

ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW REPORT for REVISED PLAN

Recommendation from the Dover Historic District Commission Meeting of July 16, 2026

And Staff Review Report

Previous Recommendation from the Dover Historic District Commission on October 17, 2024

|                           |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <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                                                                                                                    |

This Report for **Revised HI-24-07 Legislative Hall Building Addition: Revision for West Entrance ADA Ramp** was updated upon submission of a Revision for a West Entrance ADA Ramp located at Legislative Hall. The Planning Staff deemed the revision of adding the ADA Ramp to warrant its presentation to update the project's Architectural Review Certification review with the Historic District Commission and Planning Commission. Application HI-24-07 was initially considered by the Historic District Commission on October 17, 2024, and then considered by the Planning Commission on November 18, 2024, as Site Plan S-24-19 Legislative Hall Building Addition.

**ACTION OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION (Revision for ADA Ramp):**

The Historic District Commission at their Meeting of June 18, 2026, began review of a Revision for the West Entrance ADA Ramp as associated with HI-24-07 Legislative Hall Building Addition. Following the presentation by the project architecture team, the Historic District Commission took action to recommend redesigning the building entrance door opening from the ramp to better reflect a symmetrical window arrangement at the entrance point and they requested resubmission of the redesign.

The Applicant made further design revisions and consideration of the updated application continued at the July 16, 2026 Meeting of the Historic District Commission. The following members were present at the July Meeting: Chairman Eric Czerwinski, Vice-Chair Mrs. Ellen Richardson, Mrs. Ann Horsey, and Ms. Kathleen Baker. The application was represented by Dan Ridgely and Gabe Cheung for Studio JAED. The updated Revision documents included the cover letter, plan, and redesigned elevations in response to the June 2026 comments of the Historic District Commission.

**Action Taken by Historic District Commission:**

The motion to recommend approval passed 3-1 of the members present for this application at the July 16, 2026 Meeting. **The Historic District Commission recommends approval of the Revised Architectural Review Certificate for Application HI-24-07 Revised Legislative Hall Building Addition at 411 Legislative Avenue and Court Street: Revision for West Entrance ADA Ramp on the applicant's presentation and plans (as Revised July 8, 2026) with reference to the Staff notes in Staff Recommendation Report.**

During the Meetings, the Historic District Commission heard the applicant's presentation on the Legislative Hall Building Addition Revised Project Revision for the inclusion of an ADA Ramp on the West Entrance of the building. This included their response to the series of Staff Comments and Recommendations. They presented information on the Revisions for the addition of an ADA Ramp located at the West Entrance of Legislative Hall site and building; ramp and door architectural features and materials; maintaining the symmetry of the building; and other site items. Questions focused on the location of the ramp in reference to the historical façade of the west entrance of Legislative Hall, ADA Ramp elevation detailing and materials, location of handicap parking relative to the location of the proposed ADA Ramp, design of the door connecting the ADA Ramp to the building, and other site features. *The Meeting Minutes of the Historic District Commission are still being prepared; the Meeting recording will be posted on the City's website.*

*The following is the Architectural Review Staff Report as prepared for the June 18, 2026 Meeting of the Historic District Commission with notations on its redesign updates.*

**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 (for the Legislative Hall Building Addition) 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 ADA Ramp design was updated with a July 8, 2026 submission.* 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. *(Note: the format of the opening was redesigned based on Historic District Commission comments. See July 8, 2026 elevation drawings.)*

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. *(Note: it is unclear if the Temporary Ramp option will be pursued or needed based on construction timing.)*
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 walkaways 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. *(\*Note: The door was revised to retain the keystone and jack arch with a door configuration at the full opening height and to include the use of a transom window and glass window lights and similar white trimwork for the door.)*
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.

#### V. 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.

#### VI. STAFF COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following Staff Comments and Recommendations for this application regarding the Architectural Review Certification were originally provided in the Architectural Review Staff

Report Issued for the June 18, 2026 Historic District Commission Meeting. Notations on the redesign as presented in July are included.

- 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.
  - a. *\*Staff finds the redesign of the door opening to include the transom and glass along with the retention of the keystone and jack arch to be compliant.*
- 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.

#### **VII. Historic District Commission Action on Revised Submission for ADA Ramp**

The Historic District Commission considered the Revised proposal at their Meeting of July 16, 2026 and have provided a recommendation in regard to the Revised Architectural Review Certification for the Revision for West Entrance ADA Ramp at the Legislative Hall Building. The recommendation reflects consideration of the *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone*. The specific conditions of the Recommendation are noted in this Report under the heading of "Action of the Historic District Commission (Revision for ADA Ramp)."

#### **Additional Documents Considered by the Historic District Commission on July 16, 2026:**

- Letter for July 8, 2026 on Legislative Hall – West Entrance ADA Ramp, Resubmission to Revision to Legislative Hall Building Addition Project HI-24-07
- Updated Site Plan (Sheet SK-A.1 dated July 8, 2026)
- Updated Elevation Rendering Views (Sheet SK-A.2 dated July 8, 2026)