



CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission (as acting Historic Landmarks Commission)
FROM: Jacob A. Graichen, AICP, City Planner
RE: Architectural Character Review for 161 St. Helens Street
DATE: February 4, 2025

Per SHMC 17.32.070(7), permanent exterior architectural changes to buildings (that are not official recognized historic resources) within the Riverfront District 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>

In this case there is a proposal to cover windows on the side and rear elevation as part of remodeling of a building for a neighborhood market type business. This memo does not address any other exterior alterations.

Per Wm. Al Petersen, the architect involved: "The intent is to leave the historic windows in place and cover them with fiber-cement board (a common concrete based board), and paint the cover boards the same color as the building. (In the future if anyone wants the windows back they can simply uncover them)."

Note that there are fire rated construction requirements of the building code that could have implications, though that is outside the scope of the Commission's consideration.

Considerations:

161 St. Helens Street is identified in the 1984 National Register of Historic Places inventory as "compatible non-contributing." This category applies to structures built after 1933 (this one was built in 1940) but are compatible architecturally with the significant structures and historic character of the district.

So, though you don't need to necessarily consider the National Register, this official document identifying compatibility and thus the importance of the building's features, is noteworthy.

Section 2.3 (pgs. 7-8) of the guidelines provides guidance including:

- Ensure that the historic façade remains intact, well maintained, and true to its origins in appearance of original façade elements and features.
- Restoring façade elements that have been covered or removed is strongly encouraged.
- Retain and do not alter original windows and doors.
- Do not cover, remove, or alter the shape and size of display, transom, or upper story windows.

There is also a crime prevention criterion for Site Development Review and windowed walls mean "eyes on the street" to aid as a crime deterrent. Blank walls do not have the same deterrence effect.



Left: Existing façade facing St. Helens Street. No modifications to this façade have been proposed to date.



Left and Below: The west façade includes windows that face an abutting property developed with a dwelling.



Left and Below: The rear façade includes windows, some that overlook parking areas.





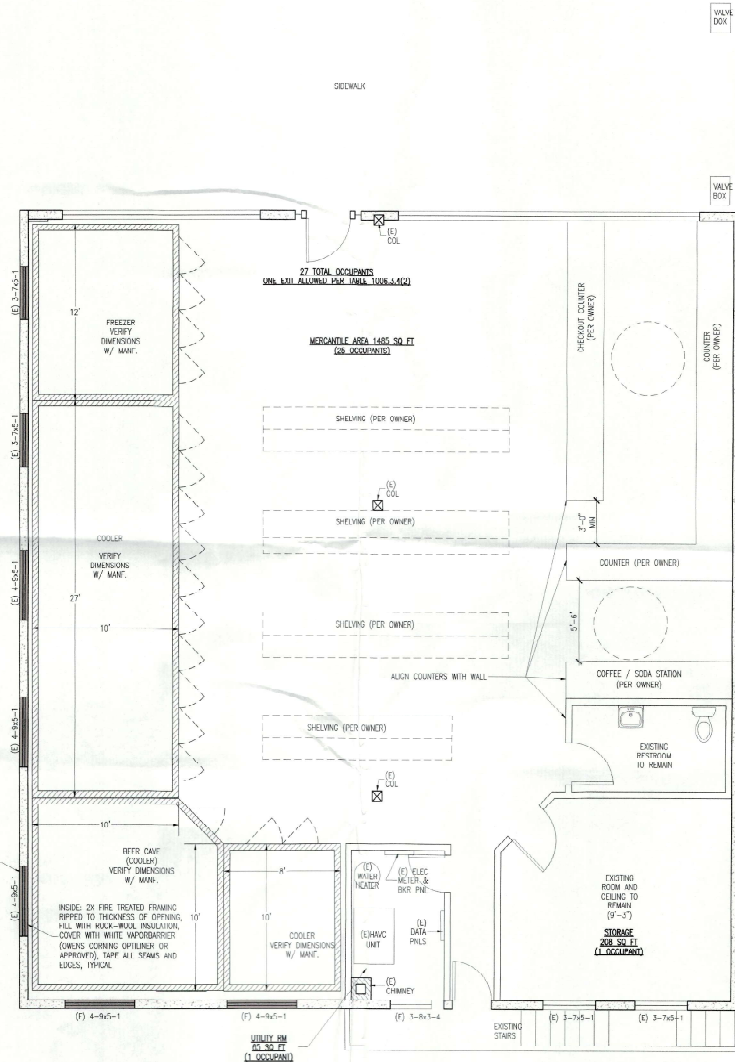
Conclusion/Recommendation: Is it ok if the windows are covered for the purpose of these standards? Some of the side windows are not as visible from public areas given a fence on the residential lot, but not ones on either end. If you are struggling with this maybe you give flexibility to some/all side windows?

At a minimum, rear windows really should remain intact as viewed from the outside. Though they may not function from inside the building, the appearance of windows provides important architectural interest and crime prevention elements.

However, if windows remain intact but are not accessible from the inside, will that promote deterioration?

Attached: Renovation plan (floorplan)
Building elevation photos showing windows covered

ST HELENS STREET



BUILDING CODE SUMMARY

GENERAL INFORMATION			
OWNER	MAHMI AHMEDANI - MAHDI SIRHI (503) 367-6780		
ARCHITECT	AKAAN ARCHITECTURE + DESIGN LLC (503) 366-3000		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION	CHANGE OF OCCUPANCY - EXISTING OCCUPANCY - D - NEW OCCUPANCY - M		
EXISTING BUILDING AREA	2700 SQ FT		
BUILDING CODE & DATE			
BUILDING OCCUPANCY		ORIGINAL STRUCTURAL PERMIT # EXP. 7/2022	
OCCUPANCY GROUPS	SBBB ST. (GROSS) M - MERCHANDISE		
OCCUPANCY SEPARATIONS	N/A		
OCCUPANT LOAD (UOA.1)	60 SQ FT PER OCCUPANT		
GENERAL BUILDING			
ALLOWABLE HEIGHT & BUILDING AREAS			
BUILDING HEIGHT	65'	±15' EXISTING	TABLE 503.204.1
STORIES	1	(EXISTING)	TABLE 503.204.1
MAXIMUM FLOOR AREA	61,500 SQ FT.	(1) STORY	504.2, 506.1
SQ. FT.	38,111 SQ. FT.		
CONSTR. TYPE	III B	III D (EXISTING)	TABLE 503.204.1

EXISTING BUILDING CONSTRUCTION - CONCRETE
 EXTERIOR CLADDING WALLS - CONCRETE
 INTERIOR STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS - WOOD
 INTERIOR PARTITIONS - WOOD
 ROOF / ROOF CONSTRUCTION - WOOD
 BUILDING GENERALLY TYPE 3-B CONSTRUCTION

FIRE SPRINGERS NOT REQUIRED

MEANS OF EGRESS: TOTAL OCCUPANT LOAD 27 OCCUPANTS, SINGLE MEANS OF EGRESS ALLOWED PER 1003.3.4(2)

AKAAN
 architecture + design llc



BUILDING OWNER:
 MAHMI AHMEDANI
 503-367-6780

161 ST HELENS ST
 5th FLOOR OF 97251

SCALE: AS NOTED
 DRAWN BY: AP
 CHECKED BY: CAD FILE
 DATE: 1005 PLAN
 DATE: JAN 17, 2024

REVISIONS
 A. DATE DESCRIPTION

CONTENTS
 RENOVATION PLAN

SHEET NO:

A1

1 RENOVATION PLAN
 1/4" = 1'-0"

Front Elevation no changes proposed.

Existing frosted glass to remain in three west windows

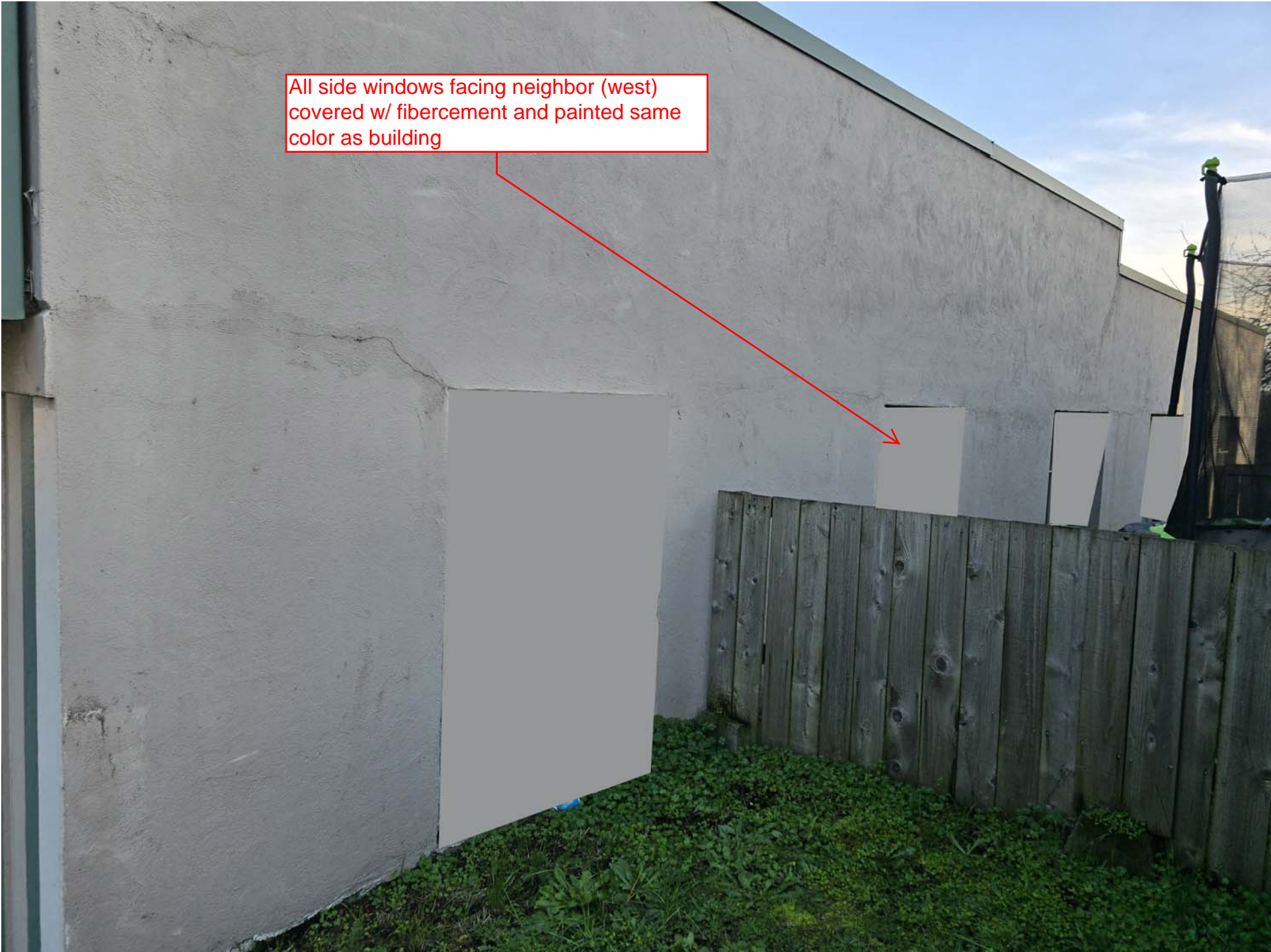


Front elevation no changes to windows

Side Windows covered w/ fibercement painted same color as wall



All side windows facing neighbor (west)
covered w/ fibercement and painted same
color as building



(2) rear windows covered
painted same color as building



All side windows facing neighbor covered w/ fibercement, painted same color as building

(2)-rear windows covered w/ fibercement, painted same color as building

