

ADDRESS: 1601 MOUNT VERNON ST

Proposal: Amend approval of façade materials

Review Requested: Final Approval

Owner: Mt. Vernon Commons LLC

Applicant: Naché Patior

History: 1859; Robert Purvis House; storefront, 1920

Individual Designation: None

District Designation: Spring Garden Historic District, Significant, 10/11/2000

Staff Contact: Dan Shachar-Krasnoff, daniel.shachar-krasnoff@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This application calls for amending the Historical Commission's July 2023 approval for the rehabilitation of the Robert Purvis house. The developer seeks approval to substitute cast stone for marble on the front façade's stoop and door surround, owing to the high cost of marble. The applicant is determining the viability of cast stone for the water table.

The property at 1601 Mount Vernon Street is significant in the Spring Garden Historic District, owing to its association with Robert Purvis, a Black anti-slavery activist, writer, and lecturer who resided at the property for the final years of his life—ca.1875 to 1898. Over the last few decades, the property languished and was subject to multiple violations, proposed but unimplemented projects, and court orders, culminating in an Act 165 conservatorship. The City demolished the rear ell to abate a dangerous condition in 2012. After years of deterioration and legal proceedings, the property is being rehabilitated.

SCOPE OF WORK:

- Amend approval of façade materials

STANDARDS FOR REVIEW:

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

- *Standard 6: Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.*
 - o The only remaining portion of the original building, the main block, had a storefront installed c. 1920. That intervention removed the original entryway and marble stoop. Two large openings for storefront windows were cut into the masonry on the front façade and side wall at the first story, and a new corner entrance was constructed.
 - o The application proposes to substitute the approved marble of the stoop and door surround with cast stone, owing to the high cost of the marble. They are unsure if they will propose cast stone or brick at the water table. While suboptimal, the staff sees the use of cast stone as the best solution to complete construction of the residential front. If cast stone is used for all marble elements on the front façade, the work complies with Standard 6.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approval, if the water table, as well as the surround and stoop are built with cast stone, with the staff to review details, pursuant to Standard 6.



Figure 1: Current South (primary) façade and east façade under rehabilitation.



Figure 2: Current first floor restoration under construction.



Figure 3: Mt. Vernon and 16th Streets, 2023. Source: Google.



Figure 4: The rear of 1601 Mt. Vernon Street, 2023. Source: Google.

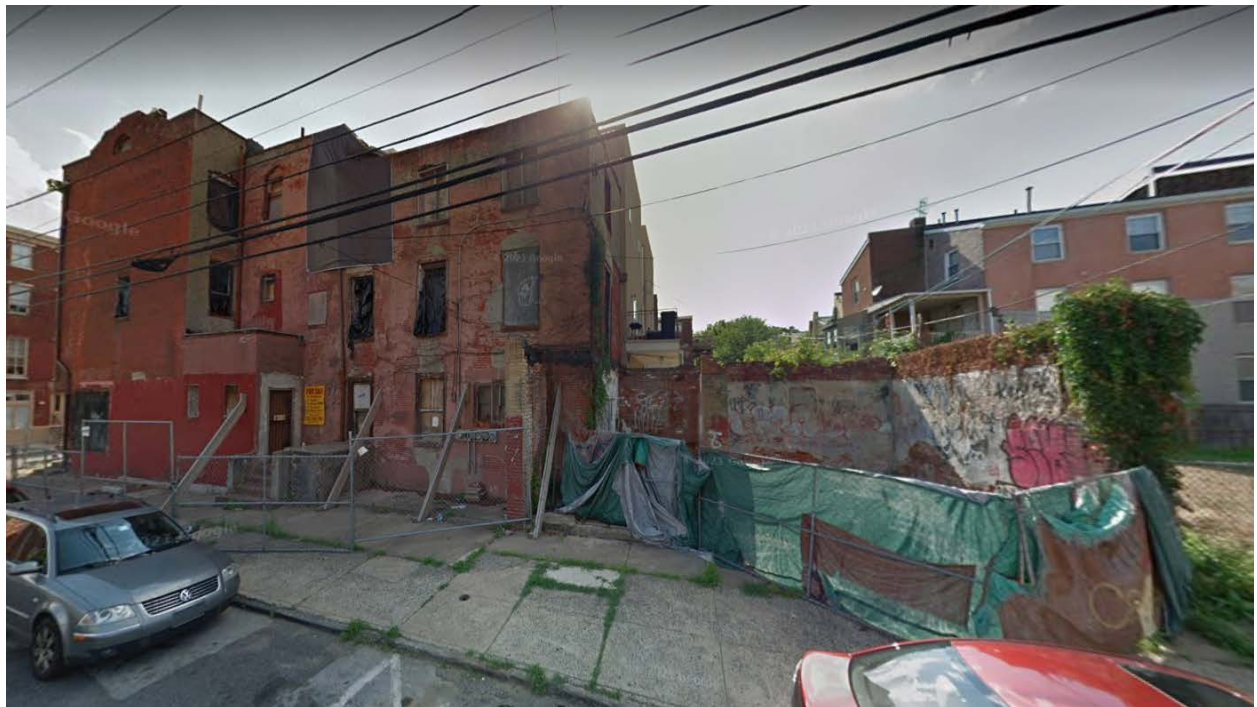


Figure 5: The dilapidated rear ell of 1601 Mt. Vernon Street just prior to demolition, 2012. Source: Google Streetview.

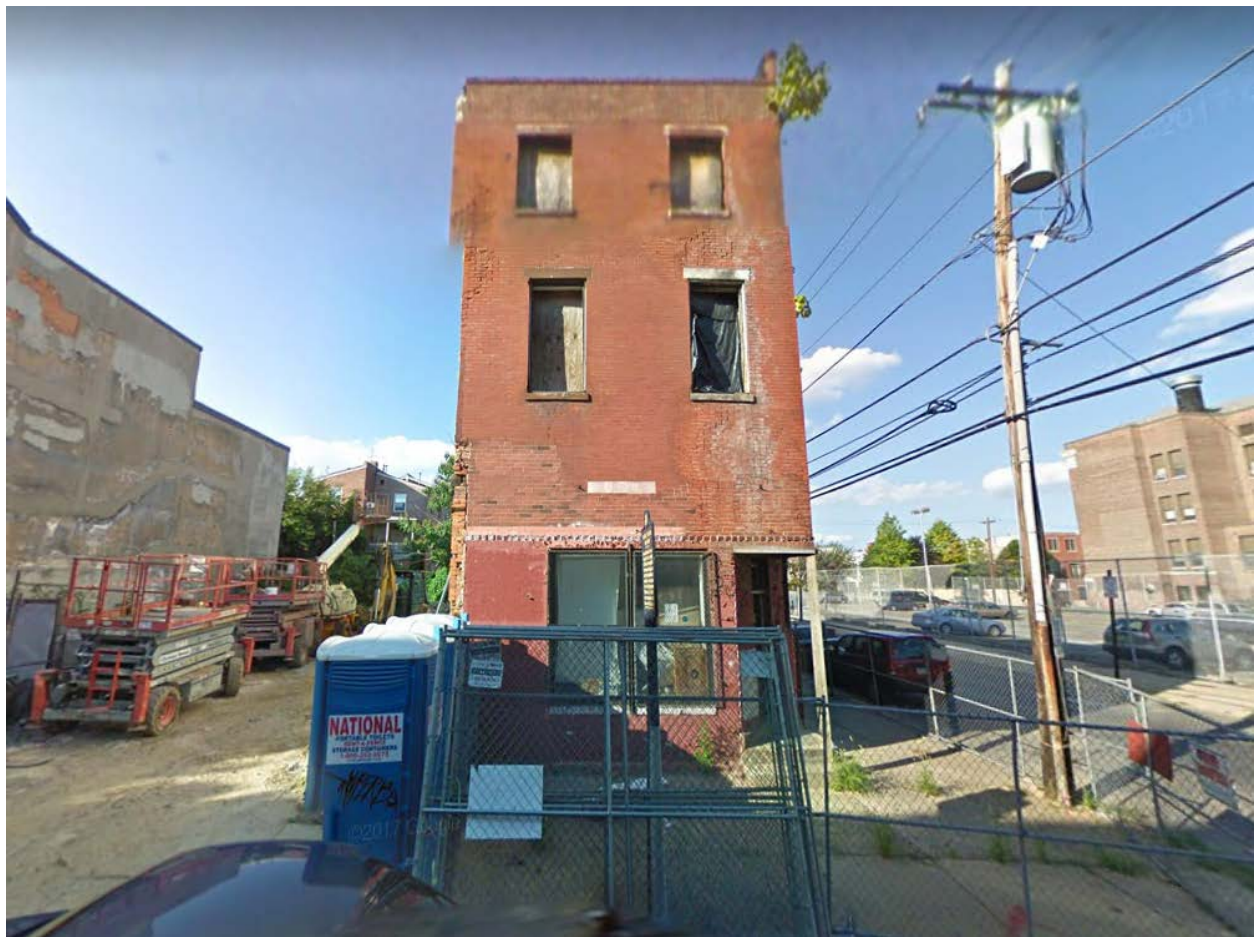


Figure 6: The front facade of 1601 Mt. Vernon Street in 2009. Source: Google Streetview.

