

Historical Architectural Review Board

HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

Address: 949-59 Hamilton Street

District: Historic Building Demolition Overlay District (HBDO)

Applicant: Robert DiLorenzo, City Center Investment Corporation

Proposal: Complete demolition of existing buildings; construct five-story hotel

Project Description:

This application proposes the complete demolition of the property at 949-59 Hamilton Street and the construction of a five-story hotel with a ground-story bar and restaurant. The new building would be approximately 55,000 square feet with roughly 140 rooms on the second through fifth floors.

The property is located in the Historic Building Demolition Overlay District (HBDO). As part of the review process, Section 660-52 of the Zoning Code states: “The City Historical Architectural Review Board shall be provided with an opportunity to provide comments to the Zoning Hearing Board concerning the historical and architectural significance of the building proposed to be demolished and on the effect of the proposed demolition on the historic character of the streetscape or surrounding neighborhood.”

While the HARB’s authority is limited to review and comment on the demolition and the historical significance of the existing building, as part of its review of the application the HARB may also provide comment on the proposed new construction at the request of the Zoning Hearing Board, Planning Commission, or applicant. However, it should be noted that the HARB has no regulatory authority over new construction in any of the city’s overlay districts, including the Historic Building Demolition Overlay District (HBDO), the Hamilton Street Overlay District (HSO), or the Traditional Neighborhood Development Overlay District (TNDO).

This application should be reviewed for the following:

1. The historical and architectural significance of the existing buildings, as stipulated in the Zoning Code.
2. The effect of the proposed demolition on the historic character of the streetscape, as stipulated in the Zoning Code.
3. The design of the proposed new construction and its compliance with the Hamilton District Façade Design Guidelines, at the request of the applicant.

Property Description:

The property at 949-59 Hamilton Street historically consisted of a large commercial building with the address of 949-55 Hamilton Street, which functioned largely as the Rialto Theater. The mixed-use painted brick building that anchors the corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets maintained separate ownership under the address of 957-59 Hamilton Street. A third existing building, previously 11 N. 10th Street, was historically a private residence, but is now connected to the corner building through infill constructed in the former rear yard of 957-59 Hamilton Street. The individual buildings had been consolidated into a single parcel, and complete demolition of all extant structures is proposed. The boundary of the parcel and extent of the demolition is outlined in Figure 1.

Historical Architectural Review Board HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

Architectural Description and Historical Context:

Building 1, formerly 949-55 Hamilton Street

The property formerly known as 949-55 Hamilton Street served primarily as the Rialto Theater, with additional commercial tenants in the western adjacent storefronts. The existing building was reconstructed in 1946 to 1947 following a fire that destroyed the portion of the building fronting Hamilton Street on April 10, 1946. The rear auditorium survived. The reconstructed massing, size, and scale replicated that of the original building; however, the new design was greatly simplified, and the classical detailing of the façade was abandoned (Figure 2; for photos of the historic façade, see Additional Documentation at the end of the report). Instead, the two-story building was designed in a Modern aesthetic. The eastern storefront served as the Rialto Theater's lobby. This portion of the façade is clad in reddish-brown polished granite tile above a metal-paneled storefront. The metal-cladding was installed after the theater closed and was inserted in place of the marquee and flanking display windows. The storefront was also relocated closer to the street. A tripartite window on the second story is centered above the storefront, while an eight-pane vertical window extends above a second entryway on the western side of the façade.

The remainder of the building is clad in limestone at the second story with large, open storefronts at the first story. A ribbon window spans the width of the façade at the second story. The building does not contain a cornice above the storefront or at the roofline and lacks decorative elements on the façade. The building has a flat roof and is bound on the east, west, and north by other structures, leaving the Hamilton Street façade the only elevation visible from a public way.

The site evolved from a series of mostly wood-frame mid-nineteenth-century commercial structures to a large, Classical Revival-style building that housed Allentown's first movie palace (Figures 3 and 4). Construction of the original Rialto Theater began in 1918 and occurred in two stages. According to a 1990 Morning Call article by Frank Whelan, the portion of the building fronting Hamilton Street, which included the theater's lobby and adjoining shops and apartments, was completed first. Whelan notes that construction of the auditorium halted owing to material shortages that resulted from the onset of World War I. The auditorium was finally completed following the war and opened to the public in 1921.

Because of the quick construction of the lobby and delay in constructing the rear auditorium, the building maintained separation between the two structures. When the fire broke out in April 1949, only the building fronting Hamilton Street was destroyed (Figure 5). The auditorium sustained minor smoke and water damage but was otherwise unscathed. The limited damage to the auditorium necessitated the rushed rebuilding of the lobby to allow for the theater's reopening within the year following the fire. Once complete, the theater reopened for business in January 1947.

The rebuilt theater enjoyed a relatively short period of success throughout the 1950s. Like many theaters in urban centers, the Rialto struggled through the 1960s and 1970s, finally shuttering its doors in 1979. The rear auditorium was then demolished in the 1980s, and the theater lobby repurposed.

Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

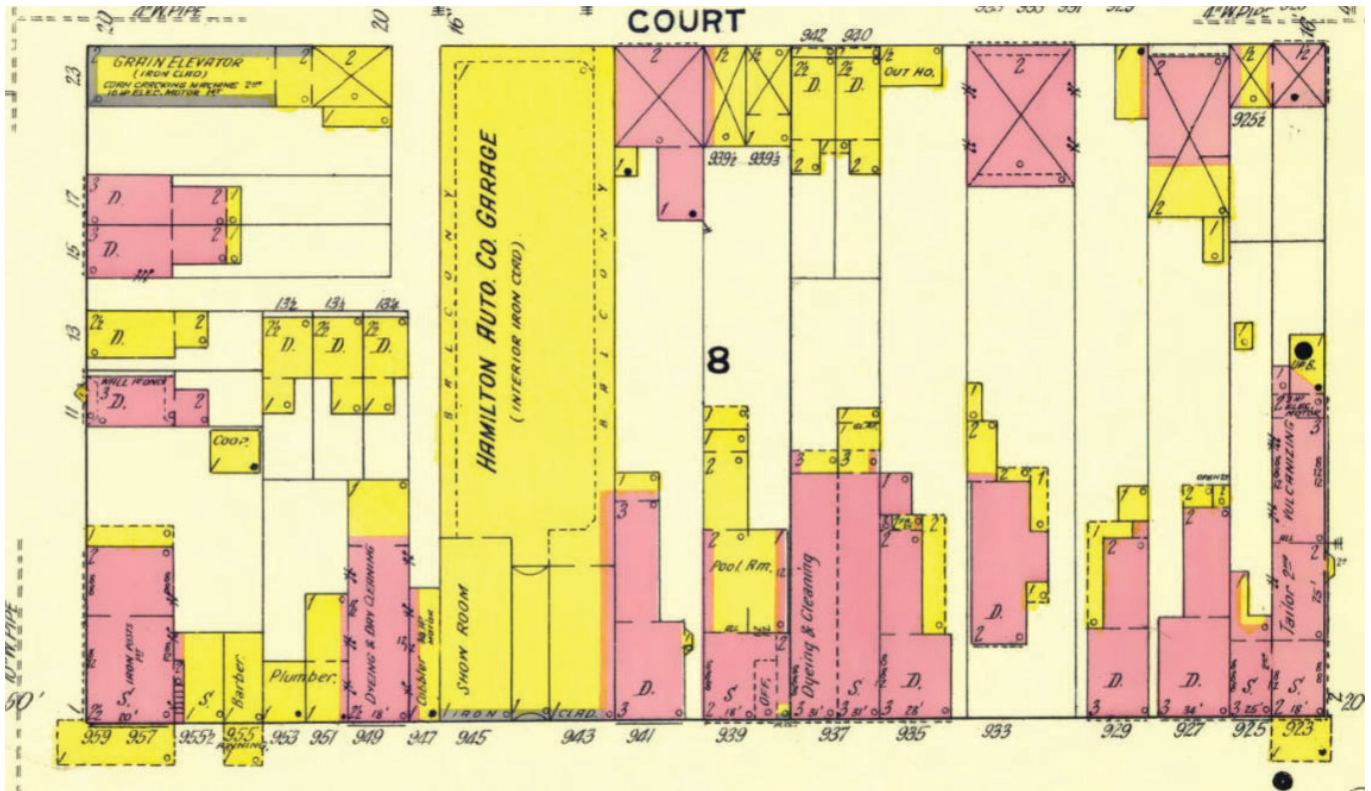


Fig. 3: 1911 Sanborn Map of a portion of the 900 block of Hamilton Street.
(Penn State University)



Fig. 4: Aerial image of the original Rialto Theater in 1930.
(Dallin Aerial Survey Company Photographs, Hagley Digital Archives)



Fig. 5: Fire that destroyed the Rialto Theater lobby, 1946.
(cinematreasures.org)

Historical Architectural Review Board HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

Building 2, formerly 957-59 Hamilton Street

The mixed-use building at the corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets, previously known as 957-59 Hamilton Street, originally included a two-and-a-half-story main block with a two-story rear ell (Figure 6). A two-story masonry stair projected east from the property line, connecting to a frame building, which historically functioned as a cobbler's shop (Figure 7). The building consists of brick construction with a paneled wood storefront along Hamilton Street. The twin building has four punched openings at the front façade, and a gable roof. The 10th Street elevation features two double-hung sash windows at the second story, along with a small oculus window at the center of the main block. A single double-hung window is centered below the chimney and peak of the roof. The chimney originally maintained an "H" design (Figure 8). A two-story brick addition adjoins the rear of the main block and contains a storefront window and door at the first story with three double-hung sash windows at the second story. A series of brick and frame infill connects the two-story brick addition to the three-story former residential building on 10th Street.

The building was likely constructed in the mid-nineteenth century and was designed in the late Federal style. According to the Sanborn map shown in Figure 7, the twin building historically housed a grocer in the western half and a cigar factory in the eastern half and, like the adjoining buildings, had a cedar shake roof. The 1879 Fowler & Bailey illustration indicates that the twin was constructed with four bays, and the first story had a rhythm of door, window, window, door (Figure 9). The date of the storefront alteration remains unknown and undocumented, but the earliest Sanborn map shows that awnings had been in place across the façade by 1885, so the alteration likely occurred prior to that date (see Figure 7).

The 10th Street elevation likely maintained its original configuration until the early twentieth century. The 1911 Sanborn map shows that the corner structure remained separate from the rear residential building fronting 10th Street (Figure 10). Only a minor frame addition was constructed onto the ell. By 1930, however, the two buildings had been connected. The 1930 aerial photograph shows that the infill was two stories in height and lacked fenestration at the second story (Figure 4). A series of storefront windows were inserted at the north end adjacent to the former residential building.



Fig. 6: Front and side elevations of the building at 10th and Hamilton Streets, 2019.
(Google StreetView)

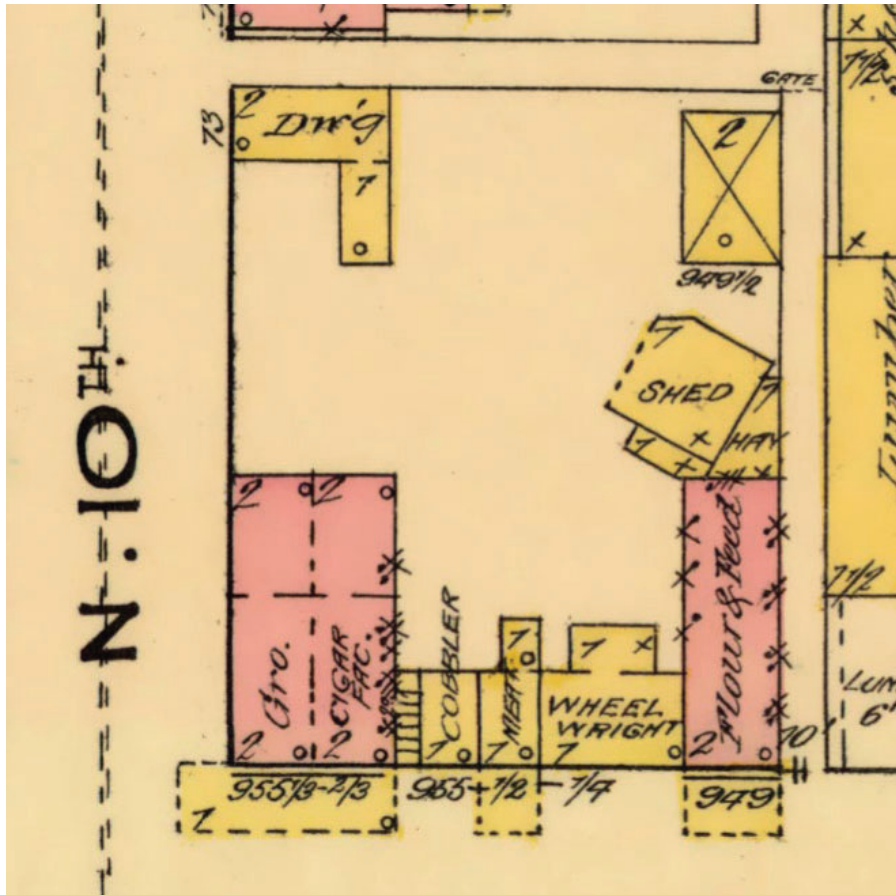


Fig. 7: 1885 Sanborn Map showing the commercial buildings at the western end of the 900 block of Hamilton Street.
(Penn State University)



Fig. 8: Corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets, 1918.
(Allentown Remembered, Schiffer Publishing)

Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

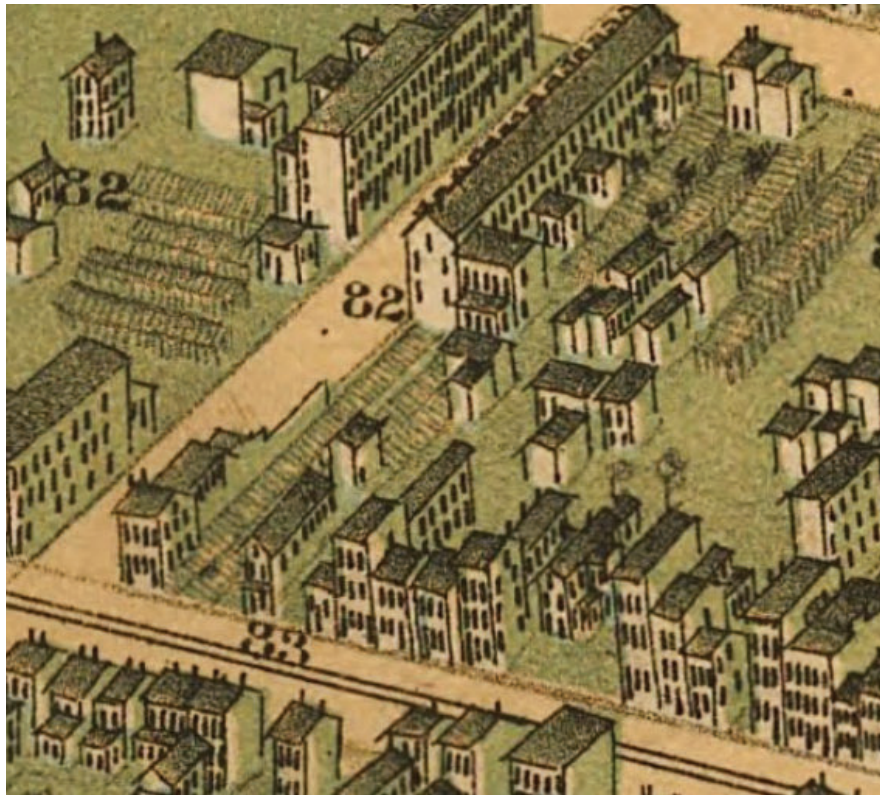


Fig. 9: Bird's Eye View of the City of Allentown, 1879, Fowler & Bailey.
(Library of Congress)



Fig. 10: 1911 Sanborn Map showing the twin building at the corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets.
(Penn State University)

Historical Architectural Review Board HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

Building 3, formerly 11 N. 10th Street

The mixed-use building at fronting N. 10th Street, previously known as 11 N. 10th Street, was constructed as a private residence in the Eastlake style between 1891 and 1897 (Figure 11). It features a large first-story storefront, two-story bay at the second and third stories, corbeled brick cornice below the mansard roof, and a dentilated cornice at the upper roofline. Carved Eastlake details remain at the cornice brackets and the frames of the bay and second and third story windows. The mansard and bay roofs would have originally been clad in slate and are now clad in asphalt shingles. The north wall is unadorned brick with no fenestration. While the building was constructed as a detached structure and the wall did not serve as a party wall, the building was in historically in close proximity to the frame structure to the north (Figure 12).

Like the property at the corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets, the date of the storefront conversion remains unknown, but the 1930 aerial shows that the building served a commercial purpose in the early twentieth century.



**Fig. 11: Front façade of the property fronting N. 10th Street, 2021.
(Google StreetView)**

Building 4, formerly 955 ½ Hamilton Street

The building formerly known as 955 ½ Hamilton Street originally functioned as a cobbler's shop and was a one-story wood frame building. Staff could not locate sufficient documentation to understand whether any of the original structure remains. The Sanborn map in Figure 12 shows that the building was one room. Staff finds it unlikely much, if any, historic fabric from the cobbler's shop remains based on the extent of alterations and large rear addition.

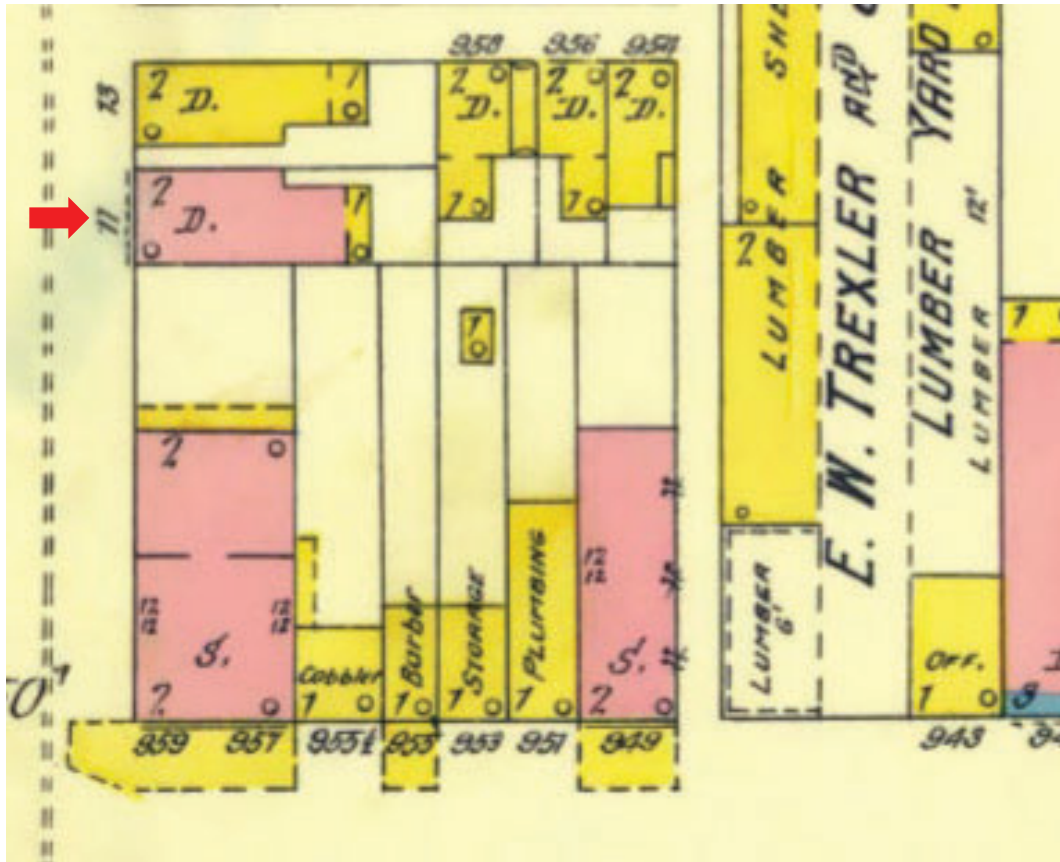


Fig. 12: 1897 Sanborn Map showing the property fronting N. 10th Street.
(Penn State University)

Staff Evaluation:

Building 1 (formerly 949-55 Hamilton Street)

The former Rialto Theater building retains much of its integrity since its reconstruction in 1947, with the exception of the first-story alterations, which include the insertion of a new storefront system and addition of metal paneling to cover the location of the marquee and flanking display windows. The adjacent limestone-clad portion of the building similarly retains integrity and has had limited modifications to the upper story of the building. Though staff was unable to locate photographs of the storefronts following construction, staff believes few alterations have been made.

Owing to its high integrity and mid-twentieth-century construction date, the property has been graded a B (A to D scale) in the 2020 Hamilton Street Historic Structures Survey completed by JMT. Grade B buildings “are resources that may not carry enough significance to be individually eligible for the NRHP but are strong architectural examples of a type or style and retain the majority of their aspects of integrity. These structures would contribute to a Hamilton Street Historic District. These structures often have minor alterations to non-character defining features.”

Additionally, the Rialto Theater building holds cultural significance within the context of Allentown’s commercial history. The building was the first movie palace on Hamilton Street and ushered in an entertainment legacy in the downtown. The theater thrived for more than half a century before succumbing to a floundering market.

However, despite its cultural significance and integrity, staff finds that the former Rialto Theater building was quickly constructed to rebound from a devastating fire and replace the former, architecturally significant theater lobby. The hasty construction resulted in a mediocre design that lacks character-defining features, aside from the masonry cladding and ribbon windows. The building, with its absence of design intent and simple façade, has stood as a placeholder for the former theater that maintained its size, scale, and massing, but failed to reflect the architectural styles and detailing of other properties along Hamilton Street.

Historical Architectural Review Board HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

Building 2, formerly 957-59 Hamilton Street

The building located at the corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets was historically constructed as a twin building to house two commercial spaces and largely continued that function through the present day. It was built as a simple vernacular Federal-style structure, and its original form is maintained on Hamilton Street, with the original massing visible but extended on 10th Street. The storefront alteration occurred early in the building's history and has achieved some significance in its own right. Despite several alterations that include changes to the roofing material, replaced windows, capped window frames, partially demolished chimney and painted masonry, the building maintains some integrity. Staff notes that the building is vernacular rather than high style and functions as a historic anchor to the corner where it relates to other vernacular architecture similar in massing, size, scale, and proportion along Hamilton Street. It may be individually significant owing to its age and association with the earlier evolution of the Hamilton Street commercial corridor. The property continues to contribute to the streetscape and neighborhood. (Staff notes that the building is not individually referenced in the Hamilton Street Historic Structures Survey and is graded a "B" with the former Rialto Theater building).

Building 3, formerly 11 N. 10th Street

This building constructed as a private residence in the Eastlake style has been heavily altered at the first story with the insertion of a storefront, likely early in the twentieth century. Unlike the neighboring building to the south, the storefront has not acquired its own significance, owing to more recent alterations. The building's integrity lies at the second and third stories of the front façade and is typical of the Eastlake style of architecture. More intact properties representative of the style remain throughout Allentown. (Staff notes that the building is not individually referenced in the Hamilton Street Historic Structures Survey and is graded a "B" with the former Rialto Theater building).

Staff Comment on Hotel Design

As stated above, the HARB has no regulatory authority over the proposed design and may provide feedback at the request of the applicant or Zoning Hearing Board. The HARB's review should be informed by the Hamilton District Façade Design Guidelines. The guidelines advocate for new buildings to be clearly differentiated from the old so as not to appear to be part of a historic resource.

The design guidelines recommend that the height, massing, and scale of adjacent buildings be considered, but that a variety of heights should be incorporated to create visual interest. The proposed hotel development includes a five-story, 55,000-square-foot structure and would increase the size, scale, and massing of the corner; however, the building would relate to the existing structures to the east at 941 and 943 Hamilton Street, which are five and six stories in height. The rendering provided in the application shows that the new building would terminate at the lower line of the adjacent building's cornice, and 943 Hamilton Street would project several feet above the proposed building. Because the property would be located on the corner, the proposed height is appropriate.

The design guidelines advocate for appropriate materials. The proposed materials include brick cladding, wood, and stone/porcelain tiles, with metal and acrylic accents. The majority of the building would be clad in Glen-Gery Carbon Black Thin Brick, and the projecting piers would be clad in Glen-Gery Aspen White Thin Brick. Staff finds the use of the dark gray brick to be acceptable but recommends replacing the stark white brick with a light gray brick. Staff notes that white materials tend to weather poorly and are susceptible to unsightly soiling without regular cleaning. Staff also recommends using stone rather than porcelain at the façade to comply with the guidelines.

The proposed design satisfies the recommendations in the design guidelines for storefronts, signage, and lighting. The proposed design incorporates an appropriate transition between the storefront and upper stories and includes transoms in the storefront systems. Signage is appropriately located on the sign band. The design guidelines recommend illumination of the upper stories, with the comment that moving or blinking lights not be incorporated. Neon lights or signs are permitted.

Staff suggests either eliminating the faux Juliet balconies on both the Hamilton and 10th Street facades or selecting a design that better relates to the historic metal detailing on nearby buildings. For example, the adjacent building at 943-45 Hamilton Street has traditional recessed panels between the third- and fourth-story window bays. The property at 948 Hamilton Street features a pressed copper bay with diamond designs.

Historical Architectural Review Board HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

Staff further suggests increasing the height of the corner pylon slightly to create verticality and to better meet the design guidelines' recommendation for varying heights of buildings. The proposed building is a large, horizontal mass. While the vertical piers provide some verticality, the horizontality is most prominent at the roofline.

In general, staff finds the proposed design follows the Hamilton District Façade Design Guidelines.

Staff Comment:

Historical and Architectural Significance:

The historical and architectural significance varies between individual buildings. As a whole, the property holds low architectural significance, owing to the lack of design intent of the reconstructed Rialto Theater and the numerous alterations to the adjacent buildings. The former Rialto Theater building retains some historical and cultural significance for its association with the early theater company that operated the City's first movie palace, beginning in 1918; however, staff contends that the most significant period of the theater's history lies with the original building that was destroyed by fire in 1946. The reconstructed building primarily served theatergoers during the most challenging period in the theater's history rather than its peak.

Staff finds the greatest degree of architectural significance is associated with the building formerly known as 957-59 Hamilton Street (corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets) due to its mid-nineteenth-century construction date, its design in the late-Federal style, and its continued use as a twin commercial building. While most of the building's character-defining features from the original design have been removed, many features could be easily restored.

Staff contends that the infill on N. 10th Street has acquired no historical or architectural significance. The adjacent structure formerly known as 11 N. 10th Street retains some integrity at the upper stories but holds no historical or architectural significance at the first story.

Effect of Demolition on the Historic Character of the Streetscape and Surrounding Neighborhood

Any complete demolition of a large property will negatively impact the character of the streetscape and surrounding neighborhood. The current structures contribute greatly to the massing, size, and scale of the 900 block of Hamilton Street. The complete demolition of the property will leave an immediate impact on the character of the streetscape and neighborhood such that the plans for any new construction should be secured prior to the start of demolition.

Staff also recommends that, if demolition is approved by the Zoning Hearing Board, some mitigation effort be made by the applicant to thoroughly document the building at the corner of 10th and Hamilton Streets according to HABS standards and that the applicant provide the documentation to the City's Bureau of Planning and Zoning.

Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet

Additional Documentation:



Rendering of proposed building viewed from 10th and Hamilton Streets.
(Applicant)



Rendering of Hamilton Street façade of proposed building.
(Applicant)

**Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet**

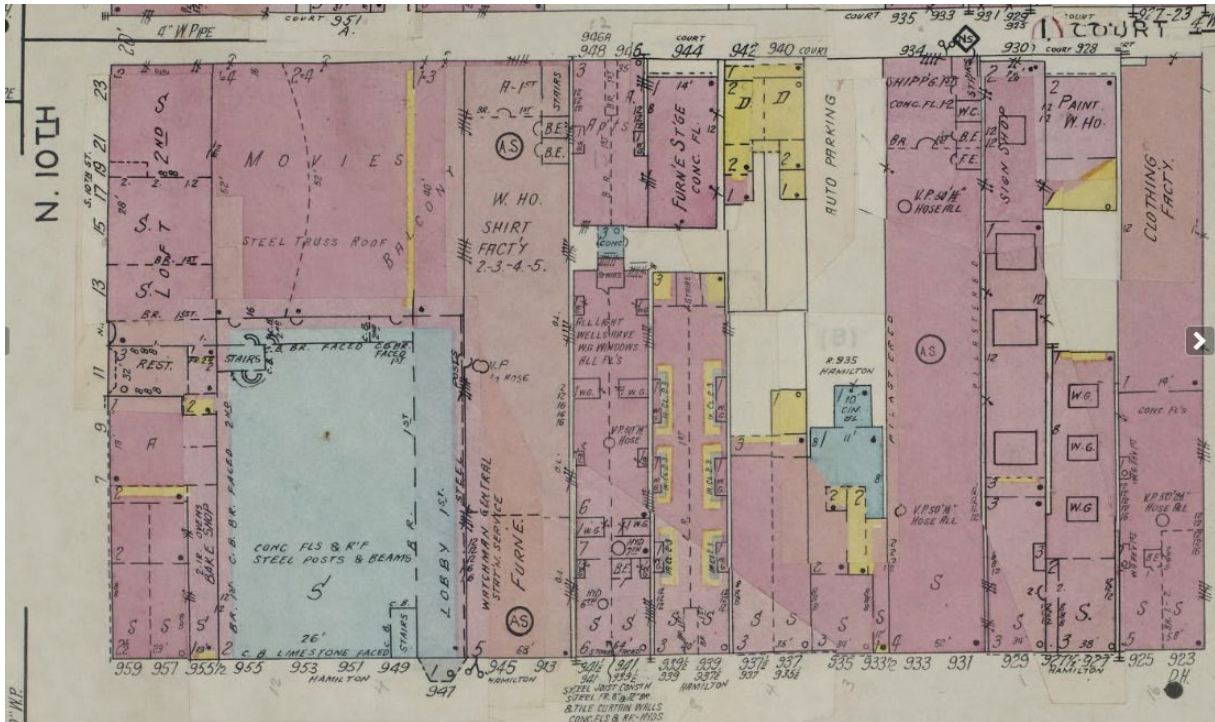


**Rendering of 10th Street façade of proposed building.
(Applicant)**

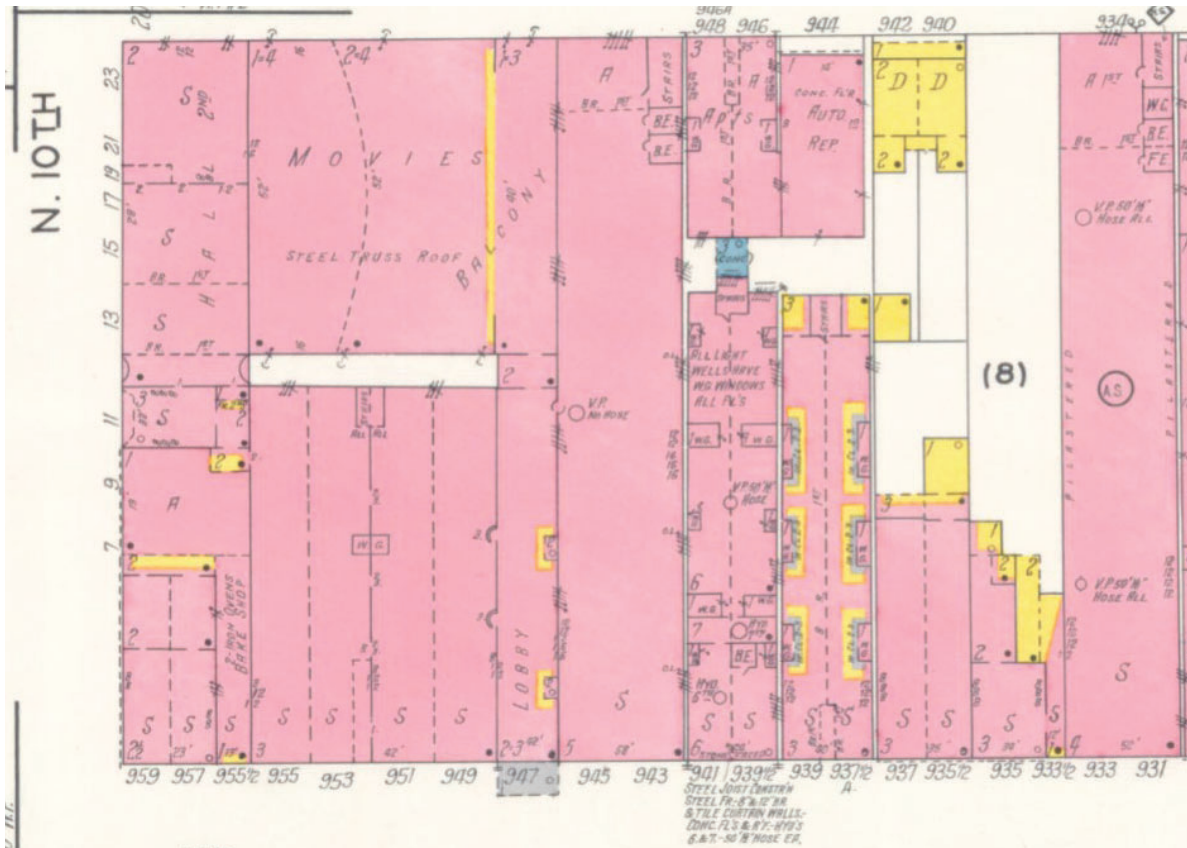


**Façade materials of proposed building.
(Applicant)**

Historical Architectural Review Board
 HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet



1950 Sanborn Map of a portion of the 900 block of Hamilton Street.
 (Library of Congress)



1932 Sanborn Map of a portion of the 900 block of Hamilton Street.
 (Penn State University)

Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet



Façade of the Rialto Theater, 1958.
(Muhlenberg College 1958 Ciarla yearbook, cinematreasures.org)

**Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet**



**Rialto Theater lobby and adjacent building, 1922.
(commons.wikimedia.org)**

Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet



Undated HABS photograph of the N. 10t Street facades.
(Library of Congress)

**Historical Architectural Review Board
HBDO Preliminary Review Sheet**



**Undated HABS photograph of the Rialto Theater lobby.
(Library of Congress)**



APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS ¹

-This form is ONLY for projects located within historic districts -

DIRECTIONS: Please **complete all form fields** to apply for exterior alterations to properties located within one of Allentown’s Historic Districts. These include Old Allentown, Old Fairgrounds and West Park. Incomplete applications, including those submitted without the required fee, will not be considered. Please consult the checklist to ensure your application contains the required information and attach supplemental information as appropriate.

FEE SCHEDULE:

Application Fee: \$25

Violation Correction (received NOV): \$300

Return complete application with all required attachments and fee by mail, email or in person to:

Historic Preservation Planning Officer
City of Allentown, Bureau of Planning & Zoning
435 Hamilton Street, 4th Floor
Allentown, PA 18101

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Property Address: 949 W. Hamilton Street Allentown, PA 18101
Historic District: N/A
Current Use: Vacant 1st floor retail; vacant 2nd & 3rd floor office

PROPERTY OWNER INFORMATION

Name: Hamilton Residential OP LP	
Do you reside at the property? No	
Business Name (if applicable): N/A	
Address: 645 W. Hamilton Street Suite 600 Allentown, PA 18101	
Phone: 610-674-4503	Email: rdilorenzo@citycenterallentown.com

APPLICANT INFORMATION (If different than property owner)

Name City Center Investment Corporation	
Relationship to property owner: Parent Company	
Do you reside at the property? No	
Business Name (if applicable): City Center Investment Corporation	
Address: 645 W. Hamilton Street Suite 600 Allentown, PA 18101	
Phone: 610-674-4503	Email: rdilorenzo@citycenterallentown.com

APPLICATION TYPE (check all that apply)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> New Construction /Addition	<input type="checkbox"/> Alteration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
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TYPE OF ALTERATION PROPOSED (check all that apply)

Exterior Wall Material	Trim/Decorative Features	Light fixtures
Roofing	Shutters	Windows

¹ Application last revised 05/25/2022

Porch/Stoop/Deck Railings		Signage		Exterior Doors	
Exterior Stairways		Satellite Dish		Fence	
Other:					

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Is the proposed work on a side visible from the street? Yes
Existing Materials: Brick, wood and granite
Proposed Materials: Brick, cement board and wood
Dimensions (if applicable, i.e.: windows/doors): N/A
Description of work (PLEASE PRINT LEGIBLY): This application proposes to demolish the existing structure located at 949 W. Hamilton Street Allentown, PA to clear the site for a proposed select service hotel. The proposed hotel would be five stories tall comprised of approximately 55,000 square feet. The boutique inspired hotel would have roughly 140 keys on floors two through five and the first floor would be comprised of amenities, support spaces, bar and restaurant.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

1. Current color photograph of overall building from street (ground to top of roof)	X
2. Current color photograph(s) of all sides impacted by proposed work	X
3. Detailed Photograph(s) of area proposed to be altered	X
4. Photographs of adjacent properties (left and right) if attached	X
5. Property Map (consult GIS City Historic District Map (arcgis.com))	X
6. Construction Drawing (scaled)	X
7. Material Samples (roofing, siding)	X
8. Specifications of new materials or features	X
9. For New Additions Only- Site Plan with proposed setbacks and addition dimensions	N/A
10. For demolition or replacement-Detailed photographs annotating damage	N/A
I have consulted a design or construction professional (circle one)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

I certify to the best of my knowledge that all information provided in this application and attachments is correct.



 Property Owner Signature



 Applicant Signature

Director of Planning & Construction

Director of Planning & Construction

For assistance completing this application or any questions regarding what work requires HARB review please contact the City of Allentown Bureau of Planning and Zoning:
 Phone: 610-437-7613. X 2865

Please be advised This application is for project review for compliance with the Historic District Ordinance only. The owner and applicant may also need other permits to complete the project. Other permits can be obtained on the 4th Floor, City Hall, 435 Hamilton St. 8 AM to 4:30 PM Monday through Friday.

If paying by check –
 Pay to: City of Allentown (HARB)
 Mail to: City of Allentown (ATTN: Planning Department – HARB)
 435 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101

Existing South Elevation of 949 W Hamilton Street



Existing South Elevation Showing Adjacent Hamilton Street Neighbor



Existing West Elevation of 949 Hamilton



Existing West Elevation Showing Adjacent 10th Street Neighbor



Proposed Hotel Development



HAMILTON + 10TH STREET CORNER WIDER VIEW



HAMILTON STREET ELEVATION



10TH STREET ELEVATION

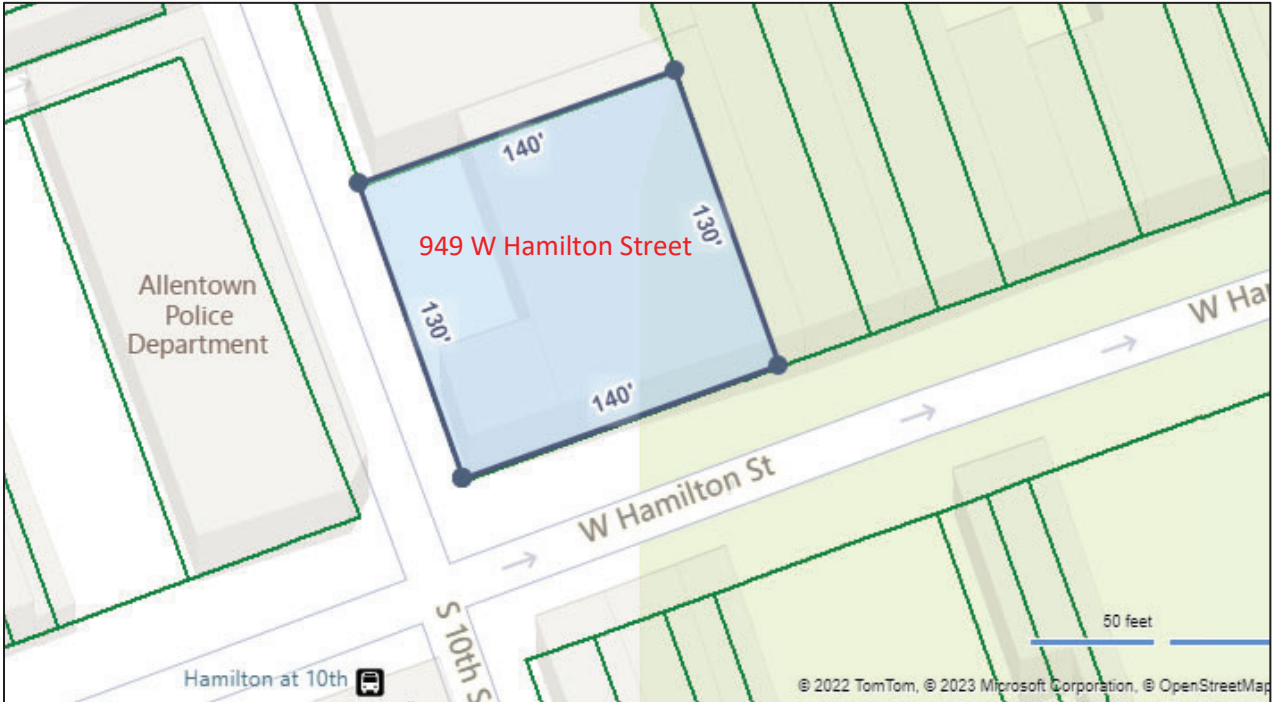


EXTERIOR MATERIALS PALETTE

949 W Hamilton Street HARB Application



GIS Site Plan





SCOTT T. WILT
Zoning Officer
Bureau of Planning & Zoning
435 W. Hamilton Street 4th Fl
Allentown, PA 18101-1699
Office 610-437-7630 ext.2862
Fax 610-437-8781
Scott.Wilt@allentownpa.gov

January 4, 2023

City Center Investment Corp.
645 W Hamilton St
Allentown Pa 18101

Dear Applicant:

This is to inform you that your zoning application to demolish the structure at 949-959 has been denied. Article 660-52.D states that special exception approval is required by the Zoning Hearing Board for the demolition of buildings in the Historic Building Demolition Overlay District.

Any further inquiries can be addressed by calling the Zoning office at 610-437-7630 ext. 2862

Sincerely,

Scott T. Wilt
Zoning Officer



1/11/2023

Robert Dilorenzo
City Center Investment Corp.
645 Hamilton Street
Suite 600
Allentown, PA 18101
Delivered: Via e-mail

RE: Property at 949-965 Hamilton Street

Dear Mr. Dilorenzo,

Pursuant to your request, below you will find our opinion regarding the feasibility of reusing the existing buildings located at 949-965 Hamilton Street for a proposed hotel. The investigation for the reuse of the buildings included examining the existing conditions, code impact, as well as a determination of the cost to repair the buildings to make them suitable as a hotel or other commercial use.

While walking through the buildings there were several issues that arose and were a cause for immediate concern. There appears to be water infiltration issues throughout the entire space, which has caused most of the upstairs floor to become infiltrated with mold and materials have significantly deteriorated because of this. Most specifically, sections of the floor pose a safety concern for access due to obvious cupping of the floorboards under the carpet. Many areas are unsafe to walk on due to this deterioration. This was especially noticeable in the buildings of 961-965 Hamilton. Attached below (Photos #1, #3, #4) are pictures of the water damage and mold. In addition, most ceilings have collapsed due to water infiltration which you will find is pictured below (Photo #2).



Photo #1 – Water Infiltration



Photo #2 – Water Infiltration

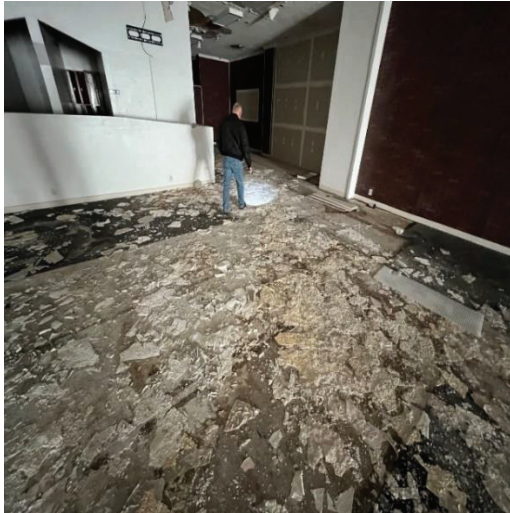


Photo #3 – Water Infiltration



Photo #4 – Water Infiltration

The next area of focus/concern was the structural integrity of the buildings. The buildings at 949-959 Hamilton are cast in place concrete structures with formed concrete floors supported by steel beams, while the adjoining buildings at 961-963 Hamilton are cast stone with wood beams and floors. There were no immediate visual concerns about the foundations at 949-959, but the likelihood that these walls can still meet the load required of them today is unlikely.

Upon reviewing the basement of 961-965 Hamilton, a rather large concern arose surrounding the structural integrity of the wood used to support the floor above. Much of the wood is deteriorated and the floor joists do not have enough structural capacity to meet the floor load requirements today (Photo #5). When walking on the first floor above you could feel the floor giving way in certain areas to the small load being put upon it, this leads me to believe that these floors are not supported enough to hold the capacity necessary. There is also concern around what appears to be a deteriorating foundation wall (Photo #6). Debris has started to infiltrate through the wall or deteriorate from above. Significant rebuilding of these walls would need to occur for reuse. Concerns also arose regarding the steel beams that run through the ceilings and support the floors. There is noticeable rust on numerous beams, especially those exposed to the water damage. Further investigation of the structure would need to occur after the steel is exposed to see the level of rust that has occurred.



Photo #5 – Deterioration

Photo #6 – Wall Deterioration

The architecture of the buildings appears to be insignificant based on my visit. The façade on the buildings closer to 10th street is not original and had been updated previously but is still dated and beginning to show significant wear (Photo #7). The facades along Hamilton Street are also dated and in need of total replacement due to age and weather damage (Photo #8) The floor heights of the two buildings are not even and creates a challenge when it comes to properly

laying out large continuous floors, which is a key requirement for most users in today's market. (Photo #9).



Photo #7 – 10th Street Façades



Photo #8 – Hamilton Street Façades



Photo #9 – Hamilton Street Façades

Ultimately, there are a few key components that render these buildings unusable for future reuse. The water infiltration and mold require significant remediation and repair. The layouts and construction type of the buildings limit the ability to attract and accommodate prospective tenants. The buildings in general lack any architecturally desirable significance. Based on these items, no feasible alternatives exist other than demolition and the buildings

cannot feasibly and reasonably be reused or rehabilitated at the appropriate market rates and demand.

BERNARDON

A CORE STATES GROUP COMPANY

ARCHITECTURE
INTERIOR DESIGN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

01/16/2023

Mr. Robert Dilorenzo
Director of Planning and Construction
City Center Investment Corporation
Two City Center
645 W. Hamilton St., Suite 600
Allentown, PA 18101

RE: "949 Hamilton Street"
7187.00-22

Dear Robert,

Bernardon has conducted a exterior site survey as well as a review of historic imagery of Allentown in an effort to evaluate the historical and architectural significance of the buildings occupying the following addresses provide to the existing urban fabric:

949 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101 (Built 1922, Modern/Bauhaus)
951 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101 (Built 1922, Modern/Bauhaus)
963 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101 (American Colonial)
965 Hamilton Street, Allentown, PA 18101 (American Colonial)

The origins of Allentown date as far back as 1762, which covers several different periods of architectural style in America. The National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) identifies several buildings and historic resources worth preserving in Allentown. Some of the buildings within proximity of our site include The Sovereign Building at 605-613 Hamilton Street (Classical revival), Allentown National Bank at 11 N. 7th Street (Beaux Arts Movement), Americus Hotel at 541 Hamilton Street (c. 1920s Jazz Age Italo-Iberian architecture), Dime Savings and Trust Company at 12 N. 7th Street (Art Deco) and Hotel Sterling at 343-345 Hamilton (Romanesque Revival Style with Queen Anne and Eastlake Influences).



Other noteworthy landmarks within a 5-minute walk from our site include the PPL Building (Art Deco / Art Moderne), Fegley's Allentown Brew Works (old Harold's Furniture Building/Chicago Style), the Farr Building (Classical Revival), as well as the Lehigh Valley Trust Company/Vault 634 (Ornate columns in the front with Beaux Arts festoons of stone garlands).

In all these examples, we have strong expressions of piers and columns, cornices, decorative masonry detailing and limestone or stone entrances that evoke the decorated history of Allentown.

965 Hamilton Street is a 2-story brick American Colonial with a later-added wood trim ground level retail frontage which is weathered and worn, as well as missing fascia pieces exposing bare and water-logged wood. The brick has been painted over and windows partially boarded with an assortment of sheet goods or vertical ribbed paneling. Given this corner parcel's significance to the introduction of downtown Allentown, the 2-story structure seems out of place from the 5-6 story neo-classical structure midblock.

949-951 Hamilton Street, expressed in Modern/Bauhaus style, also seems out of place amongst the celebrated architecture and landmarks of Allentown as described above. The simplicity of a flat façade along with a single horizontal band of windows pays little homage to the rich history of Allentown, nor do these buildings house any functions that have a large public appeal.

Having researched the buildings that are listed in the NRHP as well as notable landmarks of Allentown, it is our professional opinion that the existing buildings on 949-965 Hamilton Street bear little to no positive historical or architectural significance to the City of Allentown and the proposed demolition of these buildings would have no negative effect on the historic character of the streetscape or surrounding neighborhood.

The proposed development at 949-965 Hamilton Street would adhere to the bulk standards and setbacks set forth in the TNDO, as well as provide an outdoor plaza, café or similar usable space indicated in the Ordinance as a positive amenity in the B-2 District. The ground level will be visually appealing and pedestrian-friendly with larger glazing, promoting active functions to support walkability and street activation along the Hamilton Street commercial corridor consistent with a hospitality, food, and beverage establishment.

The development would also be beneficial to the architectural fabric of Allentown in such a way that it proposed to bring back the decorative motifs that recall the rich architectural history as well as re-introduces a strong tripartite division, rich stone or stone-like materials at ground level, raised first floor retail, and architectural motifs and decorative cornices often found in the various revivals, Art Deco and Beaux Arts styles touted in Allentown. The development will articulate a



vertical orientation in window patterning and expressed column, which aligns more appropriately with the adjacent building directly east of the property.

Some modern design elements will be layered in to support the hospitality group's branding but will be incorporated into the historic design language with intentionality and appropriateness. The curved awning, a key component to the hotel arrival and entrance, will turn up to create a marquis that allows wayfinding and signage for the hotel. This canopy turned marquis will incorporate architectural lighting as well as use of color to support the hotel brand. Other modern features include limited mural or paneling on 10th Street to tie in the hotel group's brand colors, and warm wood tones to highlight the bar and restaurant entrance.

It is our professional opinion that the design of the proposed development at this site would constitute a net positive addition to the streetscape and character of the block, and would clearly be an improvement over the buildings that currently exist on the site.

Please feel free to contact our offices if you have any further questions or comments.

Thank you,

KaMan Skinner | *Senior Project Director*



ARCHITECTURE | INTERIOR DESIGN | LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

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