

CITY OF JERSEY CITY

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



Interdepartmental Memorandum

DATE: 4/12/2021
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Daniel M, Wrieden Historic Preservation officer
CC: Liz Barna, Esq., HPC Counsel
Gerard Schubert RA, Applicant
Josceyln Chan and Robert Caruso
/File
RE: Case #H20-301
206 York Street Roofdeck Application
Block: 14102 Lot 15 Unit C3
Zone: H / Van Vorst Park Historic District

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I. PLANS AND DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1. Historic Preservation Application, submitted 10.9.2020 and subsequently amended
2. Architectural Plans by Gerard Schubert GJS STUDIO entitled New Skydoor Hatch and Roof Deck 208 York Street Jersey City NJ 07302 dated 8/23/20 and 3.05.21 (A-5)

II. PROJECT & PROPOSAL BACKGROUND

The property, an altered, contributing, three bay, four story, frame, Italianate building with Grecian influences in the Van Vorst Park Historic District, has recently been rehabilitated with a reconstruction of the front façade based on site and photographic evidence and the construction of a rear yard addition. The rehabilitation and alteration of the building was completed in accordance with the requisite Certificate of Appropriateness granted by the Jersey City Historic Preservation Commission H17-062 and certificate of No Effect H15-110 for the selective investigatory demolition and reconstruction of the primary façade. Demolition. This building, built circa 1870 and altered in the early 20th century with the removal of the presumed original parlor entry stoop is an interesting and rare survival of frame vernacular architecture which was once common in the Van Vorst Park Historic District.

The applicant, Gerard Schubert, on behalf of the owners, Josceyln Chan and Robert Caruso is seeking a Certificate of Appropriateness for a private roofdeck to be accessed from their unit via a sky door. All parties acknowledge that due to the setting of the building, adjacent to a low rise PSE&G Substation to the east and a parking lot to the north, the deck will be visible when viewing the building obliquely from the east and when viewing the rear façade from the north. However, the proposed roofdeck will not be visible to the viewer from the public right of way when the viewer stands fronting the building due to the proposed 9'6" setback of the skydoor

and the deck. The owners and their architect appear to have been extremely conscientious when considering their proposal in order to have the least possible impact on the viewer's experience of the building and the surrounding historic district. In addition to the deep setback at the front of the deck, the proposal also calls for the installation of a low profile sky door instead of a bulkhead, and minimally visible cable rails surrounding the proposed deck.

The application and submitted plans were deemed complete by HPC Staff on March 5, 2021.

III. PROPERTY LOCATION & JURISDICTION

206 York Street (herein referred to as "The Property") is located in the Van Vorst Park Historic District. As defined in the City of Jersey City Zoning Ordinance, and as shown on the City's official zoning map the zoning district is H (Historic).

The property is a contributing building within the Van Vorst Park Historic District, which was locally designated on February 1st 1977, as well as on the on the National and State Registers of Historic Places on August 2, 1978 and March 5, 1980, respectively. 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.

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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 project, Staff finds that the proposed roof deck shall not be a significant visual intrusion into the historic district and recommends the approval of the deck as presented to the commission due to the deep setbacks, minimally visible railing and the low profile skydoor proposed in lieu of a bulkhead. These proposals mitigate against the visibility of the deck which will not be visible when this mid block building, surrounded by a low one story building to the east and vacant lots, is viewed from directly across the street. Staff recommends approval of the application with conditions.

Staff notes that the building at 206 York Street is an important surviving frame building within the Van Vorst Park Historic District and has been rehabilitated in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and with previous approvals issued by the Commission. Unfortunately, due to the siting of the building, any proposed rooftop deck will be at least partially visible from the west and from the north of the building due to a lack of buildings or permanent structures to block the view of the proposed decks when the buildings are viewed obliquely or from the rear. To the east, the low rise PSE&G substation was constructed in the late 1980s while the rear façade is visible because of the large municipal parking lot on Manila Avenue, historically known as Henderson Street. If it weren't for these accidents of development and demolition, the proposed deck would not be visible from any public right of way and would most likely be approved as of right. Staff hopes that, in the future, appropriately designed development will complete the streetscape and fill in any remaining voids in the street wall.

Staff believes that in accordance with the City's General Standards for Historic Preservation The distinguishing original qualities or character of the building, especially its unique, early corniceline, and the surrounding environment shall not be adversely affected by the minimal visual intrusion of the deck when viewed at secondary facades. There will be no removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural features as part of this construction project. The materials themselves are visually simple, clearly modern, discreet and are in keeping with the railings and fences which are often encountered at roofs especially as guard rails around mechanical equipment.

It is staff's professional opinion that, the project as proposed will not cause an adverse effect on the character and/or integrity of the Van Vorst Park Historic District, and nor will the proposed use have an adverse effect on character defining features of the building. HPC Staff recommends approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

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1. Material samples shall be submitted to HPC Staff for review before the submission of construction documents for permitting.
2. The architect, Gerard Schubert, shall be retained during construction and shall submit a signed and sealed letter noting that site construction was consistent with work approved under this Certificate of Appropriateness before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy.
3. Details, Specifications, and Material Submissions not currently submitted to and approved by the HPC under this Certificate of Appropriateness, or changed during the course of construction are remanded back to the HPC.
4. 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.
5. 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. Requests for deviations from this Certificate are to be submitted through written request of the architect.
6. When necessary, 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.