



CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission acting as the Historic Landmarks Commission
FROM: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner
RE: 71 Cowlitz Street (The Klondike Tavern) Architectural Review
DATE: May 5, 2026

Per SHMC 17.32.070(7), permanent exterior architectural changes to buildings (that are not officially recognized historic resources) shall comply with the ***Riverfront District Architectural Guidelines***. The Historic Landmarks Commission shall make a recommendation to the approval authority as to whether the Commission believes the proposal complies. Please review your copy of the guidelines when looking at this proposal and be prepared to discuss. The guidelines can also be found on the City's website:

<https://www.sthelensoregon.gov/planning/page/riverfront-district-architectural-design-guidelines>

The Planning Commission reviewed and approved previous work for this property, which is summarized below.

- **Building Permit No. 749-22-000519-STR (October 2022)** – This was to re-roof the building and install a new roof hatch. For the Commission, this was Architectural Review alone, without any associated land use permit. Recommendation for that was for old roof layers to be removed (i.e., avoid layering new roofing over old).
- **SDRm.2.23 (April 2023)** - Minor Site Development Review (SDRm.2.23) to construct a new 682 sq. ft. covered porch addition, a corresponding basement addition, a new ADA lift at the main entry, a new basement entry door/stairs, a new exterior double door to the proposed porch addition, a new door into the restaurant near the ADA lift, and structural improvements to the foundation to help prevent the building from settling. This included Architectural Review by the Commission.
- **Revised SDRm.2.23 (July 2023)** - Revisions to SDRm.2.23 included replacing the ADA lift with a sloped ramp/walkway for a *future* elevator shaft, a new wooden basement window, relocation of the full-light basement door, and winter/rain folding accordion windows on the porch addition. This included Architectural Review by the Commission.
- **SDR.3.24 (March 2024)** – A Site Development Review addressing on-site parking improvements, shard access improvements and elevator to serve future uses in upper floors. This also addressed new uses in the basement and expansion of the main floor eating and drinking establishment with outdoor covered patio. This included Architectural Review by the Commission.

Now in 2026 the owner is hoping to finish the project, continuing the effort explained above (some of which is not completed) with a new side entry, establishing the hotel use in the upper floors, and new structures adding amenities to the site. This will require another Site Development Review and more building permitting, but also additional Architectural Review by the Commission.

The Architectural Review before the Commission is prior to the Site Development Review application or any building permitting, with time efficiency in mind.

There are many new exterior modifications with the proposal.

First, recent photos of the building are included to compare with the proposed elevation drawings provided by the applicant.



Above left: the building as seen from Cowlitz Street with the east side also shown. The plans identify the Cowlitz Street side as a “front” elevation. The east side is the location of the new entry. **Above right:** the building as seen from Cowlitz Street with the west side current restaurant entry shown. **Below:** the building as seen from S. 1st Street showing the west side and the rear side. The unimproved area in the foreground is the proposed parking area with the proposed buildings in the approximate area as the conex box (shipping container). All photos from April 2026.

Second, staff thoughts and comments.

This architectural review includes additions to the building (e.g., the new entry), new treatments to existing facades (e.g., new awnings for existing windows), and a new structure (the pavilion).

A new sign attached to the building is also shown, but that will require a separate Sign Permit later and that’s when Architectural Review will be conducted for the sign. Don’t worry about the sign for now.

It’s ok if the Commission thinks about or wants to talk about more things than identified by staff below. I welcome that discussion to help make sure we get it right.

As organized by sections of the **Riverfront District Architectural Guidelines**. Questions for the Commission to discuss are in **red**.

Awnings & Canopies

Awnings should be rectangular (not arched). Also, the Guidelines note that awnings are appropriate only below the mid-belt cornice.

The building does not have a traditional storefront, which is the focus for awnings in the Guidelines. The building also does not have a mid-belt cornice, though awnings are proposed for some upper floor windows. Upper floors are usually above the mid-belt cornice.

The awnings would be an amenity for people staying in rooms on the upper floors, but there is no awning detail that identifies the specific awning profile. If the Commission is ok with the upper floor awnings, staff at least recommend that the awnings be rectangular.

Buildings Façade/Entry

Preservation of original entries is supported by the Guidelines. This building is unique in the Riverfront District because it lacks any ground floor access directly from the street. The current access is not going away.

There is no information about the door at the improved east side entry. As it will be obscured by the covered entryway, does the Commission have any concern about this?

The Guidelines note to not use balconies that are not original to the structure. The new covered entry has an integrated balcony as part of the roof structure, so it's not just a balcony. Is the Commission ok with this?

Materials and Building Colors

Horizontal lap siding to match the original is proposed for the building additions.

The pavilion (new structure) will have CMU, mostly on the back (east) side, which will not be as visible with some galvanized corrugated metal on the front, but only towards the bottom. These materials may not be traditional, but they are not front and center. That said, is the Commission ok with this?

Proposed colors include brown, white and yellow paint.

Note that fiberboard is proposed for the walls of the new eastside entry. This is probably because that additional will be at the property line where the building code typically requires fire rated construction.

Attachments

- Narrative
- Plans

Phase 2 Design Review Narrative

The Klondike Tavern / Hotel Amenity Improvements
71 Cowlitz Street, St. Helens, Oregon

The Phase 2 design updates are consistent with the Olde Towne Architectural Design Guidelines and support the continued rehabilitation and activation of the Klondike Tavern property as an integrated hotel, restaurant, and hospitality-related event venue, including weddings, retreats, and similar uses. The additions help bring the upper stories of the structure into active occupancy through a required egress stairway addition, while also improving the building's ability to operate as both a tightly integrated hotel/restaurant property and as two separately functioning uses.

A new and improved restaurant entrance and exit is proposed on the east alley side, replacing the end-of-life stairway presently in that location. This improves circulation, safety, and operational separation between the restaurant, hotel, patio, and amenity areas without diminishing the primary Cowlitz facade of the historic building.

The Phase 2 design also adds one architectural detail to the previously approved elevator tower: metal louvers. This detail gives the previously flat tower surface more architectural texture, depth, and point of view while remaining compatible with the building's historic character and overall material palette.

The proposed work uses traditional and compatible materials, including retained and matching horizontal lap siding, retained and matching vertical siding, wood trim, wood railings, painted finishes, fabric awnings, historically compatible wood single-lite windows, wood double-hung windows, and wood fixed windows. These materials maintain visual continuity with the existing historic building and reflect the Guidelines' preference for traditional materials, compatible scale, and historically appropriate color palettes.

Windows

New and modified window openings are designed to maintain the building's traditional rhythm and vertical emphasis. New windows are proposed as historically compatible wood single-lite, wood double-hung, or wood fixed units, which are compatible with the historic character of the property and the district.

The design avoids false windows, inappropriate contemporary window systems, or disruptive changes to the primary street-facing facade. Where window or door changes are proposed, they are tied to the adaptive reuse of the property and support hotel, restaurant, life-safety, and amenity functions.

Doors and Entries

New doors are located in functional secondary areas and are designed with traditional materials and simple detailing. The primary public identity of the historic building remains intact.

The new restaurant entrance and exit on the east alley side improves the connection between the restaurant, hotel, patio, and event spaces. It also replaces an end-of-life stairway with a safer, more functional, and more coherent access point. This is an operational improvement, but also a design improvement, because it clarifies the east-side circulation pattern and supports the dual-use nature of the building.

The wellness pavilion doors are painted wood with dark metal hardware, appropriate for a secondary accessory structure. Their simple form keeps them visually subordinate to the main historic building.

Siding, Trim, and Exterior Materials

The proposed siding and trim strategy is consistent with the Guidelines' preference for traditional materials and visual continuity. Existing horizontal lap siding and vertical siding are retained where possible. New siding is designed to match existing siding patterns.

New wood trim, wood railings, painted finishes, and coordinated siding are used to integrate the Phase 2 additions into the historic building composition. The Victorian-inspired color-way is compatible with Olde Towne's historic character and avoids bright, neon-like, or visually disruptive colors.

The material approach helps the new work read as a compatible addition to the property rather than as a disconnected contemporary intervention, while also being reasonably easy to distinguish from the original historic structure through cues such as single-hung windows instead of double-hung.

Visible Facades

The front facade remains the primary public face of the building. The Phase 2 interventions are concentrated on secondary facades where they support circulation, life safety, restaurant operations, hotel operations, and amenity access.

The east side receives the new restaurant entrance and exit, and two restored historic windows: one previously converted to a door, and another boarded over inside the wall. The west/patio side is improved as the hotel and restaurant amenity frontage, with coordinated siding, wood trim, wood railings, appropriate window placement, and fabric awnings.

The previously approved elevator tower is refined through the addition of metal louvers. These louvers add texture and architectural interest to a previously flat surface, helping the tower read as a more intentional architectural element while remaining visually compatible with the larger historic building. We had received feedback that the flat tower looked like an outlet mall, and were seeking ways to create a different impression that could still pass City and National Park Service federal historic standards.

Fabric Awnings / Cloth Sunshades

The proposed fabric awnings are consistent with the Guidelines' support for historically appropriate awnings and canopies. They provide shade, support outdoor dining and hospitality use, and reinforce the pedestrian-oriented character of Olde Towne.

The awnings are visually lightweight and do not obscure important architectural features. Their fabric construction and metal-frame support system are compatible with the district's historic awning traditions.

Restaurant Vent / Rooftop Mechanical Equipment

The relocation of the restaurant exhaust from its current non-code side-yard position to the roof is both a code-compliance improvement and a design improvement.

This change removes a visually and functionally disruptive element from the side property and allows that area to serve as the hotel's event lawn and outdoor amenity area. The rooftop location is consistent with the Guidelines' preference for locating mechanical equipment away from primary facades and minimizing its visual impact.

The relocation is also central to the business case for the property. It allows the restaurant, hotel, and event functions to work together by opening the side yard for the wedding lawn and hospitality programming.

New Egress Stair

The new exterior stair is a necessary life-safety and occupancy improvement. It helps bring the upper stories into active hotel use by providing required egress.

The stair is located on a secondary elevation and designed with wood stairs and railings so that it remains visually compatible with the historic building. Its placement supports required circulation while allowing the side yard to function as an event and amenity space.

Wellness / Amenities Pavilion

The wellness pavilion is a small-scale accessory structure located toward the rear/side property line. It is designed to support the hotel's amenity program without competing with the historic building.

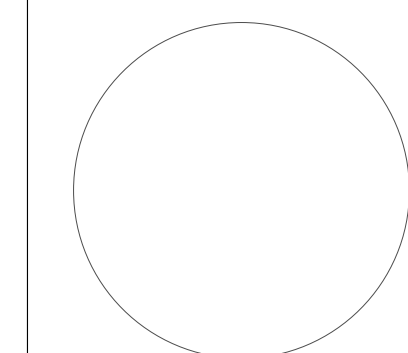
Its use of painted wood, board-and-batten siding, asphalt shingles, wood pergola elements, painted doors, and coordinated color families gives it a compatible, traditional character. The pavilion backs up to the property line, which helps preserve usable open space for the wedding lawn and keeps the amenity structure organized within the site.

Because the pavilion supports the wedding lawn and wellness amenities, it is central to the hotel's business case and the long-term economic viability of the restored property.

Conclusion

Overall, the Phase 2 work enhances the property's function while preserving and reinforcing its historic character. The design uses compatible materials, traditional proportions, appropriate awnings, coordinated colors, and secondary placement of functional additions to ensure that the building continues to contribute positively to Olde Towne's historic commercial character.

The improvements are practical, code-responsive, and preservation-minded. They support the successful occupancy of the historic upper stories, improve restaurant and hotel circulation, relocate non-compliant mechanical equipment, and create the amenities necessary for the building to function as a viable hotel, restaurant, and hospitality-related event property.



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ISSUED SETS:

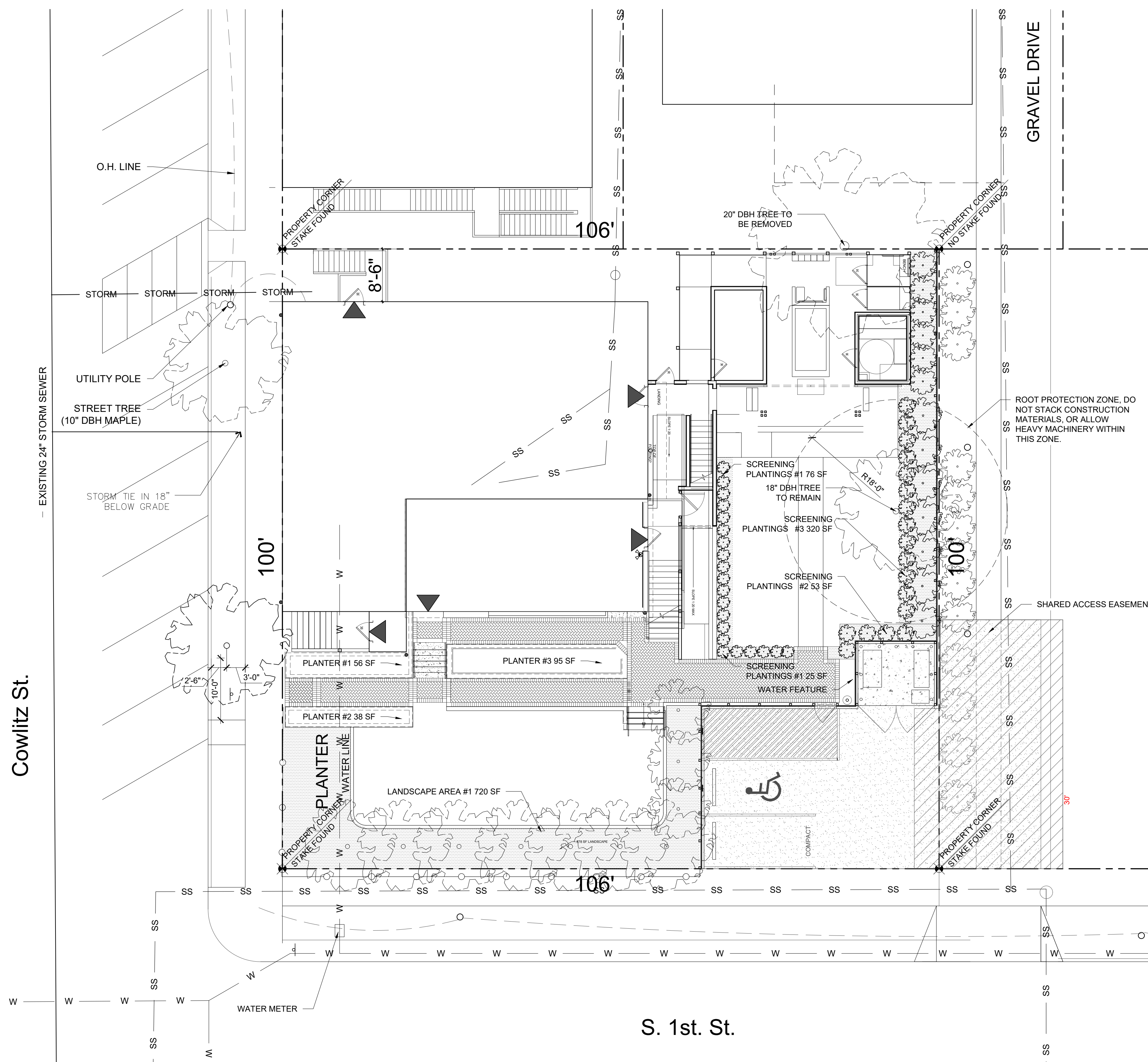
DATE	DESCRIPTION	REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION
4-24-26	PHASE 2 DESIGN REVIEW			

THE KLONDIKE TAVERN
PHASE 2
 71 COWLITZ ST.
 ST HELENS, OR 97051

DATE: 4/24/26
 PROJ #: 2306.2
 DRAWN: JHM/SZO
 CHECKED: JHM

ARCHITECTURAL
 SITE PLAN

G1.5



01 ARCHITECTURAL SITE PLAN
 SCALE: 1/4"=1'-0"

ARCHITECTURAL SITE PLAN IS FOR GENERAL INFORMATION & ZONING COMPLIANCE ONLY. REFER TO CIVIL DRAWINGS FOR DETAILED SITE INFORMATION, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO GRADING, SLOPES, PAVING DETAILS, UTILITY CONNECTIONS, AND STORMWATER MANAGEMENT.

