

STAFF REPORT SEPTEMBER 7, 2022 HRC MEETING

Case #: COA2022-075
Staff: Michelle M. McCullough
Applicant: Salem Congregation/David Bergstone

LOCATION

District: Old Salem Historic District #35 & 36
Street: 455 South Main Street, Winston-Salem
Building: Belo House
Status: Contributing
Local Historic
Landmark#: N/A

REQUEST(S)

- After-the-fact installation of new HVAC system

APPLICABLE DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS

Old Salem Historic District: Guide to the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Process and Design Review Standards available at <https://www.cityofws.org/DocumentCenter/View/21036/Old-Salem-Historic-District-Standards-July-2021-PDF>

STAFF COMMENTS

On May 13, 2022 staff received and approved a Minor Work application requesting the removal of the window air conditioning units and installation of electrical mini-split units in the rear of the Belo House located at 455 S. Main Street, in the Old Salem Historic District. After reviewing the specifications of the request, Commission staff determined that the application constituted a Minor Work project as defined by the *Old Salem Historic District Guide to the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Process and Design Review Standards*. Staff found that the project met District Standards 1, 5, and 9 of the *Accessory Features* section.

The applicant proposed to remove all the window air conditioning units and install on the east elevation new mini-split electric heat pumps for all the units and common areas. The east elevation of the building faces a public right-of-way with a privately maintained pedestrian walkway known as Cedar Alley that connects Cemetery and Bank Streets on the west side of God's Acre, and there is vegetation screening of a majority of the building. There were to be four locations on the ground, and five units at each location, were to be placed along the wall of the building. Between floors two and three on the rear wall were to be five locations with two units each. All lines and fasteners were to be installed through the mortar joints, not the historic bricks. All the electrical lines and conduit were to be painted white to match the building. The new units were to be in a white color that matches the building as close as possible.

Subsequent to approval, the applicant informed staff that the ground units were not to be located on the ground, but on the roof, and lines were being attached from those units over the gutters down the exterior wall. This arrangement was not approved by staff.

STAFF FINDINGS

Commission staff finds that the project is incongruous with the character of the Old Salem Historic District because:

- 1) The applicant proposes to install condenser units on the roof and run the linesets from these roof units over the top of the wall and gutters, down the wall, and through the mortar joints. Due to the

elevation difference between the building and Church Streets, the building site is approximately 15' lower than the intersection of Bank and Church Streets, and height of the building, these visible linesets can be seen from Bank Street, Church Street, and Cedar Alley. The linesets alter the appearance of the building by adding a highly visible component of HVAC equipment. The size, location, and scale of the linesets, which project into the air and over the side of the building, detract from the character of the building and District: the linesets are not installed in the most unobtrusive manner possible. Outdoor mechanical equipment and HVAC units should be installed in areas where they will require the least possible alteration to the appearance of the structure and be hidden from public view. The size and scale of accessory features should not detract from the character of the building or District. (*Accessory Features*, Old Salem Standards 1, 5, and 9)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the preceding findings, staff recommends that the Commission deny COA2022-075 located at 455 South Main Street (PIN 6835-23-9783.00), within the Old Salem Historic District.