Thursday, March 26, 2026

Honorable City Council
1300 Perdido Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

Re: 934 Port Street

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Attached, please find a report regarding an appeal of the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission's denial of an application to retain delaminated stucco at a contributing rated structure in the Faubourg Marigny local historic district.

Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Eleanor Burke

Eleanor Burke
Deputy Director

934 Port Street Appeal Summary

Appeal of the New Orleans HDLC denial of retention of missing stucco as is.

Delaminated stucco leaves bricks exposed to moisture and deterioration.

The building was originally stuccoed and should remain so.

Allowing retention of the current situation sets a prominent and highly visible, problematic precedent.

HDLC has been citing the property for deteriorated and missing stucco since 2013.

HDLC offering an extended timeline for compliance due to stated financial concerns.

March 26, 2007 – Evidence of beginning of building stucco finish delamination cited by HDLC.

Violation Case History/Summary:

This property has been cited by the HDLC for deteriorated stucco since at least 2013. The previous owner applied to retain the removed stucco; however, the Commission deferred the request in February 2014 for sixty days to allow time to complete a cost analysis and explore re-stuccoing options. The owner took no further action, the deferred request was never reheard, and the application expired due to inactivity in 2018.

The previous owner later applied to reinstall stucco to match the existing conditions, and a CofA was issued in March 2015. However, no work was completed and that application also expired due to inactivity in 2019.

In February 2019, the HDLC observed that the property was listed for sale and sent a letter to the previous owner noting the existing violations and advising that prospective buyers should be informed they would be responsible for addressing the missing and deteriorated stucco. The current owner purchased the property in June 2020. In May 2021, the HDLC opened a new Demolition by Neglect violation under the current ownership.

Current Request Summary:

The owner is requesting retention of the delaminated stucco at the N Rampart Street side to remain, with new stucco to match the existing only at the Port Street side. This request was previously heard at the November 2025 meeting, and the Commission voted to defer the application for sixty days to allow the applicant time to submit additional documentation related to the masonry, mortar, and stucco conditions and further substantiate their request for partial retention. The Commission noted that materials such as masonry or structural inspection reports, contractor or conservator cost estimates, historic documentation regarding the original wall finish, and detailed descriptions of the proposed scope and extent of retained material would be appropriate for review. On February 24, 2026, the applicant submitted the supporting documentation.

Current Building Conditions:

FEMA survey research indicates the building was constructed between 1850 and 1860 and first appears on the 1887 Sanborn map. Given the age of the masonry structure, it likely includes softer "lake" bricks and almost certainly originally featured a smooth, lime-based stucco coating. This stucco was an integral component of the exterior envelope and intended to protect the underlying brick from deterioration.

However, based on the textured appearance of the current finish, it is likely that the original stucco was replaced or overcoated with a textured "spatterdash" application. This technique can be problematic because it often contains a high proportion of Portland cement combined with coarse sand or aggregate, producing a harder, less permeable surface that can trap moisture within the wall assembly and accelerate deterioration. Notably, this coating does not appear to have been applied to the Franklin or Burgundy Street sides, which are currently uncoated and appear to exhibit deteriorated masonry and mortar as well as algae growth.

Staff Recommended Actions:

While Staff appreciates the applicant's proposal to install new stucco at the Port Street side, the request to retain the delaminated stucco and missing stucco at the other elevations does not meet the HDLC Design Guidelines. **The Guidelines prohibit the removal of historic stucco that exposes soft underlying brick to the elements, prohibit maintaining the appearance of delaminated stucco, and recommend applying appropriate stucco to conceal inappropriate masonry, mortar, and repairs. Additionally, the selectively removed or deteriorated stucco is problematic not only because it represents a missing component of the original wall assembly, but because approval of its retention could set a negative precedent for similar requests at other properties.**

Based on these factors and the observable building conditions, Staff recommends denial of the request to retain the delaminated stucco. To address the conditions moving forward, Staff recommends:

- Maintaining the existing spatterdash stucco where it remains in fair to good condition, primarily at the attached rear dependency (shown with blue lines on diagram).
- Applying a new smooth-finish stucco coating only to areas of missing stucco at the N Rampart and Port Street sides (shown with red lines on diagram).

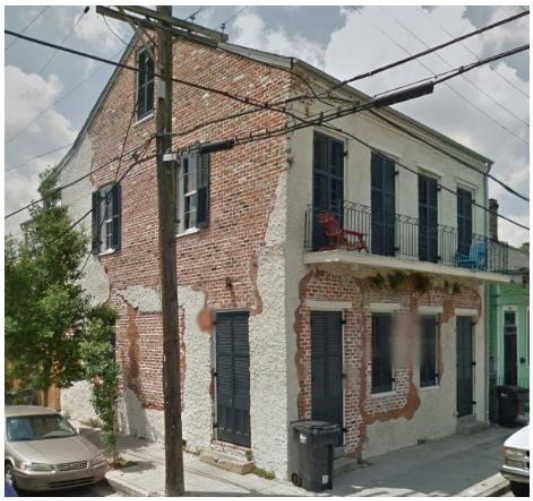
- Repairing deteriorated masonry and mortar and applying a new smooth-finish stucco coating to the full wall areas at the Franklin and Burgundy Street sides (shown with orange lines on diagram).

This approach would provide a more uniform and appropriate exterior coating while preserving some visual distinction between the new smooth-finish stucco and adjacent areas of older textured stucco. Additionally, the Commission may wish to consider providing some additional time, or permitting the work to be phased, to allow the applicant time to financially prepare. However, any such allowance should include a clear timeline and be contingent upon improved communication and good-faith progress by the applicant.

At their meeting of March 11, 2026 the Commission voted to deny the application and require that the stucco be restored. The HDLC is happy to work with the property on an extended timeline due to the stated financial concerns. The end goal is to ensure that the building is maintained properly.

Stucco Condition Over Time:

2007



2011

2016

2019

Additional information, photos and public comment may be found in the staff report: https://sites.google.com/view/nocmm031126/old-retention-applications/934-port-st-2632-n-rampart-st

Audio of the hearing may be found here: https://nola.gov/next/hdlc/meetings/

STUCCO

Stucco is a relatively inexpensive material that can provide a more finished appearance to brick, stone or wood framed buildings. In some cases, the surface was scored to look like stone. It acts as a weather repellent coating, protecting the building from the elements including rain, snow, sunlight and wind, and can moderately increase its fire resistance. Stucco can also provide an insulating layer to a wall, reducing the passage of air, as well as improve a building's fire resistance.

In New Orleans, stucco was traditionally applied at the time of construction over "lake brick" as a protective coating. Beginning in the 20th century, it was also applied on wood framed buildings in revival styles of architecture. It was also applied on some buildings and structures, years after the original construction, as a remodeling material to vary the original appearance or to conceal deterioration.

EXTERIOR MASONRY AND STUCCO CHECKLIST

Almost all buildings include some masonry, in some cases as a wall material, but typically as a foundation, pier or chimney. Since masonry is often used as part of the structural system for older buildings, it is critical that it is maintained to prevent serious problems. For the best results, it is recommended that all masonry and stucco repair and cleaning be conducted when the temperature is consistently between 40 and 90 degrees Fahrenheit to minimize potential spalling and problems associated with colder temperatures and shrinkage with warmer temperatures.

If there are questions regarding whether the severity of deterioration warrants replacement of an element, consultation with a professional is recommended. It is usually less costly to fix a small problem than to delay action resulting in more extensive deterioration and repair needs. For further information, please refer to the *Guidelines for Masonry and Stucco*.

Several different color stucco patches are visible suggesting various repair efforts. Repair with lime based stucco, colored and scored to match the historic finish, to protect the soft underlying bricks.

THE HDLC DOES NOT PERMIT:

- Widening or extending the existing mortar joints or overlapping the new mortar over the masonry surface
- Removal or covering of historic masonry surfaces or details
- Removal of historic stucco from masonry surfaces or from "brick between post" construction exposing the soft, underlying brick to the elements
- Creating or maintaining the appearance of delaminated stucco, exposing brick behind
- Installing stucco over brick, stone or wood framed buildings that were not intended to be stuccoed unless covering previously damaged masonry
- Installing modern brick for patching historic masonry, even if they are "antiqued", since they are generally much harder and do not match the historic masonry
- Exposing painted or unpainted concrete masonry units
- Using pre-mixed mortar or stucco that contains a high percentage of Portland cement
- Using pre-mixed mortar that does not match the appearance of the historic mortar

Stucco removed near roof – *Stucco was often used as a less expensive means of achieving the prominence and grandeur of masonry. In this example, the stucco was scored to resemble stones and molded to form the details of the window surrounds and cornice. The failure of the stucco has exposed the soft, underlying brick to the elements.*

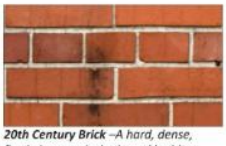
Recommendation – *Verify whether there is a roof drainage issue that caused the stucco to fail. Apply compatible stucco to match historic profiles and finish and lime based masonry paint for a uniform appearance.*

BRICKS

Brick is by far the most common masonry material in New Orleans and can be found at some of the City's earliest buildings as well as those constructed today. Bricks are made by inserting clay into a mold and then firing or baking the brick at very high heat. The result is a standardized unit, generally 8" by 4" by 2-1/4" in size.

- Lake bricks, also known as mud bricks, tend to be very soft and can be found on buildings and structures built during the 19th century. They were made by pressing wet clay into a wood or metal mold, historically by hand; the shaped clay was dried and then fired. In the process, small air pockets and impurities were trapped in the clay, and the bricks were often slightly irregularly shaped with holes or voids and rounded edges and corners. Because lake bricks are very soft, they were often covered with stucco to protect them from the weather.

- Dry pressed bricks are similar to lake bricks except the clay used is drier, is pressed into the molds with greater force and fired longer. The result is a harder brick with sharper corners and edges. Dry pressed bricks gained in popularity in the second half of the 19th century.



***20th Century Brick** –A hard, dense, fired-clay, regularly shaped building component; sometimes with a glazed surface; used primarily in walls, piers, foundations and exterior pavers.*

***19th Century Brick** –A soft, fired-clay, fairly regularly shaped building component; often with color and surface variations; used primarily in walls, piers, foundations and exterior pavers.*