

ADDRESS: 3629 AND 3631 WARREN ST

Proposal: Apply stucco to brick facades and mansards

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Qinghua Wang

Applicant: May Chang

History: 1878

Individual Designation: none

District Designation: Powelton Village Historic District, Contributing, 11/10/2022

Staff Contact: Heather Hendrickson, heather.hendrickson@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application proposes applying stucco to the brick facades and mansard roofs of the rowhouses at 3629 and 3631 Warren Street. These two properties are in a row that stands on the southern boundary of the Powelton Village Historic District. This row is the last remnant of the Black Bottom neighborhood, which was largely demolished during the 1950s and 1960s urban renewal of the University City area. The owner is rehabilitating both properties and would like the front of the buildings to match the front of the building at 3627 Warren Street. The building at 3631 Warren Street is painted a gray-black color and the building at 3629 Warren Street is the only building on this block with its red brick still exposed, although the window openings have been significantly altered. As this row was only recently designated, there have been many alterations to the buildings in the row. This is the first substantial undertaking on this block that has been proposed since the designation of the historic district. The Historical Commission has already approved an interior demolition permit application for both properties and a window replacement permit application for 3631 Warren Street.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Apply stucco to brick facades and mansard roofs.

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and Guidelines include:

- *Standard 9: New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.*
 - Applying stucco to the exterior of these buildings will forever alter their appearance. It would be very difficult to remove the stucco at a later date without damaging the historic brick.
- *Building Exterior, Masonry Guidelines:*
 - **RECOMMENDED:** Applying new or non-historic surface treatments such as water-repellent coatings to masonry only after repointing and only if masonry repairs have failed to arrest water penetration problems.
 - **NOT RECOMMENDED:** Applying waterproof, water repellent, or non-historic coating such as stucco to masonry as a substitute for repointing and masonry repairs. Coatings are frequently unnecessary, expensive, and may change the appearance of historic masonry as well as accelerate its deterioration.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Denial, pursuant to Standard 9 and the Masonry Guidelines. The staff recommends removing the gray-black paint on 3631 Warren Street, and repointing as necessary, and repairing and pointing the masonry at 3629 Warren in lieu of stucco. The staff recommends not stuccoing the mansard roofs, but instead repairing and reroofing them with asphalt shingles.

supplemented

October 2nd , 2025

Philadelphia Historical Commission
Attn: Heather

Re: Application for Exterior Lime-Based Stucco system-3629 & 3631
Warren Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Heather,

The owner would like to emphasize Lime-Based Stucco finish provides the most effective, historically consistent, and minimally invasive preservation treatment.

Below is the revised application to prove
Lime Based Stucco finish is primary preservation strategy for
current facades.

Observed Conditions:

A. Brick Deterioration:

- Widespread face brick spalling and surface delamination.
- Loss of brick faces, particularly along mortar joints and near window openings.
- Multiple units show soft, friable conditions consistent with moisture intrusion and age-related deterioration.

B. Mortar Failure

- Mortar is eroded in numerous locations, with voids and gaps evident.
- Prior patching and pointing are mismatched in strength and color, and are failing.
- Open joints allow uncontrolled water penetration behind the wall surface.

C. Moisture Intrusion

- Active efflorescence and staining consistent with water migration.
- Vertical hairline cracks combined with eroded joints allow moisture entry.
- Freeze-thaw cycling has already caused loss of surface material in multiple bricks.

D. Structural Risk

Continued water infiltration will accelerate:

- Loss of original masonry fabric
- Brick face detachment and unit failure
- Long-term structural degradation of the wall system

Repointing alone would not stabilize weakened brick material.

Assessment of Repointing as a Treatment

While repointing is appropriate when brick is intact and sound, the conditions at both properties indicate:

- Brick surfaces are weakened beyond what mortar replacement can protect.
- Repointing does not address:
 - Cracked and delaminated brick faces
 - Moisture penetration through soft or damaged units
 - Hidden voids behind the wall surface
 - Without a protective finish, deterioration will recur and worsen, requiring brick replacement—a greater loss of historic fabric.

Recommended Preservation Treatment

Based on field observations, best practices in masonry conservation:

Application of a breathable, lime-based stucco system over facades.

- Vapor-permeable: Allows moisture to escape, preventing trapped water.
- Reversible: Can be removed without destroying original masonry.
- Historically documented: Lime stucco and limewash finishes were widely used on Philadelphia rowhouses in the 19th and early 20th centuries to protect soft brick.
- Protective: Provides a continuous weather-resistant barrier over fragile brick surfaces.

Benefits:

- Arrests ongoing deterioration of soft and spalled brick.
- Reduces future material loss and prevents the need for large-scale brick replacement.
- Enhances long-term structural stability while retaining historic character.

Comparative Analysis

Treatment	Repointing (Pointing Only)	Lime-Based Stucco Application
Scope	Fills mortar joints only	Covers entire wall surface
Protection	Limited; water still penetrates through weak bricks	Continuous protective coating
Durability	Short-term; 3 - 5 years before renewed damage	Long-term; reduces freeze-thaw and surface erosion
Impact on Brick	Does not stabilize spalled or soft brick	Encapsulates and protects deteriorated units
Preservation Value	Leads to eventual brick replacement (loss of fabric)	Minimizes brick loss, reversible treatment

Conclusion:

The exterior masonry at 3629 and 3631 Warren Street is deteriorated beyond the point where repointing alone can ensure preservation. While repointing addresses mortar loss, it cannot stabilize soft or delaminated brick, nor can it protect against continued water intrusion and freeze-thaw cycling.

The application of a lime-based stucco finish provides the most effective, historically consistent, and minimally invasive preservation treatment. Without such intervention, the façades will continue to degrade, resulting in permanent loss of historic masonry fabric and the need for extensive brick replacement.

Sept. 04th, 2025

Philadelphia Historical Commission
Attn: Heather

Re: Application for Exterior stucco installation-3629 & 3631 Warren Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104

Dear Heather,

I am submitting this application on behalf of the property owner of 3629 & 3631 Warren Street, Philadelphia, PA 19104. The owner is proposing to apply on the exterior front facade wall of the existing three-story buildings.

- Proposed Work: Installation of smooth stucco finish
- Color/Type: Burns White (sample sheet attached)

Applicant Information

Name: May Cheng

Phone: 264-475-9888

Email: c8moon15@gmail.com

Address: [REDACTED]

Property owner information

Name: Qinghua Wang

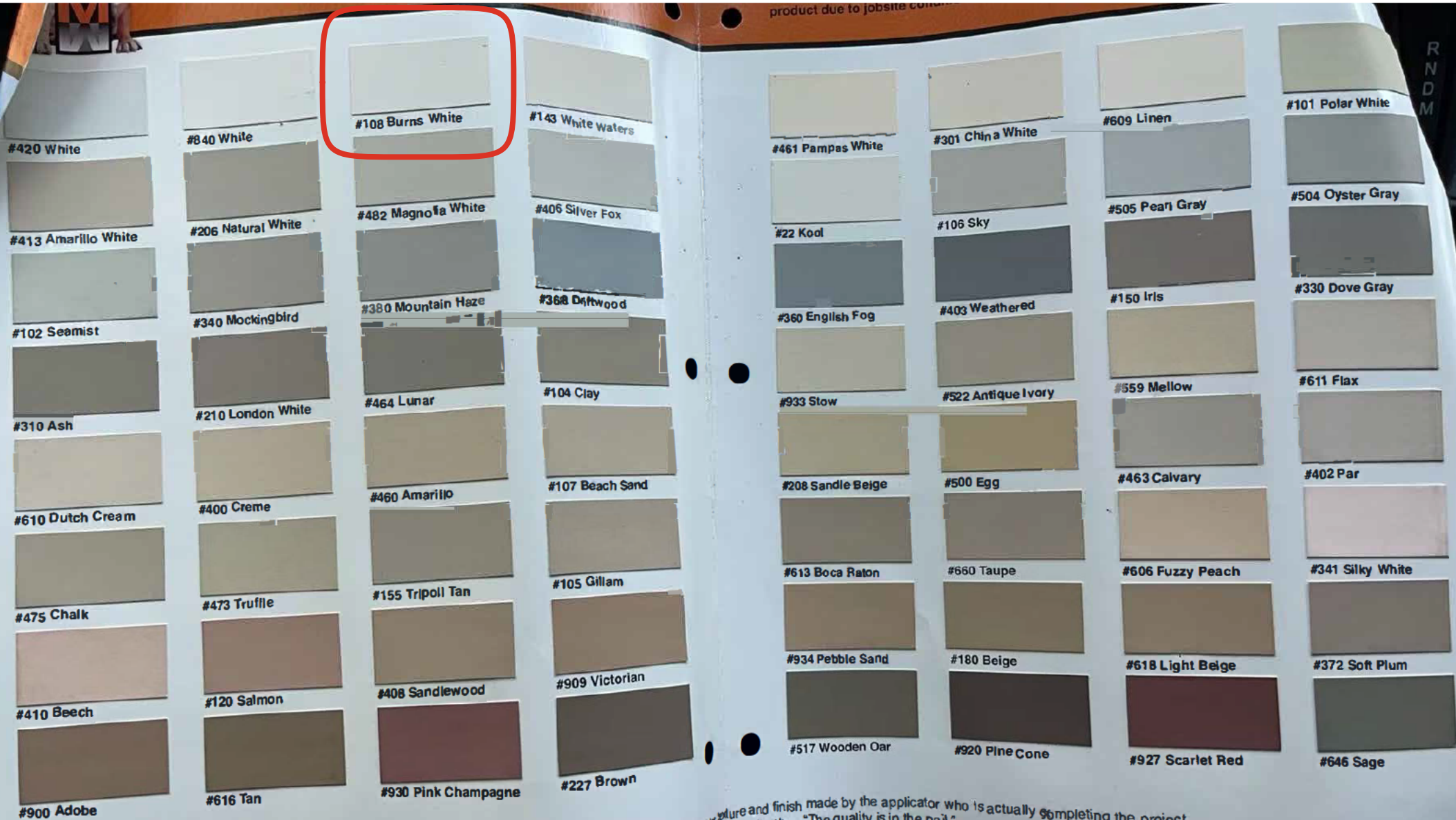
Phone: 856-283-7898

Address: [REDACTED]

If you require any additional information or documentation, please do not hesitate to contact me at 267-475-9888 or by Email.

Thank you for your consideration.

Best Regards,
May Cheng
Applicant

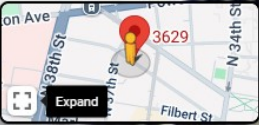


Actual color selection should be made from a 1'x1' sample of each color and finish made by the applicator who is actually completing the project. Master Wall manufactures 100% pure acrylic finishes. "The quality is in the pail."

← 3629 Warren St 🔍 ✕

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3631 Warren St
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
📍 Google Street View
Jul 2024 [See more dates](#)



Google Maps

3631 Warren St, Philadelphia PA 19104

Photo taken from

<https://atlas.phila.gov/3631%20WARREN%20ST/property>



3629 Warren St, Philadelphia, PA 19104

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<https://atlas.phila.gov/3629%20WARREN%20ST/property>

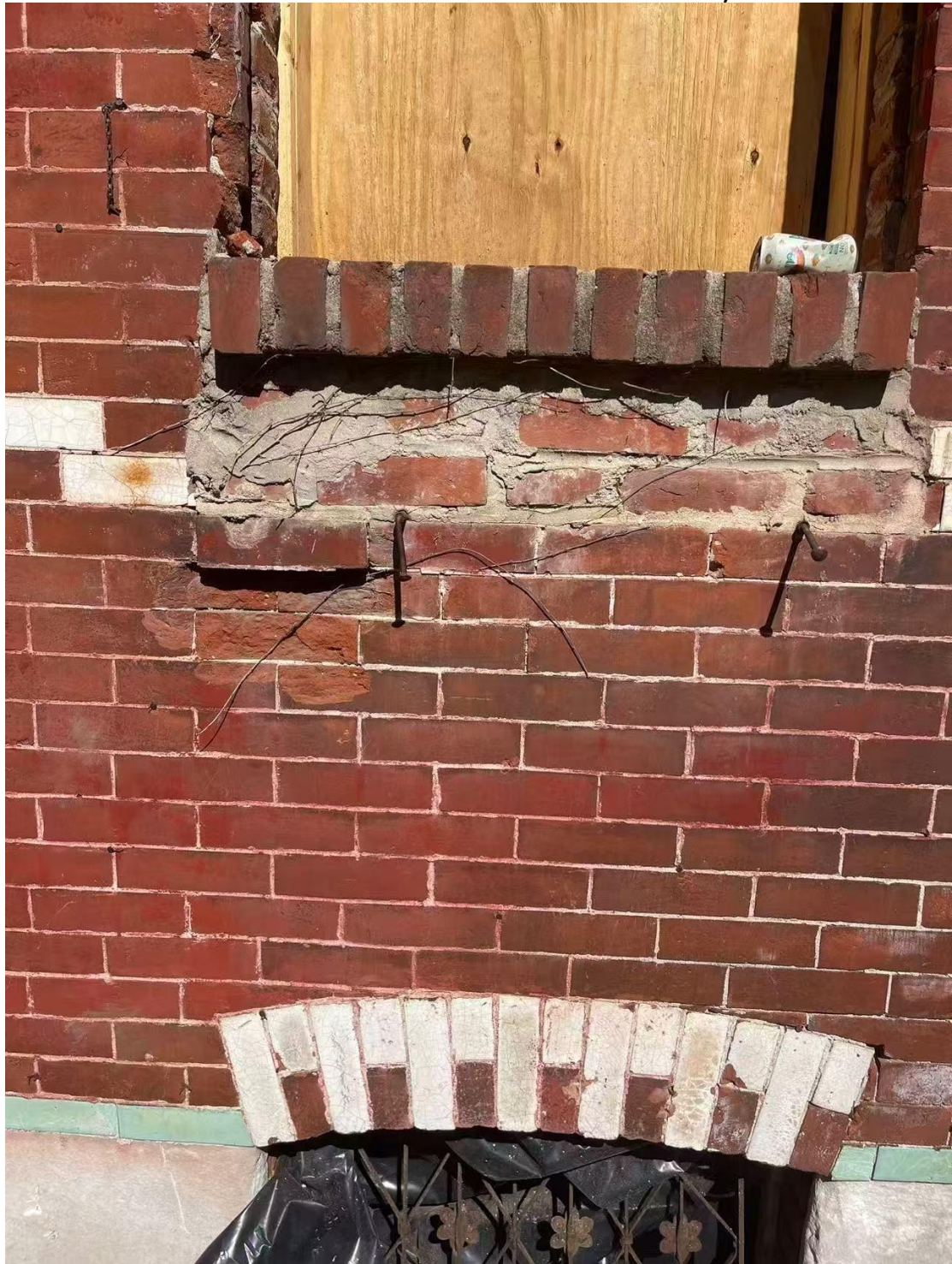


3627 Warren St - stucco example





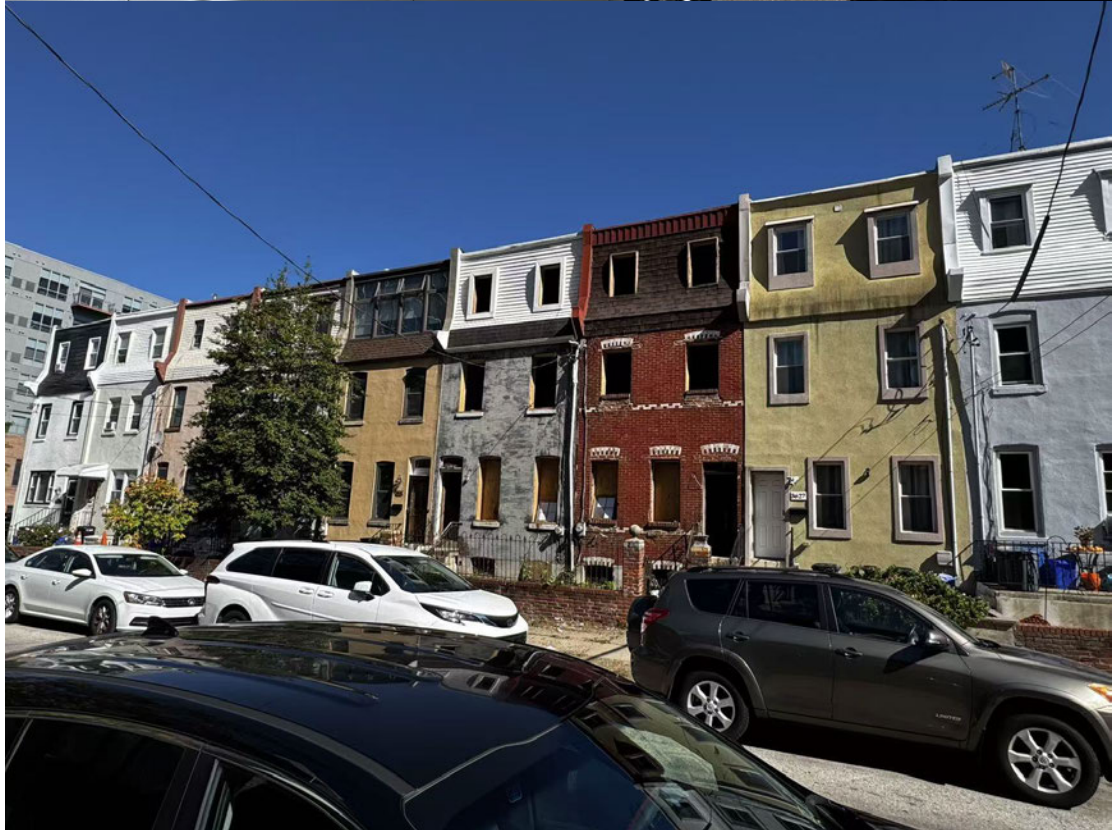
Current front Facade Conditions: Photos took on Oct 1st, 2025











Streetscape on Warren Street