



## CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

# MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Planning Commission acting as the Historic Landmarks Commission  
**FROM:** Jennifer Dimsho, AICP, Associate Planner  
**RE:** Architectural Character Review at 325 Strand Street  
**DATE:** August 26, 2024

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Will Uebelacker submitted a building permit (Permit No. 749-24-000238-STR) to remodel the existing commercial building, including exterior alterations, at 325 Strand Street.

Per SHMC 17.132.172 (7), permanent exterior architectural changes to buildings (including new construction) must 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 website:

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

### Background

This is a different type of proposal than anything we have dealt with since the inception of the Riverfront District Architectural Guidelines in 2012. In 2020, the building was partially demolished to remove interior walls and exterior siding to expose areas for observation, repair and such (Permit No. 14729). This was done, but the building was left exposed to weather and further decay without further work to date, other than temporary shoring as ordered by the Building Official around the time infrastructure construction started due to concerns about worker safety if the building collapsed. If this was a designated landmark subject to Chapter 17.36 SHMC, this could be considered demolition by neglect which is prohibited by this Chapter.

Demolition by neglect is not a technical violation since this building is not a designated landmark, but it is subject to the Riverfront District Architectural Guidelines. A general review of the standards will reveal a trend when dealing with **existing buildings** of maintaining or restoring existing or original appearance, materials, etc., where **new construction** is more about compatibility.

Since the applicant's reason for rebuilding the building in phases so that at no time the building goes away and loses the off-street parking exceptions of the zoning district, **a key question for the Commission is should you look at the building through the lens of an existing building or new construction.** This is a key question the Commission should discuss first before delving into the details of the proposal, since the front façade proposed (especially the Strand Street façade) is considerably different and how you look at it will differ depending on if you include the existing building provisions.

### Proposal

The proposal is to remodel the entire commercial building into phases so that the building itself remains intact during the construction. The existing building will be divided into two separate commercial suites. Exterior changes are proposed, mostly to the east-facing façade, but there are changes on each facade. A subsequent land use permit will be needed to establish the land uses/occupancies of the two suites.

The following is a summary of the exterior changes as it relates to the Guidelines organized by chapter. Anything in red requires a discussion by the Commission.

### **Awnings/Canopies**

New commercial buildings are encouraged to integrate awnings over the sidewalk to provide shade and protection for pedestrians. Simple hanger-rod suspended metal canopies are preferred over canvas awnings. Awnings should be straight in shape and not arched. Awnings should ideally span the length of the building, but at a minimum, should project over the primary entrance.

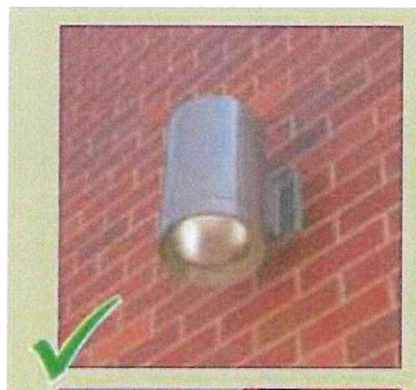
The applicant is proposing two hanger-rod metal awnings over the two commercial entrances. There are no awnings currently. Staff feels this complies.

### **Building Façade/Entry**

The existing Strand Street building façade includes one vehicular access door and a more traditional storefront entry (not recessed). This proposal converts the vehicular access door into two separate identical storefronts. The Guidelines state building façades should incorporate some of the following: recessed entry, kickplates at the base of display windows/doors, ground floor display windows, transom windows, parapets/cornices, sign bands, 2<sup>nd</sup> story windows and decorative sills, and columns/pilasters. Of these, the applicant incorporates a parapet/cornice, a sign band, transom windows, and kickplates on the doors. The Guidelines encourage using windows and doors of a similar shape, size, and material to those found in the Riverfront District. **The large folding display windows are not elsewhere downtown. There are no kickplates at the base of the display windows; it appears the windows fold open and they extend all the way to the ground. Does the Commission want to recommend replacement of these ground-floor folding display window into something more like a traditional storefront with kickplates/bulkheads at the base?** See “Windows” below for a similar discussion.

### **Building Lighting**

The preferred gooseneck lighting fixture has been incorporated into the commercial units above their signage and over a new exit on the rear/west façade. The Guidelines recommend installing partially or fully shielded light fixtures which only emit light downward. There are two proposed wall sconces on Strand Street. These can sometimes be directed upwards. **Staff recommends including a condition that the sconce lighting be directed downwards or that they be shielded.**



### **Signage**

There is not enough detail about the signage. Signage will be reviewed with future permitting and review by the Commission with a future submittal.

## Material & Building Colors

Traditional materials such as brick, terra cotta, concrete or stone, and horizontal wood siding are preferred. When using brick, match brick and mortar in color, profile, and texture to another neighboring historic building. The applicant is proposing brick wainscot along the Strand Street storefronts. The narrative states this brick will be of the antique red. Staff notes this is similar to the neighboring Morgus Building (picture below), adjacent to this proposal. Staff feels this complies, **but should be included as a note on the plans.**

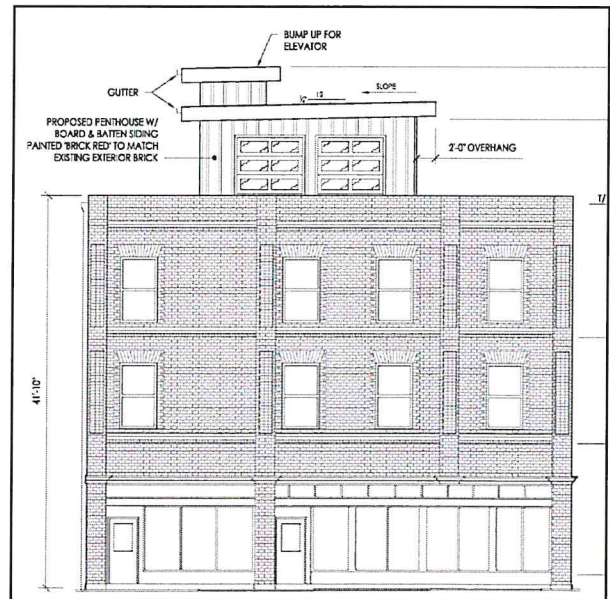
The proposal includes using horizontal siding which is what used to be on all facades of the existing building. The applicant narrative indicates use of either replacement wood siding or an approved fiber cement siding with wood grain texture. **Is the Commission okay with horizontal fiber cement with wood grain texture in lieu of wood siding replacement?**

## Windows

The Guidelines encourage preserving original windows. It appears the applicant will be replacing all of the original Strand Street windows with new transom windows and large folding display windows/doors in lieu of traditional storefront windows with kickplates/bulkheads. **The large folding display windows are not necessarily traditional and do not incorporate a window kickplate. Two neighboring traditional storefront photos/plans are included on the next page for reference. Does the Commission want to recommend a change to the large folding display windows/doors to mirror a more traditional storefront window that would match the adjacent two developments?**



**Left:** Morgus building adjacent to subject property on Strand Street demonstrating storefront window kickplates/paneled bulkheads



**Right:** Muckle building at the corner of Strand Street & Cowlitz Street demonstrating traditional window kickplates along Strand Street

## Attachments

- Applicant Narrative (5 pages)
- Building Elevations (2 pages)

# Architectural Design Guidelines – Narrative Response

FOR THE CONSERVATION OF TRADITIONAL DESIGN IN OLD TOWNE,  
ST. HELENS

Project Address:

325 Strand St

Tax Lot 300

**Building Alteration**

Date: 8/22/2024

## 1. Awnings & Canopies

### 1.2 General Guidance

*Awnings and canopies should complement neighboring features and reflect the historic use of awnings and canopies within Olde Towne.*

### 1.3 Existing Buildings

*Original awnings should be maintained; removed original awnings can be replaced.*

Response:

The current building does not have any awnings attached to the facade, though photographs support the evidence that fabric awnings once existed. The proposed alteration would provide two fixed metal canopies at each tenant entrance. The proposed metal awnings fit the character of the neighboring buildings and match the acceptable style as outlined in the Olde Towne guidelines.

## 2. Building Façade / Entry

### 2.2 General Guidance

*Maintain traditional façade elements on existing structures and encourage their use on new buildings.*

### 2.3 Existing Buildings

*Preservation or restoration of original building facades and entryways is necessary to maintain the unique qualities and characteristics of Olde Towne, and to strengthen the integrity of the district.*

## 4. Signage

### 4.2 General Guidance

*Signs should complement the historic and cultural significance of the area and be sensitive to existing architectural patterns and features found in Olde Towne.*

### 4.3 Existing Buildings

*Signs should be maintained; signs that are historically represented in photographs may be replaced given compliance with other sign regulation. Murals can be maintained or recreated based on evidence, or created to honor building history.*

Response:

The existing sign for the tenant is located just above the door and fixed to the building façade directly. There is no historic value to the existing tenant signage. The proposed building alteration will place the tenant signage just above the transom windows and will match the same style as the existing condition by attaching the signage directly to the building in a designated spot.

## 5. Maintenance

### 5.2 General Guidance

*Prior to beginning an alteration or addition project, evaluate what cleaning or alternation may be necessary to the existing materials.*

Response:

Not applicable, the building is not a historic building and every material will need to be replaced due to weather related damages.

## 6. Material & Building Colors

### 6.2 General Guidance

*Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the historic district should be preserved.*

### 6.3 Existing Buildings

*During rehabilitation of buildings, replace materials with similar material types to maintain original appearance of the structure.*

Response:

The existing building façade is composed of painted wood, and the building alteration will match the same style with either horizontal wood siding, or fiber cement siding w/ wood grain texture painted to be consistent with the recommended neutrals or stately greens as listed in the Olde Towne guidelines. The brick wainscot will match the antique



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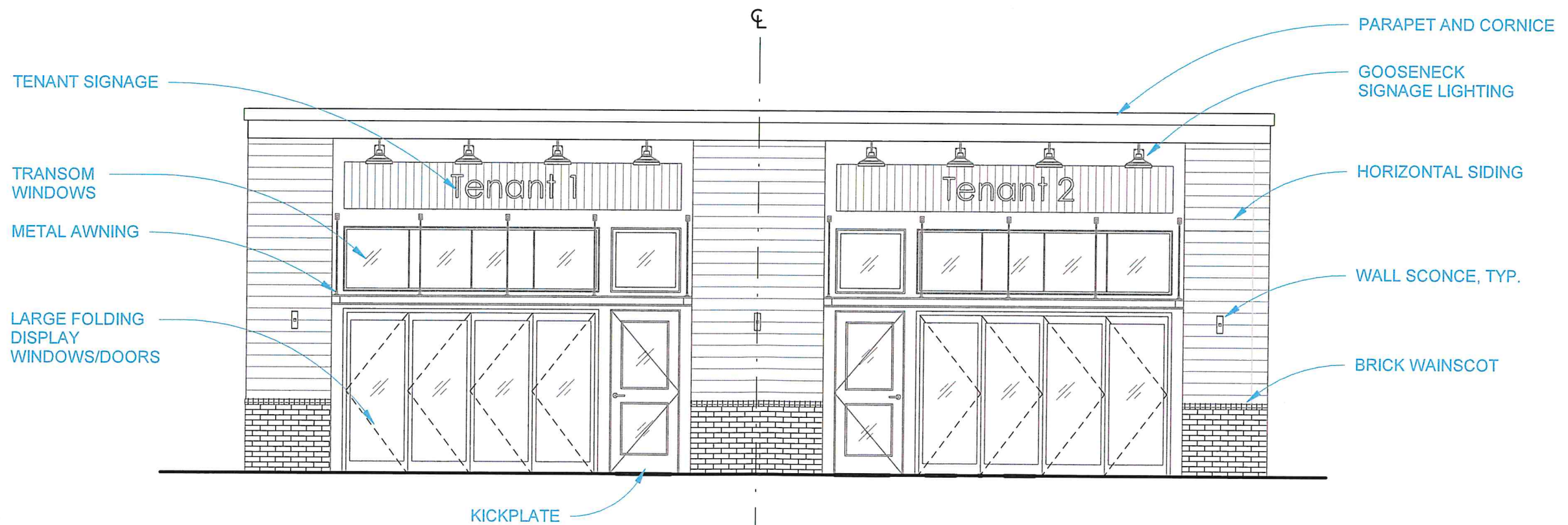
Response:

The existing building does not have any historical value, and the existing windows are single pane and fully deteriorated or broken. Instead, an interpretation of the architectural guidelines and the concept of the existing layout will be pursued. The overall pattern of each tenant entrance (door and window) is a rectangular shape, the same idea applies to the building alteration by having the entrance door to one side, and the large folding display windows/doors to the other side. This creates a visual connected rectangle at the pedestrian level, similar to the architectural guideline layout. The existing building has transom windows that run across the display windows and tenant door that is also evident in the building alteration. Together, the display windows, entry door (with kickplate), and the transom windows represent the ethos of the Olde Towne guidelines without mimicking the design exactly.

# EAST ELEVATION

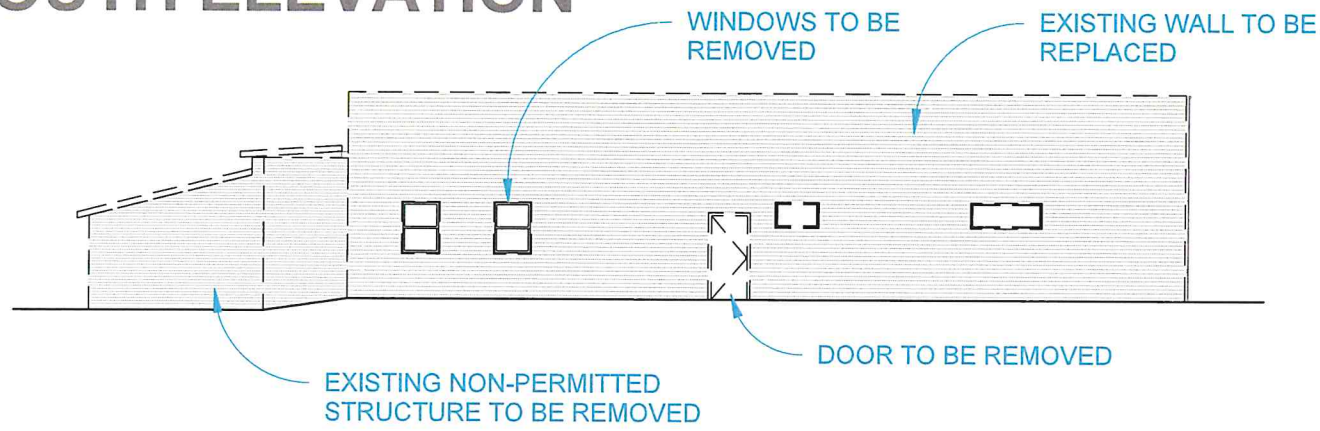


**3 EAST ELEVATION EXISTING**  
3/16" = 1'-0"

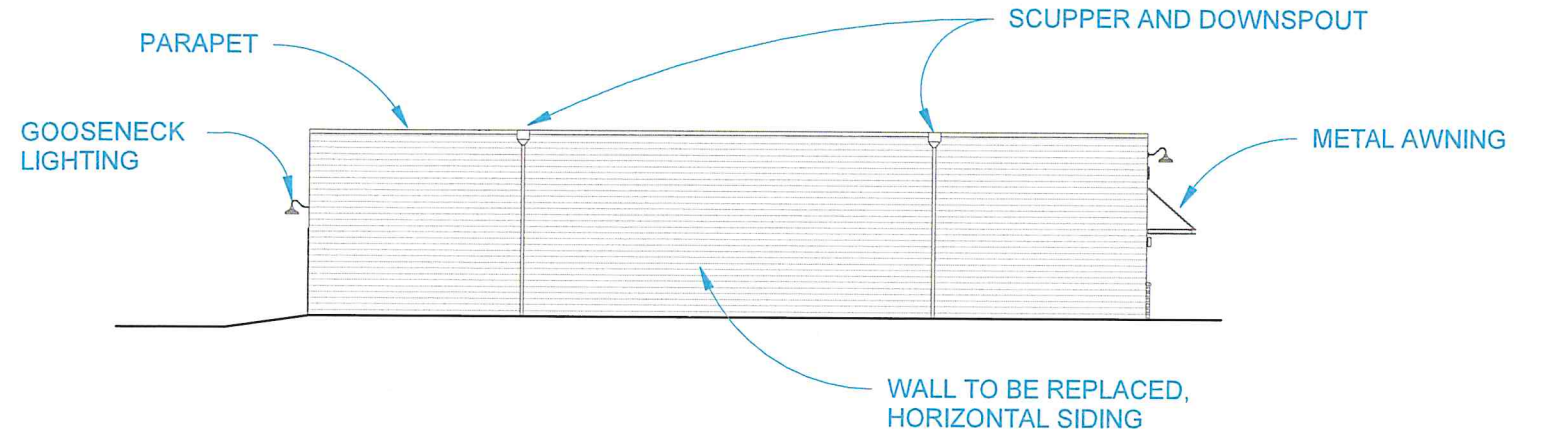


**4 EAST ELEVATION PROPOSED**  
3/16" = 1'-0"

# SOUTH ELEVATION

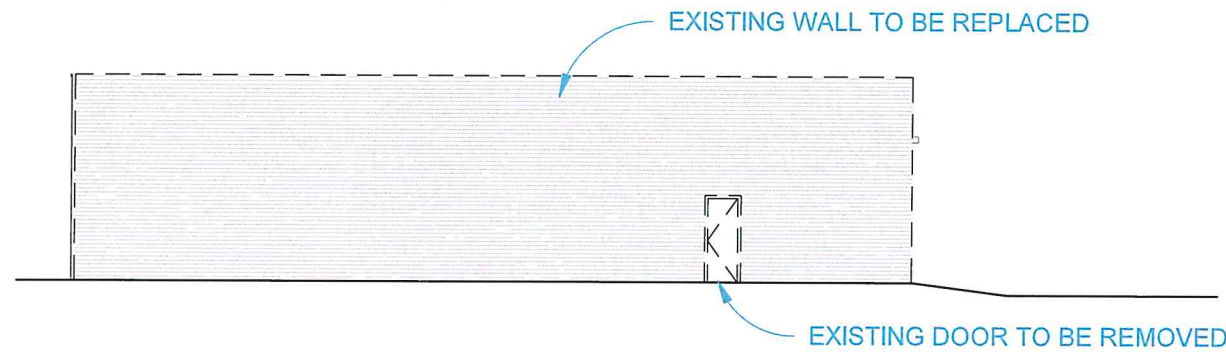


**1 SOUTH ELEVATION EXISTING**  
1/16" = 1'-0"

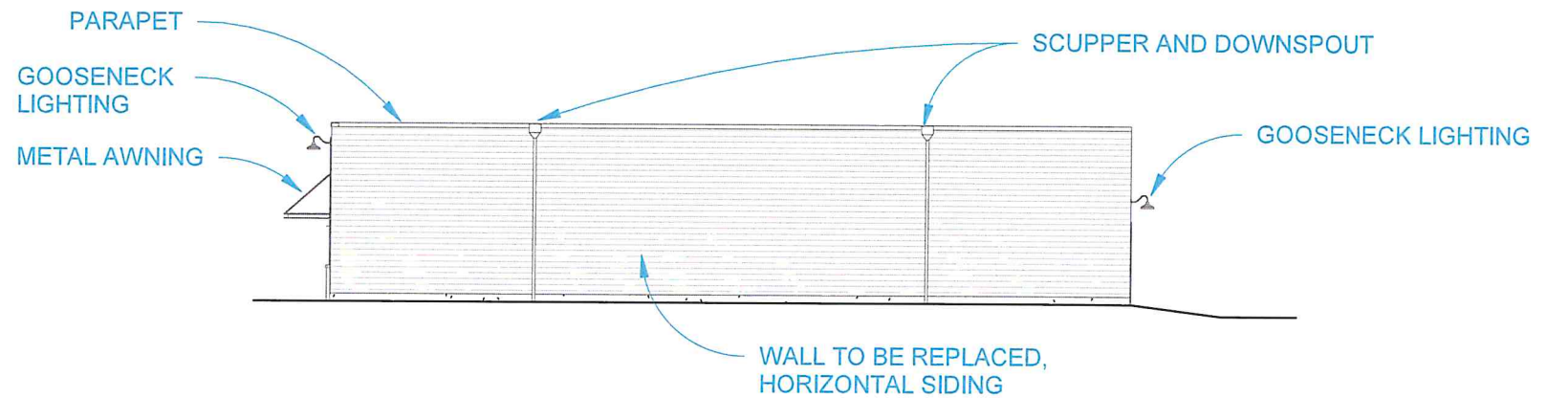


**3 SOUTH ELEVATION PROPOSED**  
1/16" = 1'-0"

# NORTH ELEVATION

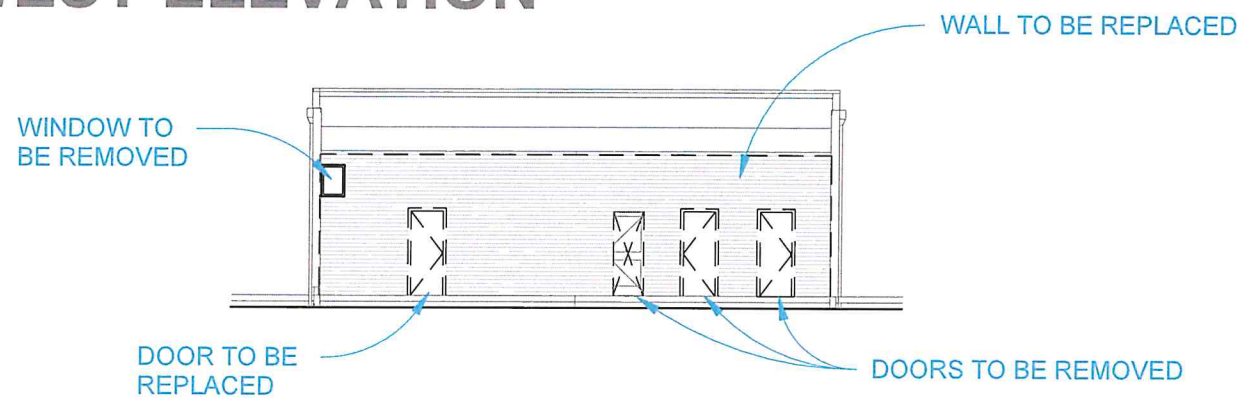


**2 NORTH ELEVATION EXISTING**  
1/16" = 1'-0"

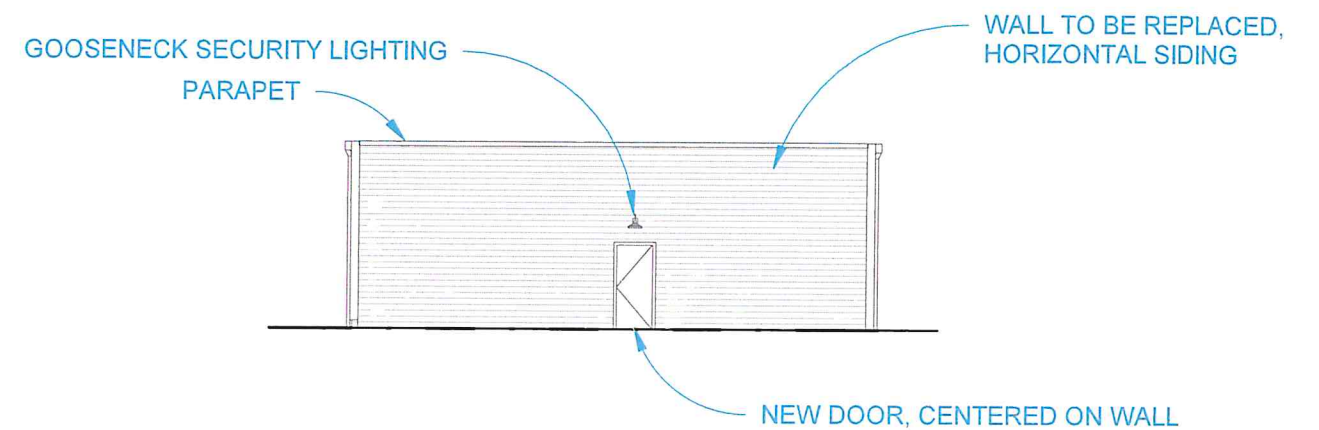


**4 NORTH ELEVATION PROPOSED**  
1/16" = 1'-0"

# WEST ELEVATION



**5 WEST ELEVATION EXISTING**  
1/16" = 1'-0"



**6 WEST ELEVATION PROPOSED**  
1/16" = 1'-0"