

NEW ORLEANS HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION

Helena Moreno
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Friday, June 12, 2026

Honorable City Council
1300 Perdido Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

Re: 510 Race Street

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Attached, please find a report regarding an appeal of the New Orleans Historic District Landmarks Commission's denial of the retention of deteriorated masonry and stucco at a Landmark, commercial building.

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

Sincerely,



Yvette Jett
Principal Architectural Historian



Permit Number: 26-13771-HDLC

Owner: 510 Race LLC

Applicant: Granville Semmes Construction Co., LLC

Description: Applicant is requesting retention of deteriorated masonry and stucco

HDLC Decision: The Commission voted to deny the request for retention of the deteriorated masonry and stucco.

Staff Recommendation: Staff respectfully request that the City Council uphold the decision of the Historic District Landmarks Commission to deny the request for retention of the deteriorated masonry and stucco.

The historic or architectural significance of the building or structure as designated by its “rating”: Significant. The 2-1/2 story Greek Revival townhouse was constructed in ca. 1847 and was part of a larger townhouse complex that was along Race St and Tchoupitoulas. This building was designated as a landmark in 2000.

Retention Items:

- **Masonry & Stucco**

Deteriorated Masonry and Stucco:

The applicant is requesting the retention of the current condition of the masonry and stucco citing the want to keep the "historic" look of the deterioration. However, the HDLC Guidelines do not allow for maintaining the appearance of delaminated stucco. Further, the brick at this building is soft "lake" brick and is showing signs of delamination, powdering, and missing mortar joints. While staff appreciates the aesthetic concern of the applicant, the main



interest of the HDLC in this matter is the level of deterioration of the masonry. **Unfortunately, this look of deterioration has long been romantically associated with a quaint New Orleans mystique that is understandably appealing to many. However, in reality, it is the result of moisture intrusion and indicates masonry deterioration. If left unaddressed, this can lead to failure of the material which is why this is referred to as “demolition by neglect”, as can be indicated in several recent partial building collapses.** Best practice, would be to repoint all of the failing and missing mortar joints and have a new coat of an HDLC approved stucco applied to all elevations. However, we cannot require that the exposed masonry on the right and rear elevations that do not have a history of being encapsulated with stucco have a new coat of stucco, though Staff would recommend it. Staff

recommends denial of the retention to maintain the current level of deterioration of the masonry and stucco and recommends that at least the mortar is repointed and the delaminated stucco repaired.



HDLC Guidelines:

- Section 7, Pages 9-12 of the *Guidelines for Masonry and Stucco*

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 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.

Case History:

- **26-02760-VIONO - Current HDLC violation for Work without Permits**
- **26-02447-DBNNO - Current HDLC violation for Demolition by Neglect**
- **16-12756-VIONO - 2016 HDLC violation for Work without Permits**
- **2012-DbyN - 2012 HDLC violation for Demolition by Neglect for deteriorated stucco**

Commission Action

At the June 3, 2025 hearing, the Commission voted to deny the request for retention of the deteriorated masonry and stucco. The motion was made by Commissioner Ross Karson. His motion was seconded by Commissioner Tim Lupin. The motion passed unanimously.

The full Staff Report may be found here: <https://sites.google.com/view/no-cmm-060326/new-retention-applications/1510-religious-st>

A link to the meeting video may be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/zmRIVDg68bs?si=nIeuTC5FfmkK-Gle>