



# STAFF REPORT

## Historic Preservation Commission

April 5, 2023  
HPCA-23-00029

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**Agenda Item:** VI.C.6.

**Case Number:** HPCA-23-00029

**Property Address:** 2609 N Martin Luther King Ave

**District:** Historic Landmark Individual Property Historic District

**Applicant:** Bockus Payne Architecture  
Collin Fleck  
1001 NW 63rd Street, Ste 300  
Oklahoma City, OK 73116

**Owner:** Freedom Center, Inc.  
Leonard Benton  
PO Box 36421  
Oklahoma City, OK 73136

### A. CASE ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Remove all paving and landscape material (elective);
2. Relocate existing monuments (elective);
3. Install new sidewalks (elective);
4. Install new paving including parking and event space (elective);
5. Construct planters and seating (elective);
6. Install landscaping (elective);
7. Install bicycle racks (elective);
8. Replace all brick veneer on structure (elective);
9. Replace roof (elective);
10. Install glazed tile on east side of building (elective);
11. Replace all windows (elective);
12. Replace all doors (elective);
13. Reinstall stone memorial (elective);
14. Install new windows on the west side of structure (elective);
15. Install new doors on the west side (elective);

16. Install new board and batten siding (elective);
17. Install LED Strip lighting (elective);
18. Place HVAC unit (elective); and
19. Refurbish sign on east side of structure (elective).

## B. BACKGROUND

### 1. Project Description

The proposed work is all previously approved. The CA for the previously approved work expired, so the applicant is reapplying for a new CA with no changes from what was previously approved, including one revision. Previous approval documents are included as attachments to this staff report.

### 2. Location

Project site is located on the west side of N Martin Luther King Avenue, between NE 25<sup>th</sup> and NE 26<sup>th</sup> Streets.

### 3. Site History

*Date of Construction:* 1945

*Zoned Historic Preservation/Historical Landmark:* 2018

*National Register Listing:* N/A

*Additional Information:*

Originally built as a Mobil filling station in 1945, the structure became the Freedom Center, home of the NAACP Youth Council, in 1965. The building served as a community center and gathering place for decades, and was at the center of many important events and efforts in Oklahoma City's Civil Rights Movement. The building suffered multiple arson attempts and was modified multiple times. At some point in the 1990s, the building was clad with brick on three sides with the original concrete block remaining underneath. Original openings from the 1945 structure appear to be identifiable within the now-exposed concrete block. The brick veneer was removed due to safety concerns in 2020.

### 4. Existing Conditions

The building is stable but is in need of maintenance, including work to the roof. The brick veneer was removed in 2019 because it was failing and falling away from the building in some locations.

### 5. Previous Actions

Previous applications for Historic Preservation Certificate of Appropriateness (HPCA) filed for this property include:

Case Number	Date	Owner	Decision
HPCA-20-00163	12/2/2020	Current	Approved

Remove brick (elective).			
HPCA-21-00169	12/01/2021	Current	Approved
1) Remove all paving and landscape material (elective); 2) Relocate existing monuments (elective); 3) Install new sidewalks (elective); 4) Install new paving including parking and event space (elective); 5) Construct planters and seating (elective); 6) Install landscaping (elective); 7) install bicycle racks (elective); 8) Replace all brick veneer (elective); 9) Replace shingles (elective); 10) Install glazed tile on east side of building (elective); 11) Replace all windows (elective); 12) Replace all doors (elective); 13) Reinstall stone memorial (elective); 14) Install skylights (elective); 15) Install new windows on the west side (elective); 16) Install new doors on the west side (elective); 17) Install new board and batten siding (elective); 18) Install LED strip lighting (elective); and 19) Place HVAC unit (elective).			
HPCA-21-00169 (Revision)	05/04/2022	Current	Approved
Revise HPCA-21-00169 to 20) Modify parking area, bike rack placement, and paving (elective); 21) Eliminate previously-approved concealed gutters (elective); 22) Modify size of new windows on rear elevation (elective); 23) Eliminate previously-approved skylight (elective).			

**C. ITEMS IN COMPLIANCE**

*Unless noted below in Section D., Issues and Considerations, all other case items of this proposal comply with the Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts, and with all relevant sections of the Oklahoma City Municipal Code, 2020.\**

**1. Items 1-19**

- a. Description: The previously approved CA and revision for this project has expired. Therefore, the applicant has returned with the same proposal as was previously approved, including the revision. The previous CA and revision are attached with this staff report. The findings and unique circumstance from the previous CA and revision will remain the same for the new CA. The conditions for approval have been removed, as they are no longer relevant.

**D. ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS**

*This proposal may not comply with the Design and Sustainability Standards and Guidelines for Oklahoma City Historic Districts, and with all relevant sections of the Oklahoma City Municipal Code, 2020\* as referenced below:*

None.

**E. HPCA-23-00029 STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

- 1. Approve Items 1) Remove all paving and landscape material (elective); 2) Relocate existing monuments (elective); 3) Install new sidewalks (elective); 4) Install new paving including parking and event space (elective); 5) Construct planters and seating (elective); 6) Install landscaping (elective); 7) Install bicycle racks (elective); 8) Replace all brick veneer on structure (elective); 9) Replace roof (elective); 10) Install**

glazed tile on east side of building (elective); 11) Replace all windows (elective); 12) Replace all doors (elective); 13) Reinstall stone memorial (elective); 14) Install new windows on the west side of structure (elective); 15) Install new doors on the west side (elective); 16) Install new board and batten siding (elective); 17) Install LED strip lighting (elective); 18) Place HVAC unit (elective); and 19) Refurbish sign on east side of structure (elective) with **Unique Circumstances and Conditions**, with the specific findings that the proposed work, with the agreed-upon condition, will not have an adverse effect on the historic character of the district or property; that the following **unique circumstances** exist; that the items do not strictly comply with all relevant Standards and Guidelines or are not addressed by them, but are nonetheless consistent with the spirit and intent of the Standards and Guidelines and are in compliance with the relevant sections of the Municipal Code, 2020\*, as referenced in the Staff Report.

**Specific Findings (excerpted from original :**

1. That the sign is existing and a character-defining feature of the historic building in its most recent form;
2. That the Guidelines support the retention and preservation of character-defining features.
3. That the Guidelines allow for new openings for windows, doors, and skylights on rear elevations and where not visible from the public right-of-way;
4. That the property is located at a corner lot where the rear elevation may be visible from the public right-of-way;
5. That the location of the structure in relationship to surrounding buildings, and the slope of the roof, may minimize the visibility of the proposed features;
6. That the property is unique because it no longer has any openings on the rear elevation;
7. That the proposed materials appear to be consistent with the existing features and character of the property but must be fully documented;
8. That all glass must meet requirements as specified in the Guidelines.
9. That the Guidelines support replacement of a composition roof with new, composition roof shingles;
10. That replacement of the roof maintains the form of the existing roof;
11. That the concealed gutter preserves the appearance of the roof at the eaves while providing protection for the building from deterioration caused by not directing water appropriately;
12. That the original finish of the gable ends is unknown;
13. That board and batten, fiber cement siding appears to be a comparable, similarly simple design that does not detract from the historic character of the building.
14. That existing paving and site features warrant repair or replacement;
15. That the general landscape plan diverges from the historic character of the site and its origins as a filling station but does not appear to impact the overall historic character

- of the property;
16. That some materials, including stone landscape benches/beds and LED strip lighting, may be out of character with the historic property;
  17. That materials present at the site, including brick and concrete, and more traditional lighting methods, may be more compatible with the property.
  18. That the Freedom Center building exhibits evidence of different eras of its development and evolution, including the most recent installation of brick veneer and gable roof;
  19. That rehabilitating the building to its most recent appearance is appropriate based on the age of the features and their connection to the history and development of the Freedom Center;
  20. That rehabilitating the building to the most recent appearance requires close replication of existing features, including brick, mortar, window, and doors;
  21. That installation of the tile markers on the east elevation is an appropriate technique to replicate a historic feature in a more durable and lasting manner;
  22. That the west façade was never clad in brick veneer and should remain exposed in order to avoid a false historic appearance and in order to preserve and document the evolution of the building;
  23. That the white concrete block exterior should be fully documented in photographs prior to reinstallation of the brick veneer;
  24. That the existing windows and doors, and their openings, have not been shown to be deteriorated beyond repair; **and**
  25. That full documentation of window and door openings and products are necessary to confirm accurate replication.

**Unique Circumstance:**

1. That the building has been in a constant state of evolution that justifies the approach to its rehabilitation.

**Condition:**

1. That the west wall of the structure be retained as CMU veneer to replicate the historic condition.

*Note: Staff recommendation does not constitute Commission action.*

*\*Relevant Sections of the 2020 Municipal Code governing HP/HL Districts are: §59.3300.1-5; §59.4150.4; §59.4250; §59.7250.1-4; §59.7300.1-7; §59.12200.1-4; §59.13300.1-6.*

*Copies of the Standards/Guidelines and Relevant Sections of the Municipal Code, 2020 are available online at [www.okc.gov/planning/hp/index.html](http://www.okc.gov/planning/hp/index.html) ; at Planning Department offices located at 420 W. Main, 9<sup>th</sup> floor, and each HP Commission Meeting.*

*DC KMF*