

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW STAFF REPORT

Before Dover Historic District Commission

June 18, 2026

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <u>Application:</u>       | Revision for West Entrance ADA Ramp – Legislative Hall Building Addition, HI-24-07                                                                                                           |
| <u>Owner:</u>             | State of Delaware                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <u>Location:</u>          | West side of Legislative Hall Addition perpendicular to Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard North and Martin Luther King Jr. South                                                              |
| <u>Address:</u>           | 411 Legislative Avenue and Court Street                                                                                                                                                      |
| <u>Tax Parcels:</u>       | ED-05-077.09-05-15.00-000 and ED-05-077.09-05-14.00-000                                                                                                                                      |
| <u>Size:</u>              | Ramp of 160 linear ft                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <u>Present Uses:</u>      | Legislative Hall                                                                                                                                                                             |
| <u>Proposed Use:</u>      | Legislative Hall – West Entrance ADA Ramp Revision to Legislative Hall Building Addition                                                                                                     |
| <u>Present Zoning:</u>    | IO (Institutional and Office Zone)<br>H (Historic District Zone)<br>SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone)<br><br>ROS (Recreational and Open Space Zone)<br>H (Historic District Zone) |
| <u>For Consideration:</u> | Architectural Review Certification of Revision for West Entrance ADA Ramp                                                                                                                    |

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Historic District Commission will act on a recommendation for a Revised Architectural Review Certificate for the addition of an ADA Ramp located at the West Entrance of Legislative Hall. The proposal includes an approximately 160 feet proposed ramp in length, while also providing access to a new accessible entrance created within the exiting west façade. A Temporary Ramp is also proposed during construction. This is associated with the Site Development Plan for the Legislative Hall Building Addition. The main property of 2.80 acres+/- is zoned IO (Institutional and Office Zone) and subject to the SWPOZ (Source Water Protection Overlay Zone) and the H (Historic District Zone). The subject property is located on the east side of Legislative Avenue as the block between Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard North and Martin Luther King Jr. South. The owner of

records is the State of Delaware. Property Addresses: 411 Legislative Avenue and Court Street. Tax Parcels: ED-05-077.09-05-15.00-000 and ED-05-077.09-05-14.00-000. Council District 4. *This Application HI-24-07 was considered at the Historic District Commission Meeting on October 17, 2024 and granted conditional approval of the Site Plan and Architectural Review Certification by the Planning Commission with Application S-24-19 Legislative Hall Building Addition on November 18, 2024.*

The original application was considered and motioned to recommend for approval, passing with 3-0 of the members present for the application by the Historic District Commission at their Meeting of October 17, 2024. They provided a recommendation in regard to the Architectural Review Certification for the Legislative Hall Building Addition and Associated Site Improvements. The recommendation reflected consideration of the *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone* and the project's compliance with the architectural review standards to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission granted conditional approval of the Architectural Review Certification on November 18, 2024.

#### Surrounding Land Uses

This subject property location in the block bounded by Legislative Avenue, Martin Luther Kings Jr. North, and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard South is part of the Capital Complex where multiple State buildings and offices are located. Across the street to the north is the Delaware Public Archives and to the south across the street is the Tatnall Building (offices) and the proposed location of the Legislative Hall Parking Garage and the Del-One Credit Union Building. Surrounding properties are zoned IO (Institutional and Office Zone) with other open space areas like the Legislative Mall area zoned ROS (Recreational and Open Space Zone). The surrounding properties are within the H (Historic Zone).

#### Previous Applications

The Legislative Hall Building at this location was constructed c. 1931-1933 with later building additions in 1965-1970 and in 1994. Prior to that the Delaware General Assembly met in the Old State House building located on The Green. (Previous Application: MI-94-17 Legislative Hall: Proposed Landscape Plan.) In October 2024, the Historic District Commission approved the application for Legislative Hall with Building Addition to create new main public entrance and Plaza area with Monument Walk (HI-24-07).

## II. HISTORIC PROPERTY INFORMATION

#### Review of Historic Maps

A series of historic maps were reviewed by Planning Staff for preliminary information on the area and found that the area was predominately open space with scattered buildings until the 1930s when the new Legislative Hall was constructed and the street network that we know today begins to be constructed as the Capital Complex area developed with various government buildings.

#### Property Information

This property is not listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The property is located within H (Historic District Zone) as established by the City of Dover. The development area consists of two parcels and a street/drive aisle area. The existing Legislative Hall Building is on the western parcel

in the block and then the eastern area (street/drive aisle area and east parcel) are an existing parking lot and landscape open space area.

### III. PROJECT PROPOSAL

#### PROJECT PROPOSAL (Revised Submission of June 2026 for West Entrance ADA Ramp):

The application proposes renovation of Legislative Hall involving the construction of a new ADA-accessible ramp. This is an addition to a previously approved project for Legislative Hall Building Addition at 411 Legislative Avenue (HI-24-07). The Applicant submission includes an architectural drawing illustration labeled as Plan Sheet SK-A.1 on June 4, 2026 that displays where the ADA Ramp is locationally in conjunction with the new Legislative Hall Addition, the new ADA parking spots, mapped accessible routes to the ramp, and an option for a temporary ADA-compliant ramp (outlined in blue). The applicant submitted three generated photos (sheet SK-A.2), dated June 4, 2024, of what the new West Entrance ADA-accessible ramp would look like from the directional views of the south, west, and north. The applicant submitted a Narrative Memo, dated June 5, 2026, describing the West Entrance ADA Ramp project and each of its accessible routes. The elements of the project are as follows:

1. New Parking Spaces: New ADA-accessible parking spaces will be designated along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard South in an area currently utilized for assigned parking. From these spaces, users will proceed west toward Legislative Avenue and connect to a new brick-paved accessible route that replaces an existing stepping condition. The route will continue to the west side of the building, where a new accessible ramp adjacent to the west entrance will provide access to the building.
2. Accessible Routes: The SK-A.1 architectural drawing highlights four (4) accessible routes leading from parking areas to the Legislative Hall Building. Detailed descriptions of each route are included in the Narrative Memo.
3. ADA Ramp Dimension and Location: The proposed ramp is approximately 160 feet in length and provides access to a new accessible entrance created within the existing west façade. To create the entrance, an existing window will be removed and the exterior masonry wall modified to provide a new door opening at floor level. The wall area above the new opening will be infilled to match the surrounding construction. This new entrance is required because the existing west entrance contains interior steps that prevent direct accessible access from the existing exterior landing.
4. Temporary Ramp: A Temporary ADA-compliant ramp constructed out of aluminum is proposed to be installed only for the duration of the Building Addition construction. The Temporary ADA ramp and entrance will be removed upon completion of the construction and brick. This option also includes modification to an existing window opening to provide temporary accessible entrance into the building. Upon construction completion, the opening will be restored to its original window configuration when the Temporary Ramp is removed.

5. Ramp Building Material: The proposed ramp will be constructed of masonry and concrete designed to complement the historic character of Legislative Hall. Exterior-facing surfaces will utilize brick masonry matching the exterior building in color, texture, and bond pattern. Ramp and landing surfaces will consist of concrete slabs incorporating a snow-melt system for year-round accessibility and safety. Guardrails and handrails will feature a wrought-iron design (black metal) consistent with the architectural character of the Legislative Mall and Capitol Complex and City of Dover *Design Standards and Guidance*. The new accessible entrance door will be a solid wood door matching the existing west entrance doors and will be framed with a cast stone surrounding consistent with other exterior openings throughout the building. Associated walkways will utilize the same brick paving materials found throughout the Legislative Complex, including a herringbone brick pattern with contrasting brick borders to maintain visual continuity with the surrounding side improvements.
6. Trees and Landscaping: Construction of the ADA Ramp will impact two existing trees and adjacent landscaping. The landscaping affected by the Temporary aluminum ADA-compliant ramp be restored upon the completion of the construction.

#### IV. ZONING REVIEW

The entire project site is located in the H (Historic District Zone) and subject to the provisions of the *Zoning Ordinance*, Article 3 §21 and referenced sections. *Zoning Ordinance*, Article 10 §3.2 outlines the review process for Architectural Review Certification and related building height, bulk, and setback standards.

The subject project area is zoned IO (Institutional and Office Zone) The IO zone allows the use for public and institutional building and makes the development subject to provisions of regulations the IO zone. The IO zoning district has a front yard setback of 10 feet.

#### Review of DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The subject property is located in the Dover Historic District Zone within the Capitol Square Historic Context. The Capitol Square Context is described on pages 2-8 and 2-9. Location within the Dover Historic District Zone requires proposals for demolition, new construction, additions, and certain renovation or rehabilitation activities to existing buildings to receive an Architectural Review Certificate.

As stated in the *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone*, an Architectural Review Certificate will be granted “if it is found that the architectural style, general design, height, bulk and setbacks, arrangement location and materials affecting the exterior appearance are generally in harmony with neighboring structures and complementary to the traditional architectural standards of the historic district.” In accordance with Article 10 §3.2, the Historic District Commission will provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission regarding the project’s compliance with the architectural review standards.

Chapter 3: Maintenance, Repair, Preservation and Restoration of Existing Historic Buildings includes guidance related to various building elements and materials. This proposal must be reviewed for conformity with the design criteria guidelines found in Chapter 4: New Construction, Additions, Demolition and Relocation. Information on the review considerations is given below.

#### New Construction

The *Design Standards and Guidelines* for New Construction (Chapter 4: pages 4-1 through 4-8) provide the design criteria and development guidelines. The guidelines specify the following individual considerations for new construction to be considered in the review by the Historic District Commission (and Planning Commission) of the project for Architectural Review Certification:

- Style
- Bays, windows, and doors (*size, relationship, spacing of*)
- Absolute Size (*compare overall size of new building*)
- Massing (*relationship of solid-to-void*)
- Orientation (*location of primary façade*)
- Proportions (*comparison of height to width of building and elements*)
- Materials

Also, in Chapter 4 there is guidance related to “Additions to Existing Buildings” (Chapter 4: pages 4-8 through 4-10) which outlines similar topics of Siting, Scale, Elevation of the First Floor, Floor-to-floor Height, Massing, Orientation, Proportions, Materials, Forms, and other guidance. Reading of this guidance finds that it is primarily focused on additions to residential and smaller scale buildings which have a front façade and rear. For this Legislative Hall West Entrance ADA Ramp project, the considerations for New Construction are more appropriate.

The proposed project must also be reviewed for compliance with the standards established by the *Zoning Ordinance*. The standards include items such as setbacks from property lines, lot coverage, height, etc. This Proposal for the placement of the ADA Ramps on the West Entrance appears to conform to most of the bulk requirements of the IO Zoning District.

#### STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are Staff comments and recommendations for this application regarding project activities and Architectural Review Certification.

- 1) Staff recommends conditional approval of the Architectural Review Certificate for the construction of the West Entrance ADA Ramp project finds the ramp addition to be of compatible design with the existing building and the other nearby buildings. The proposal complies with the intent of the *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone* and with its recommendations for development in Capital Complex Historic Context. The proposed ADA Ramp brick masonry is in compliance with the masonry guidelines. The proposed new accessible entrance wooden door is similar to the existing west entrance doors. Its surrounding cast stone frame is consistent with other exterior openings throughout Legislative Hall. The proposed guardrails and handrails made

of wrought iron is consistent with the architectural character of the Legislative Mall and Capitol Complex and City of Dover historic district standards.

- 2) The following conditions are recommended by Staff to improve the project's compliance with the recommended guidelines of the *Design Standards and Guidelines*. The following are recommended conditions:
  - a. The selected brick choices should be compatible with the brick of the existing building.
  - b. Clarify what trees and landscaping will be impacted by the construction of the ramp in the future Landscape Plan as the architectural renderings may only be concepts. If trees are displaced, then new tree plantings should occur. This is to ensure compliance with the tree planting requirements of the overall project.
  - c. Any revisions or changes in the identified materials may be subject to further review by the Historic District Commission.

#### Historic District Commission Action Required

The Historic District Commission shall consider the proposal and provide a recommendation in regard to the Architectural Review Certification for the West Entrance ADA Ramp project. The recommendation should reflect consideration of the *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone*.