

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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



Interdepartmental Memorandum

DATE: 03/14/2022
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Margaret A. O'Neill, Historic Preservation Specialist
CC: Elizabeth Barna, Esq., HPC Counsel
Andres Cortes, Architect of Record
/File
RE: Case #H19-578
344.5 8th Street
Block: 8503, Lot 32
Zone: H / Hamilton Park Historic District

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I. PLANS AND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Architectural drawings entitled *Front Stoop Details* dated 3/22/2021
2. Architectural drawings entitled *Front Stoop Images* dated 3/22/2021
3. Letter addressed to Margaret O'Neill, RE: 344.5 8th Street – Certificate of Occupancy, dated February 1, 2022
4. *Original COA Application*: Historic Preservation Application, submitted December 5, 2019
5. *Original COA Application*: Architectural Plans entitled *344 ½ 8th Street Jersey City, 07302* dated, signed, and sealed December 4th, 2019

II. PROJECT & PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

The property has been owned by Scheffield Development LLC (herein referred to as “The Owner”) since November 2020. Previously, the property had been owned by Andres Cortes and Sarrah Khan. The property is currently a one-unit residence.

A Certificate of Appropriateness Application was first reviewed by the Commission at the regular meeting of October 7, 2019 for front façade alterations, interior renovation, construction of a rooftop addition, and construction of a four-story rear addition and fourth floor. After testimony and discussion by the Commission, the application was denied (5-0-1), as the HPC felt that various elements of the Standards for Considerations, particularly the Standards for Reconstruction found the *City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-71 entitled Historic Design Standards*, were not being adhered to.

The applicant, who is not the current owner of the property and is now only the Architect of Record, submitted a new, scaled down, application, which was heard by the Commission at the Special Meeting of January 29, 2020. With the rooftop addition removed and the front façade’s reconstruction showing greater conformance with the historic site

documentation, the Commission approved a Certificate of Appropriateness with conditions and a recommendation for approval at the Jersey City Planning Board 5-0-0.

Per the submitted letter and plans prepared by Agencie Architecture and Engineering, the Architect of Record is seeking a deviation for the front façade stoop, in addition to other deviation requests, at a contributing Greek Revival rowhouse built circa 1875.

The application and submitted plans were deemed complete by HPC Staff on March 4, 2022.

III. PROPERTY LOCATION & JURISDICTION

344.5 8th Street (herein referred to as “The Property”) is located in the Hamilton Park Historic District. The property is located on an undersized lot (12.5x100) fronting 8th Street. As defined in the City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance, the property is zoned as H.

The property was designated within the Hamilton Park Historic District on February 1, 1977, as well as on the National and State Registers of Historic Places on January 25, 1979. 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.”*

As this project requires a Major Site Plan approval from the Jersey City Planning Board, this application comes to the HPC as referral from the Planning Board per 40:55D-110 of the New Jersey Municipal Land Use Law. Per this provision, the historic Preservation Commission “... may provide its advice, which shall be conveyed through its delegation of one of its members or staff to testify orally at the hearing of the application and to explain any written report which may have been submitted.”

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. *Secretary of Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*
2. *City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-58 entitled H - Historic District*
3. *City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance § 345-71 entitled Historic Design Standards*
4. *City of Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission Rules & Regulations for Alterations & Additions to Buildings & New Construction in Historic Districts*

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS

After reviewing the proposed deviation request for the front stoop, HPC Staff finds that the proposed, as built stoop is not consistent with the Secretary of Interior Standards for Restoration and New Construction, as well as with the *Historic Design Standards* and *Rule & Regulations*. Wooden stoops are ubiquitous on this block of 8th street, which was originally modest worker's housing. The wooden stoop is clearly visible on the 1938 Tax Card, which the applicant agreed to follow as a condition of their approval. Staff notes that conditions that could have prevented this from occurring, like conditions 2, 7, and 8, were not adhered to by the applicant during construction. There are a series of deviations being requested, most of which may be granted. However, the conscious, purposeful use of an inappropriate material on a front façade reconstruction is not something that HPC Staff can recommend be granted, regardless of the fact immediately adjacent stoops are constructed of masonry. HPC Staff recommend that the Commission make a motion to deny the deviation request under the following conditions:

1. § 345-71(G)(2) – *Standards for Reconstruction: The reproduction of missing elements accomplished with new materials shall duplicate the composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities of the missing element. Reconstruction of missing architectural features shall be based upon accurate duplication of original features, substantiated by historical, physical or pictorial evidence rather than upon conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural features from other buildings.*
2. § 345-71(L)(4)(A)(II) – *Restoration: The restoration is based on documentation such as: (A)Physical evidence on the building; (B)Original drawings; (C)Old photographs; (D)An identical building.*

Alternatively, if the Commission finds the as-built stoop to be appropriate, the HPC may make a motion to grant the deviation request and for HPC Staff to signed off on the Certificate of Occupancy.