

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

Department of Housing, Economic Development & Commerce
Division of City Planning



Interdepartmental Memorandum

DATE: 2/5/2024
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Maggie O'Neill, Senior Historic Preservation Specialist
CC: Jonathan Rekstad, Esq., HPC Counsel
Jennifer Bogdanski, Esq., Applicant
Temple Beth-El, Owner
/File
RE: Case H-23-0183 and H-23-0184
2419 Jon F. Kennedy Blvd
Block: 17702/27
Zone: R-3/RH-1/West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District Overlay

I. PLANS AND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Historic Preservation Application, submitted November 17, 2023
2. Architectural Plans by Landau | Zinder Architecture, most recently revised 11-17-2023 entitled *Submission D [Canopy] 2419 John F. Kennedy Boulevard Jersey City NJ 07304*
3. Architectural Plans by Landau | Zinder Architecture, most recently revised 11-17-2023 entitled *Submission E [Areaway Fencing] 2419 John F. Kennedy Boulevard Jersey City NJ 07304*
4. *Temple Beth-El Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission Submission Review Report* prepared by Heritage Consulting Group dated February 2024.
5. Front Photos (10 page, undated)
6. Rear Photos (9 page, undated)

II. PROJECT & PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

The property has been owned by Temple Beth-El (herein referred to as "The Owner") since February of 1922, when the land was purchased for the construction of the Temple. Temple Beth-El has been an established congregation in Jersey City for over 150 years.

Per the submitted application and plans prepared by Landau | Zinder Architecture, most recently revised 11-17-2023 entitled *Submission D [Canopy] 2419 John F. Kennedy Boulevard Jersey City NJ 07304*, the applicant is seeking two Certificates of Appropriateness for the installation of two canopies (one at the north side of the building and one at the south) and the installation of a 6' tall areaway fence, also at the north and south sides of the building, at 2419 John F. Kennedy Blvd, a key-contributing, altered, two-story, five-bay, Byzantine Revival Style temple constructed in 1925

The application and submitted plans were deemed complete by HPC Staff on December 15, 2023. The applicant has also applied for additional work to the building, which was

approved under a series of Certificates of No Effect. Most of the additional work was restoration work due to damage sustained during Hurricane Ida. Approvals included interior renovations (basement), non-primary façade window replacement, side-yard fencing replacement, interior elevator installation, and security upgrades at the façade. All work approved under separate applications, as well as the work proposed under these two applications, requires additional review by NJHPO and FEMA as a component of their grant funding.

III. PROPERTY LOCATION & JURISDICTION

2419 John F. Kennedy Blvd (herein referred to as “The Property”) is located in the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District. The property is located on a 113.8 x 119.88 irregular lot on the northwest corner of John F. Kennedy Blvd and Harrison Avenue. As defined in the City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance, the portion of the lot that contains the temple is zoned as R-3. Staff notes that the adjacent northern lot is also owned by Temple Beth-El and is zoned as RH-1. Both lots are within the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District Overlay.

The property was designated as a key-contributing building within the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District on July 1, 2015, as well as on the National Register of Historic Places on July 19, 2016, and State Registers of Historic Places on December 29, 2014. The HPC’s jurisdiction regarding the property is defined per § 345-30, entitled Historic Preservation Review Procedures:

- a. *No permit shall be issued or amended nor shall any construction, alteration, minor alteration, ordinary maintenance and repair or demolition be started on a landmark building nor on any sign, building, structure, object, site or landscape feature within a designated historic district, whether or not a construction permit is required, prior to a filing of an application for review by the Historic Preservation Commission or the issuance of either a Certificate of Appropriateness or a Certificate of No Effect.*

Additionally, per 2(a), *“The Historic Preservation Officer shall refer all applications for **new construction, alterations, relocation or demolition** to the Historic Preservation Commission for review.”*

IV. REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS FOR CONSIDERATION

Staff notes regarding the Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission:

Per § 345-9, entitled Historic Preservation Commission, Section (B) entitled Powers and Duties of the Historic Preservation Commission, the Commission has the following relevant powers and duties:

(4) To advise and assist City officers, employees, boards and other bodies, including those at County, regional, State and Federal levels, on all matters which have potential impact on the landmark buildings, sites, structures, object or landscape features in the City or on the ambience of a historic district.

(17) To issue Certificates of Appropriateness or Certificates of No Effect in accordance with the rules and standards set forth herein.

The property is subject to following standards during the Board’s consideration regarding the application seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness:

1. *A Thing Of Beauty: Guidelines For The Protection of The Historic Architecture of The West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District Jersey City, New Jersey*
2. *Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*
3. City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-59.6 entitled *Historic Districts Overlay*
4. City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-67 entitled *Fences and Walls*
5. City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-71 entitled *Historic Design Standards*
6. City of Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission *Rules & Regulations for Alterations & Additions to Buildings & New Construction in Historic Districts*

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

The scope and impact of the proposed project represented by the plans were reviewed according to the City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-30 entitled Historic Preservation Review Procedures, the City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance chapters § 345-40 entitled RH-1 Residential Housing District (large lots), § 345-59.6 § 345-71 entitled Historic Design Standards and by the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation, as adopted by the ordinance.

While the two work proposals were submitted separately, HPC Staff is reviewing them together as they are components of a larger project. Each project is separately funded by two different grants:

- The canopies are funded by the FEMA Public Assistance Program, which is covering the recovery work related to damage caused by Hurricane Ida (2021). Per the applicant, the proposed canopies are intended to mitigate future damage by covering the areaways and diverting water. Per the *FEMA Cost Estimating Format for Large Projects Instructional Guide V2.1* (September 2009), hazard mitigation is defined as “... cost-effective action taken to prevent or reduce the threat of future damage to a facility in 44 CFR 206.2. The mitigation measures must be appropriate to the disaster damage and must prevent future damage similar to that caused by the declared event.” HPC Staff notes that the CEF specifically states in 4.6 that in order to be approved, any measures must meet historic preservation compliance.
- The areaway fencing has grant funding provided by FEMA (Department of Homeland Security), New Jersey Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NJ NSGP), and New Jersey Office of Homeland Security and Preparedness. The areaway fencing is part of the Target Hardening scope, which is intended to provide support for “... physical security enhancements and activities to nonprofit organizations that are at high risk of terrorist attack.”

There are two components of the design standards that the Commission should consider when reviewing these applications.

- The first is § 345-71(L)(6)(A) entitled *Ironwork*. § 345-71(L)(6)(A)(iii)(D) states that “A Certificate of Appropriateness is required for... the installation of a fence or railing in a location which historically had no ironwork.” It is HPC Staff’s opinion that, while the design of the railings is appropriate for a modern fence in a historic district, the location is a cause for concern. There are already original, historic fences at both of these locations, though they are shorter. The applicant is proposing to keep these in-situ, however installation of the new areaway fences would block the historic fences from

being visible. HPC Staff is cognizant of the fact these are being proposed as security upgrade, which is why HPC Staff believes that the proposed fence on the south side of the building could be seen as a compromise, as this portion is directly exposed to the street frontage on Harrison Ave. However, on the north side of the building, Staff does not find it to be appropriate to compromise the view shed of this key-contributing building to have a fence inside of a fence, where there will already be a 6' fence (approved under H-23-0185).

- The second is § 345-71(L)(8), entitled *Commercial Awnings*. This section of the design standards is the closest to what the applicant is proposing to install. . § 345-71(L)(8)(A)(ii) states that “The installation of a commercial awning requires a Certificate of Appropriateness and should meet the following criteria ... The awning frames are attached to the building in such a way that they do not destroy, conceal from view, or cause irreversible damage to significant architectural features.” The canopies are a new, distracting architectural element that change the entire way the building is interpreted, which is supported by the submitted renderings in the Heritage Consulting report. HPC Staff believes that there are other mitigation methods that should be explored before adding something to the building, regardless of if the installation method is reversible or not. Staff notes that there is no indication on the plans as to if this installation will be done in a reversible manner for either the canopy itself or the canopy rods. The renderings in the Heritage Consulting report do not show the proposed leaders on either side of the canopy which would tie into the storm water system, which will change how the proposal is viewed from the public right of way. Based on the photos submitted in the application, it does not appear that there are leaders on the north façade of the building, nor are drains present or proposed in the areaway that previously flooded. No information has been provided to HPC Staff in writing regarding other methods of mitigation that have been explored.

The combination of the canopy and the areaway fencing is, in HPC Staff’s opinion, damaging to the way the public views and interprets this key-contributing building. The Heritage Consulting report states that “Temple Beth-El retains a high degree of exterior integrity as there appear to be a few changes and alterations ...” of which Staff is in agreement. The report further details the changes to the building in terms of materials and workmanship, which is expected. HPC Staff views this proposal as a design change, rather than a material addition. The design change proposed distracts from the architectural features elsewhere on the building by calling attention to the ground floor of the side elevations. Perhaps if installed individually there may be less of an adverse effect, but together it is clear that is an intrusion to the building that these proposals negatively impacts the overall appearance and character of the building.

If, after hearing testimony from the applicant and reviewing the submission, the HPC finds that the project as proposed would have an adverse effect on the character and integrity of the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District, a motion could be made to deny the Certificate of Appropriateness under the following criterion:

H-23-0183: Canopies:

- § 345-71(L)(8)(A)(ii) - *The awning frames are attached to the building in such a way that they do not destroy, conceal from view, or cause irreversible damage to significant architectural features.*

H-23-0184: Areaway Fencing:

- § 345-71(H)(2)(i) - *Continuity in Visual Imagery of Appurtenances. Appurtenances of a building or structure such as walls, fences and landscaping shall honor the relationship of appurtenances to buildings of historic significance in the surrounding environment.*

- § 345-71(H)(2)(a) - *Site and Setting*. A developer intending to utilize a historic resource as a part of a development must consider the context of the resource's original site by honoring the original historic intention of said resource and integrating it respectfully into the new development. **Design elements shall have compatible rhythm and repetition with an emphasis on historically compatible materials and colors.**

If, after hearing testimony from the applicant and reviewing the submission, the HPC assesses that the project as proposed will not cause an adverse effect on the character and/or integrity of the historic resource or the West Bergen-East Lincoln Park Historic District, the Commission could approve of a Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1. All conditions approved under H-23-0169, H-23-0181, H-23-0182, H-23-0185, and H-23-0186 shall remain in effect for the duration of this approval.
2. All installations on the building, particularly concerning the canopy, shall be done in a reversible manner, into the mortar joints rather than the brick itself.
3. There are no lights (in the canopy, in the areaways, etc) approved as part of this application.
4. If necessary, the applicant shall seek approval of a franchise ordinance for the installation of the canopy on the south side of the building, as it extends beyond the property line. If any component of that approval alters the design or means and methods of installation of the canopy, the applicant shall submit the request in writing to HPC Staff and provide plans for review showing the existing, approved, and revised condition. If necessary, the applicant will reappear in front of the HPC to seek approval of changes.
5. The architect, Landau | Zinder Architecture, shall be retained during construction and shall submit as-built, signed and sealed drawings to staff, or a signed and sealed letter representing and noting that site construction was consistent with work approved under this Certificate of Appropriateness before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
6. Details, Specifications, and Material Submissions not currently submitted to and approved by the HPC under this Certificate of Appropriateness, such as shop drawings for the front façade windows, doors, or brick samples for the rear addition, or changed during the course of construction are remanded back to the HPC or shall be reviewed by HPC Staff.
7. Construction drawings, noting materials and finishes, cross-referenced with the material sample board, are to be reviewed by, approved by and signed by the Historic Preservation Officer or HPC Staff for compliance with the issued Certificate of Appropriateness before construction permits are applied for and issued. Any changes or deviations from the approved drawings are to be clearly bubbled on the construction drawings and noted in an accompanying signed and sealed letter from the architect addressed to Staff for review. Depending on the degree of change or deviation, additional review by the HPC may be required.
8. Any changes or deviations from the approved plans over the course of construction shall be submitted to HPC Staff in writing from the architect of record for approval on an as-needed basis, prior to any work on said change or deviation being undertaken (except in cases of emergencies).

Changes or deviations that result in new work may require a new application to the HPC for said work.

9. Upon final approval of this Certificate by the HPC, any deviations from the granted approval must be approved by the HPC, except in cases of emergency affecting the public safety, health and welfare, which may be approved by HPC Staff.