vinyl stickers, do not comply with Guideline 3.13.21, which recommends a high-quality and durable material. However, the guidelines do allow for surface-applied window signs with high transparency in a material similar to what is proposed. Staff recommends one of the following to comply with the design guidelines:

1. Print or paint the signs on wood or metal; or
2. Install surface-applied signs within the transom of the storefront windows.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval, provided the signs are metal or wood, or the proposed signs are installed within the transom of the storefront windows, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Chapter 3, Section 3.13 Commercial Storefronts.

HARB Discussion:

The HARB discussed where the signage should be installed. Mr. Jordan suggested limiting the signage to the space below the former lintel. Mr. Huber stated that the signage could be installed within the upper pane of glass within the storefront window or on a wood sign above. Mr. Jordan read the staff recommendation, stating that the HARB seemed to be in agreement with the staff, but added that the sign should be centered above the storefront windows but below the former lintel. The applicant agreed to the HARB's comments and presented a revised signage plan that satisfies the design guidelines.

Action:

Mr. Jordan moved to approve the application presented on 7/10/2023 for the installation of signage at the storefront of 449 N. 10th Street, with the staff to review details, pursuant to chapter 3, Section 3.13 Commercial Storefronts, with the following conditions agreed to by the applicant:

- Install surface-applied signs within the transom of the storefront windows; or
- Print or paint signs on wood or metal and center the sign vertically and horizontally within the space below the former lintel line between the first and second stories.

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