CITY OF ST. HELENS PLANNING DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission acting as the Historic Landmarks Commission
FROM: Jennifer Dimsho, AICP, Associate Planner
RE: Architectural Character Review at 325 Strand Street
DATE: June 4, 2024

Will Uebelacker submitted a Variance request for a reduction of off-street parking requirements for a subsequent development proposal at 325 Strand Street and the vacant lot just west of 325 Strand Street. Land use permit(s) have not been submitted for the development proposal, but the applicant has submitted architectural details for the Commission to review.

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

Although there is a building located at 325 Strand Street, it is proposed to be demolished as part of this proposal. The proposal is new construction with a four-story, elevator serviced, mixed-use building with commercial uses fronting Strand Street, ground-level parking accessed from S. 1st Street, and three levels of residential. There are 8 proposed 1-bedroom units and 8 proposed loft units for a total of 16 residential units. The rooftop would be developed with landscaping and accessible to residents as shared outdoor recreation space. The following is a list of the Design Guidelines chapters which are relevant to **new construction**. 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 retractable 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, the width of which makes up most of the length of the building. Staff feels this complies.

Building Façade/Entry

The Guidelines state that new building facades should be a contemporary interpretation of the traditional commercial vernacular. This means the façade 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, 2nd story windows and decorative sills, columns/pilasters. The applicant includes nearly all of these features. 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 on Strand either; 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 to something more traditional with a kickplate at the base?

Building Lighting

The preferred gooseneck lighting fixture has been incorporated into the commercial units above their signage. The Guidelines recommend installing partially or fully shielded light fixtures which only emit light downward. There are proposed wall sconces on Strand Street. These can sometimes be directed upwards. Does the Commission want to include a condition that the sconce lighting be directed downwards or that they be partially for fully shielded?

Signage

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

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. When using stone, stone should be limited to colors and types found in the Riverfront District. The applicant is proposing brick arches and stone veneer on both Strand Street and S. 1st Street. The brick is proposed to be in the antique red color palette, similar to the neighboring Muckle Building on the corner of Cowlitz and S. 1st Street. The stone veneer is proposed to be limestone in the drawings, but basalt or other similar contrasting color in the narrative. What does the Commission think about the stone? Staff does not believe there are other similar, prominent uses of limestone. The windowsills of the old courthouse and City Hall building are sandstone.

There are various uses of wood siding, both vertical and horizontal. The narrative states this will be either shiplap or lap finished. The colors are all shades of browns and black. Staff feels this complies with the recommended neutral color palette. There is metal roof and siding proposed as dark black and brown. It appears that on both the south and north elevations, there is a significant portion of windowless siding that makes up almost the entire elevation on the ground level. It's unclear if this is wood or metal siding.

Roof

The Guidelines state to minimize the impact of mechanical unit clutter on the roof. Mechanical rooftop units will be placed behind parapets and the roofs of the residential units. The Guidelines state to set back rooftop activities like rooftop decks so that they are not easily seen from the street. The proposed rooftop landscaping separates the rooftop outdoor recreation space. Staff feels this complies.

Setback, Orientation, & Bulk

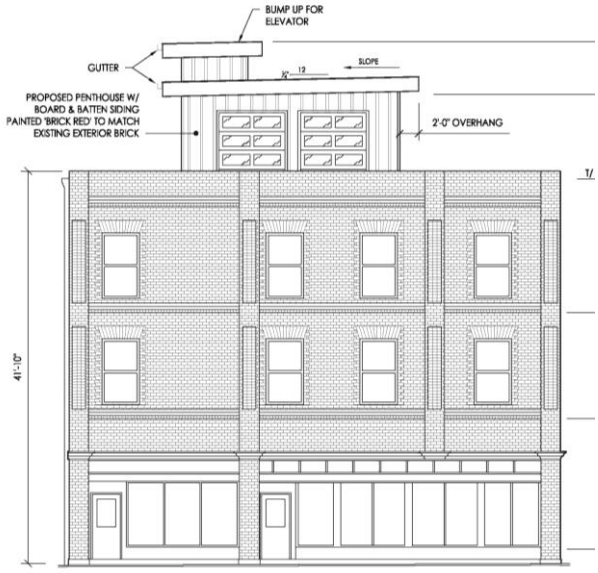
The Guidelines encourage building orientation towards the street with the primary entrance at street level. This is met on both sides. The Guidelines state that the building height and bulk should be similar to the adjacent structures and that new buildings should be designed with a mix of wall areas with door and window elements in the façade. The Muckle Building nearby is a similar height to the proposed building. The building also contains a variety of window elements. The buildings are also supposed to break up boxlike forms into smaller varied masses. The applicant notes that the length of the building is

nearly 200’ and they have broken it up into smaller masses with recesses and extensions, as well as changes in the roof line. Does the Commission agree?

Windows

For new construction, the Guidelines state that storefront windows and upper-floor windows should incorporate appropriate traditional design that enhances the character-defining features of the district and neighboring historic resources. Specifically, they state that upper-story windows should have a vertical emphasis. For example, windows which are twice as tall vertically as they are wide are more traditional. They also state that upper story and storefront windows should be symmetrically placed and that the placement should consider neighboring buildings. The Guidelines encourage the use of transom windows, as well as window kickplates.

For the storefront side, the applicant incorporates storefront windows with transoms. The large folding display windows are not necessarily traditional and do not incorporate a window kickplate, which was also discussed under Building Façade/Entry. Does the Commission want to recommend a change here? Overall, the upper floor windows are more vertically oriented, although they are not necessarily symmetrical or continue/match the neighboring property, nor do they match traditional wall-to-window ratio. The applicant is likely trying to maximize the view of the river on the Strand Street side by including more windows to walls. Although a similar design is used on S. 1st Street. Does the Commission want to recommend a more traditional wall-to-window ratio on the street frontages? Both the south and north elevation have a more traditional window spacing and wall-to-window ratio.



Left: Morgus building adjacent to subject property on Strand Street demonstrating traditional upper-story window/wall ratio and storefront window kickplates
Right: Muckle building from Strand Street “ ”

Attachments

- Applicant Narrative (5 pages)
- Building Plans (9 pages)

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Architectural Design Guidelines – Narrative Response

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

Project Address:
325 Strand St
Tax Lot 300 & 401

Date: 5/13/2024

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.

1.4 New Construction

New commercial buildings may integrate an awning to project over the sidewalk, providing shade and protection for pedestrians.

Response:
Simple hanger-rod suspended metal canopies are proposed located above the two main entrances that lead into the commercial and residential spaces. See sheet A12 and A14.

2. Building Façade / Entry

2.2 General Guidance

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

2.4 New Construction

Visual continuity of Olde Towne can be best maintained if new development includes traditional building features on the façade. The building should be designed in a manner that reinforces the character-defining features found in Olde Towne and adds to the sense of place.

New construction should not detract, but further enhance the historic structures in the district by incorporating façade elements found there.

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Response:
The street facing façade is an interpretation of traditional vernacular including simplified classical design with the large three-story height sweeping arch brick colonnade that frames the building entrances and residential units. The curved colonnade references the half circle transom windows often found in traditional window patterns on a larger scale, and used functionally to frame two residential decks on each street façade. The curved colonnade will use running bond brick veneer to connect materially and visually to the historic buildings and be complete with a parapet and cornice. The larger stone base that occupies the main street level on Strand St. connects w/ the urban edge condition created by the existing buildings and will be topped with a mid-belt cornice that doubles as a second story window sill. The brick colonnade and stone urban edge form a connection between traditional and contemporary in both form and material.

The primary building entrance for the commercial and residential units is located at the street/sidewalk level and is clearly defined by the storefront glazing and entry door (with kickplate) that is oriented towards the sidewalk. Large street level glazing further connects the building with the pedestrians, and transom windows above the metal awning help illuminate the commercial space.

Where applicable, windows will be vertical in nature or will be grouped in order to read vertically. Double hung windows are used except where proper egress windows are required in bedrooms, utilizing casement windows instead. Where double height spaces exist for the studio units, groups of vertical and/or double hung windows are used rather than storefront systems. This maintains the residential character of the units by utilizing smaller compositions to create a similar effect as full height glazing.

3. Building Lighting

3.2 General Guidance

Incorporate appropriate lighting to improve the pedestrian environment and help foster a comfortable and safe place to shop and stroll.

3.4 New Construction

New commercial or mixed-use buildings should incorporate lighting features appropriate to the character of Olde Towne.

Response:
New lighting fixtures will have a simple sleek design that will be located along the brick colonnade as well as lighting above the signage located at the main entrance.

4. Signage

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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.

4.4 New Construction

Sign materials should be durable and easy to maintain.

Response:
Signage will be located for the two tenant spaces directly above the transom windows. The signage will be either painted or carved wood; epoxy letters; galvanized sheet metal; slate, marble, or sandstone; gold leaf, gilt, painted, stained, or sandblasted glass; clear and colored acrylic; neon; or stained glass. Lighting for the sign will be external and located overhead, or directed towards the signage as needed. Lettering will be proportional and legible and fit visually within the framework of the proposed building.

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, proposed building will be new construction.

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.

6.4 New Construction

To maintain visual consistency, building materials used on the exterior of buildings should be traditional materials that are more durable.

Response:
Standard brick sizes will be used for the brick colonnade that will be in the antique red color palette. The brickwork and brick cornice will display the craftsmanship of said material. Stone used for the urban edge condition will be either basalt or similar and be in the neutrals color palette to contrast w/ the antique red brick. The use of brick and stone on the street facing façade will create a sense of permanence and connect with the surrounding brick and stone buildings. The remaining building will be finished in painted wood siding, either shiplap or lap finished in earth tone or muted colors. Standing seam metal roofs will visually connect w/ the metal awning systems.

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7. Roof

7.2 General Guidance

Minimize the visual impact of mechanical systems and equipment by locating these as far away from the façade as possible.

Response:
Mechanical rooftop units will be shielded from the street view by being located behind parapets and sloped roofs located at the residential bump-outs. Parapets are located closest to the streets and alternate to sloped roofs near the middle of the building. Rooftop decks are located behind the colonnade and are stepped back from the street due to the rooftop landscaping. Exhaust stacks for the residential units and commercial kitchens have to vent a minimum of 7' above the occupied roof deck and are disguised within roof coverings located at the stair and elevator entrances/exits. The exhaust stacks will be wrapped in brick and appear as residential chimneys. The roof is designed to be low profile and any roof coverings are set back from the building edge.

8. Setback, Orientation & Bulk

8.3 New Construction

Buildings should be oriented toward the street and at the front of the existing property line, though some exceptions may be made (as deemed appropriate by the Historic Landmarks Commission).

Response:
The proposed building has street frontage on S 1st Street and Strand St and in both cases the brick colonnade starts at the property line. Where the urban edge is evident along Strand St, the stacked stone main level wall will continue the corridor of visual interest. Where the stone wall continues the urban edge horizontally, the brick colonnade takes the eye vertically. The building will adhere to the height limit requirements of occupied spaces and will blend with the existing and future development for 3-4 story buildings. The north and south elevations of the buildings, spanning nearly 200 feet will be broken up into smaller, varied masses for visual interest. Some of the building forms will have parapets, where the others will appear as one-half of a gable roof, split by the roof deck.

9. Windows

9.2 General Guidance

The Olde Towne tradition of large storefront windows must be continued by appropriately maintaining existing windows and maximizing the window-to-wall ratio of ground-floor facades in new construction and/or additions.

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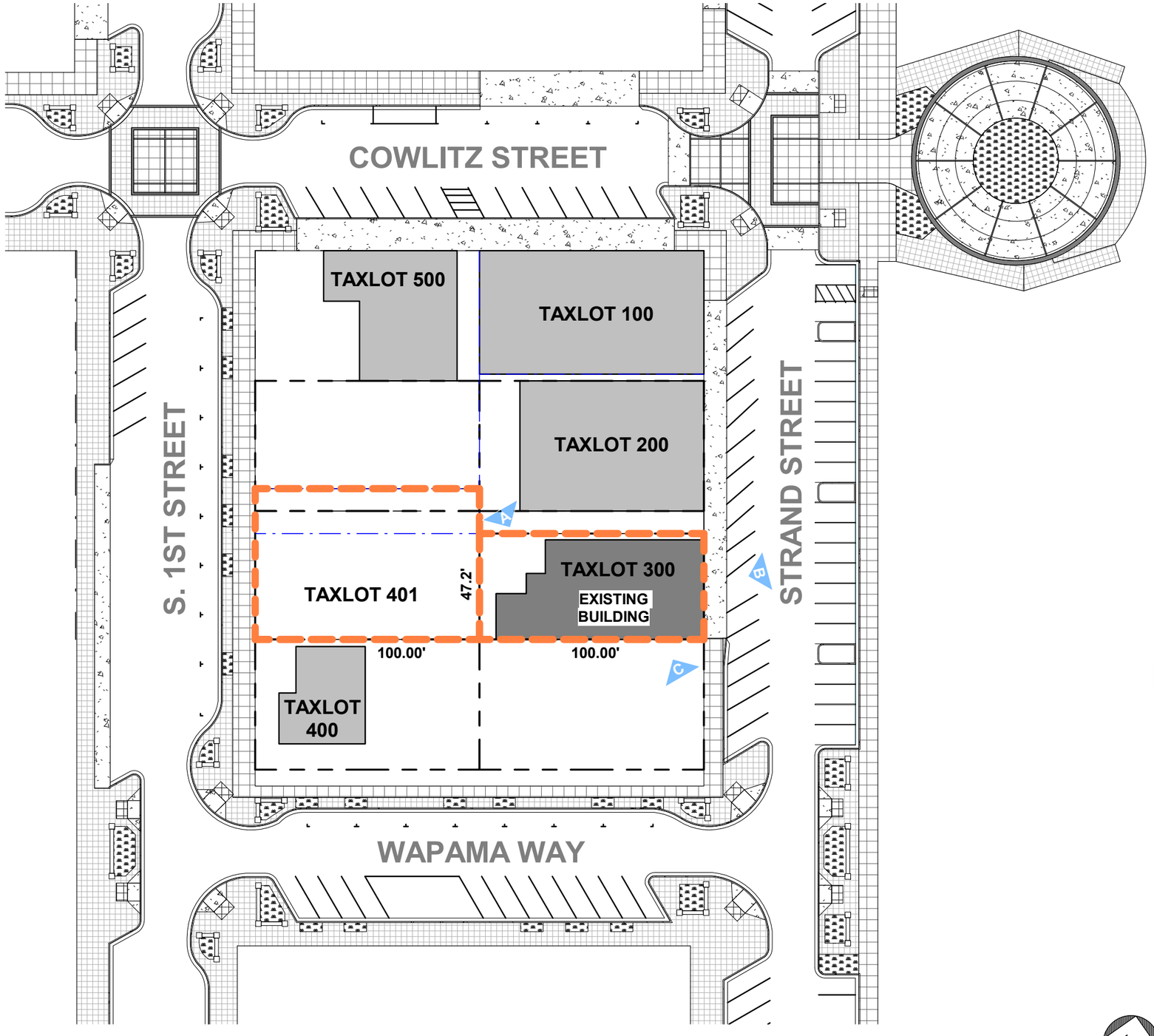
9.4 New Construction

Storefront windows and upper-floor windows should incorporate appropriate traditional design that enhances the character-defining features of the district and neighboring historic resources.

Response:
Upper story windows will have a vertical emphasis and where appropriate will be twice as tall as they are wide. Where studio units have double height spaces the windows will be grouped to be vertical in nature with the middle row of windows being transom windows (fall in line with floor plane). The double height windows will align with other windows on the building in both vertical and horizontal axis planes. Where ventilation is required, double hung windows are utilized, and where egress windows are required casement windows provide the proper existing requirements.



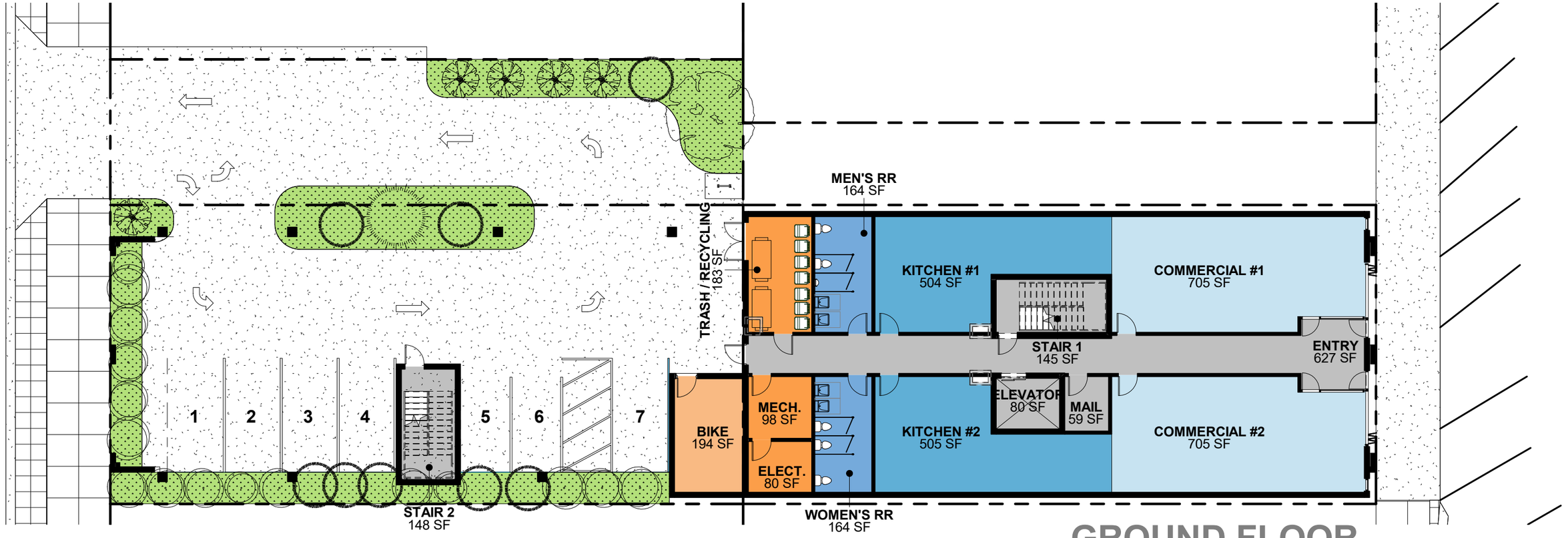
1 **(E) SITE PLAN - WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT**
1" = 50'-0"

EXISTING STRUCTURE

A VIEW LOOKING SE

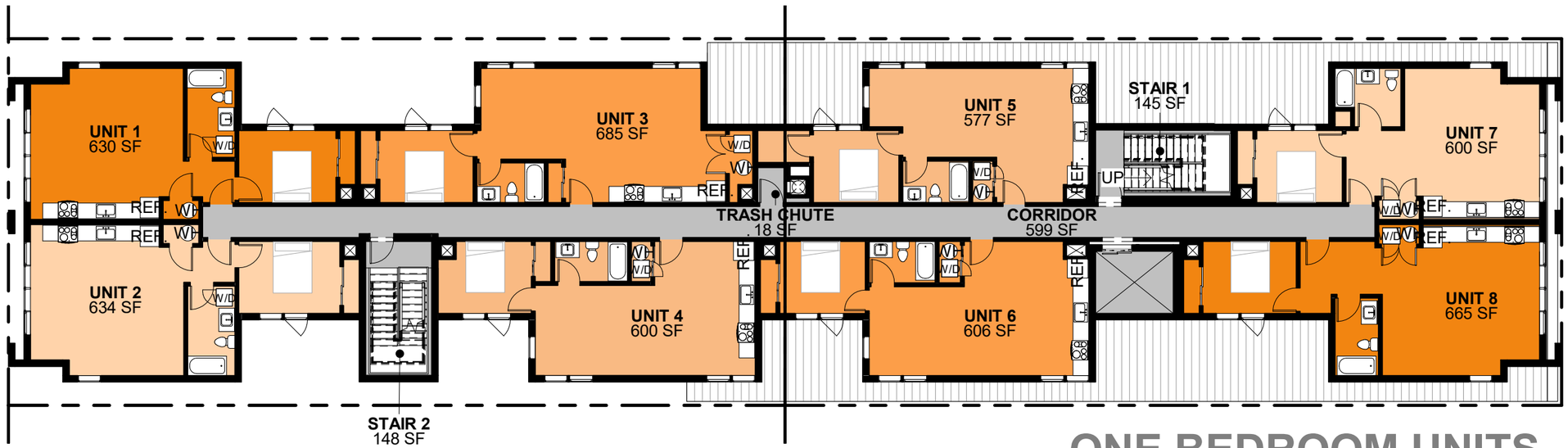
B STREET FACING FACADE

C VIEW LOOKING NW



1 **LEVEL 1 PLAN**
1/16" = 1'-0"

GROUND FLOOR COMMERCIAL



2 **LEVEL 2 PLAN**
1/16" = 1'-0"

ONE BEDROOM UNITS

FLOOR PLANS - PROPOSED

VARIANCE REQUEST

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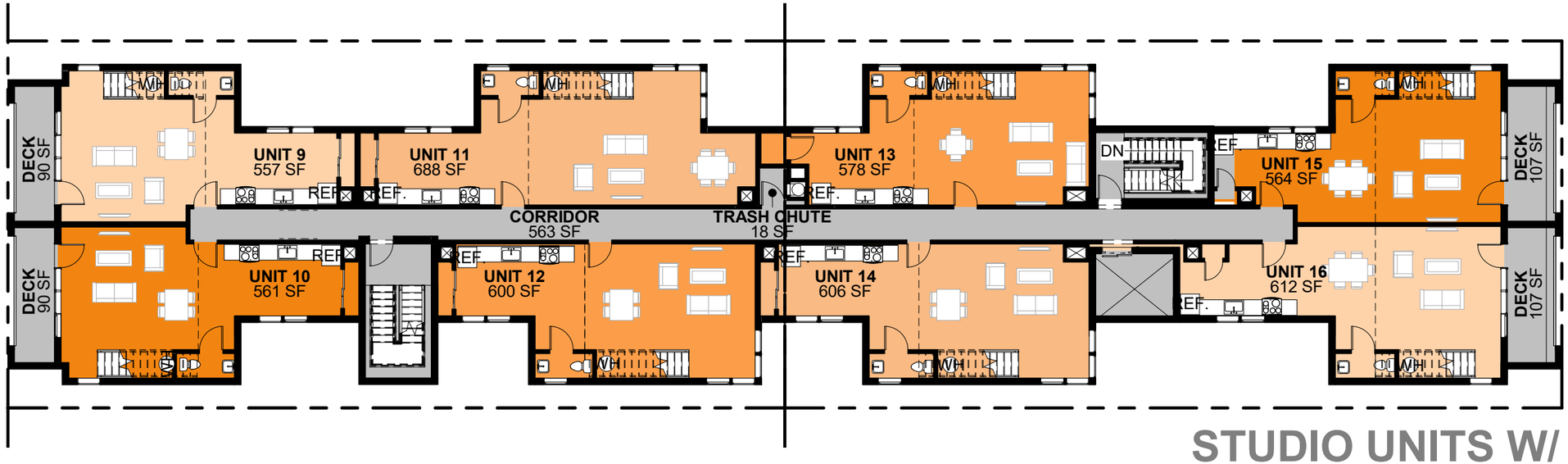
0 8' 16' 32'

TAX LOT 300 & 401

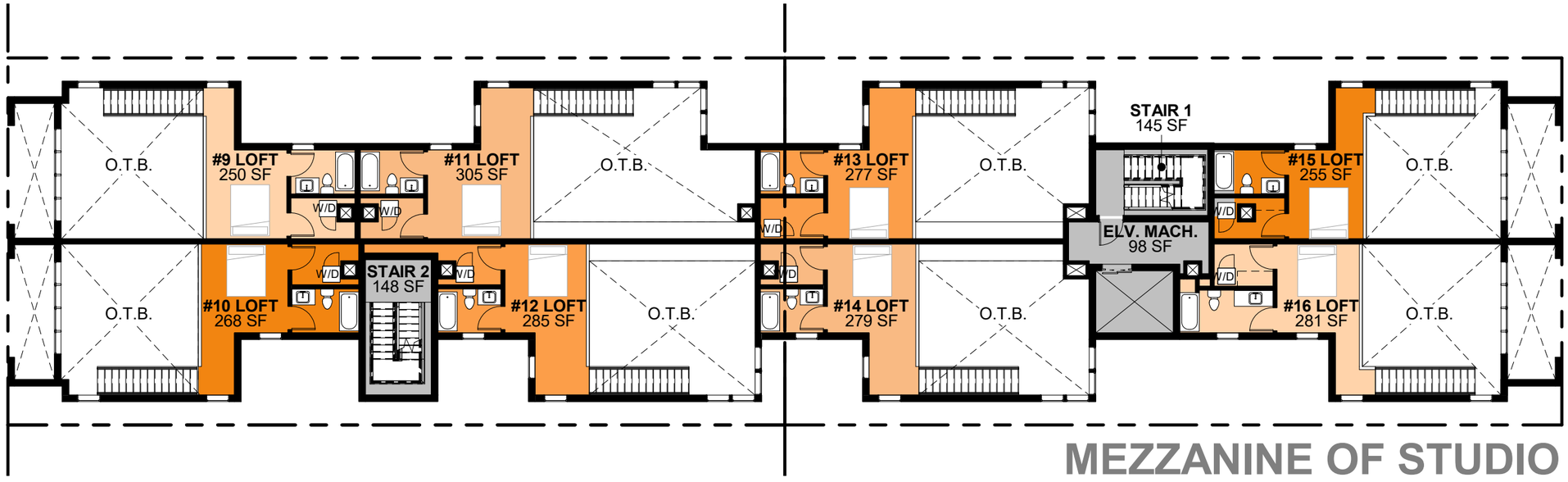
A7

5/13/2024 9:52:07 AM



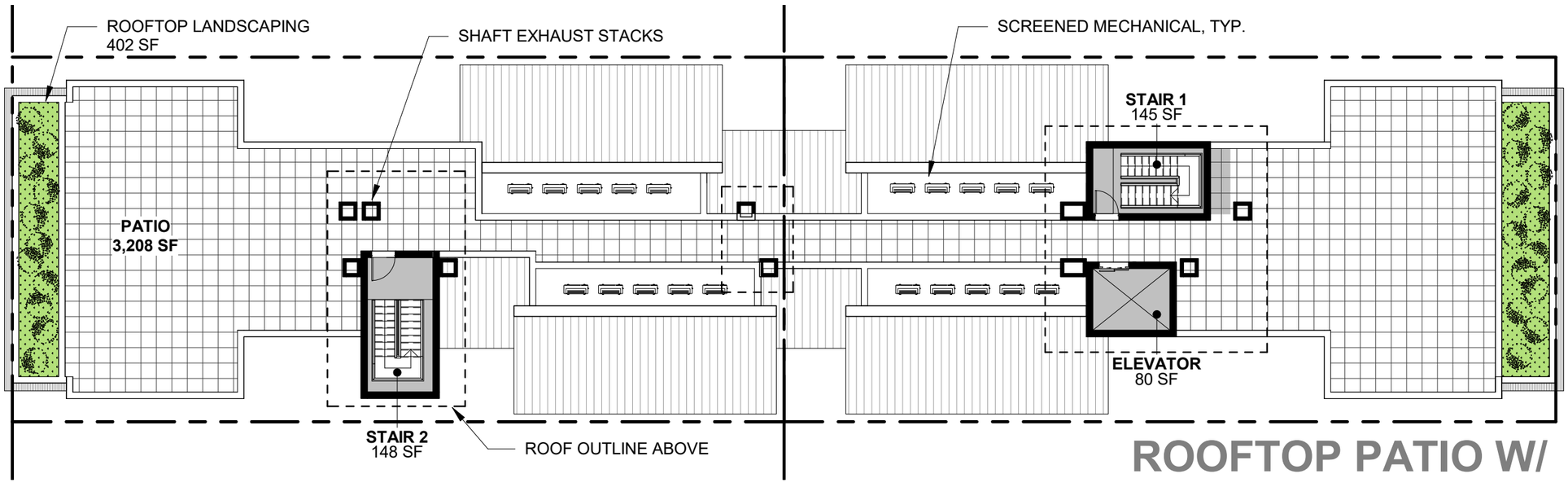
STUDIO UNITS W/ MEZZANINE ABOVE

1 **LEVEL 3 PLAN**
1/16" = 1'-0"



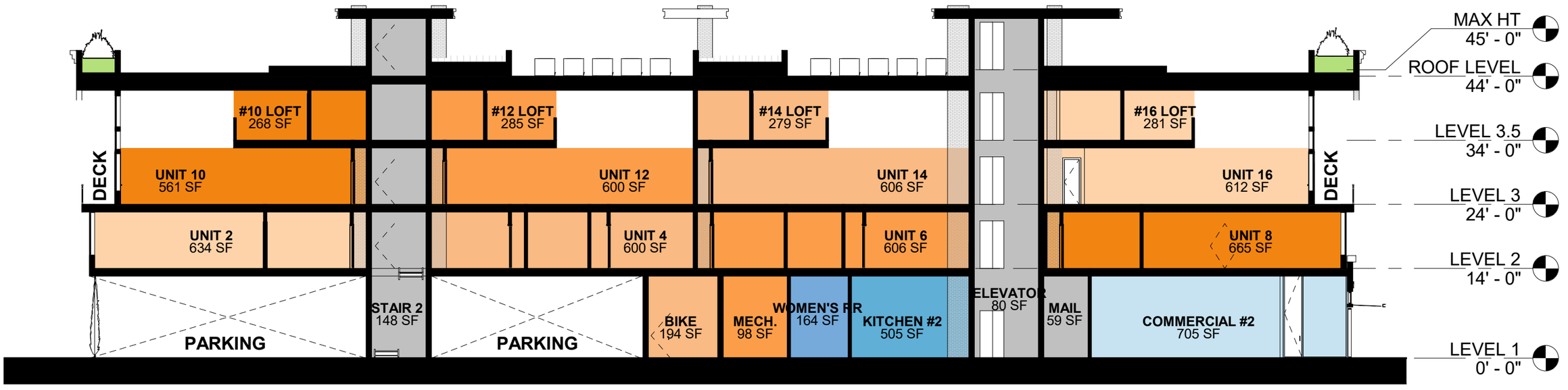
MEZZANINE OF STUDIO UNITS BELOW

2 **LEVEL 4 PLAN**
1/16" = 1'-0"



ROOFTOP PATIO W/ LANDSCAPE BOOKENEDS

1 **ROOF PLAN**
1/16" = 1'-0"



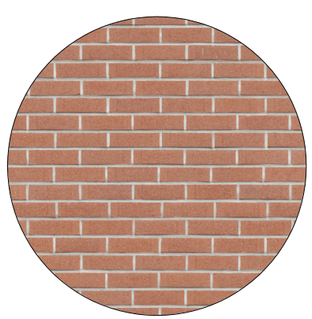
BUILDING SECTION

2 **EAST - WEST BUILDING SECTION**
1/16" = 1'-0"

LIMESTONE VENEER

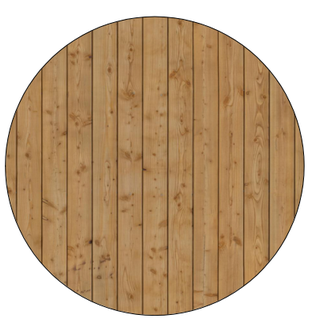
AWNING SYSTEM

BRICK VENEER ARCHES



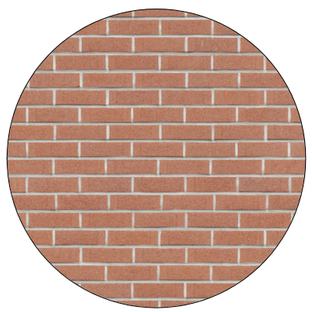
HORIZONTAL PAINTED WOOD

VERTICAL WOOD



GREEN ROOF

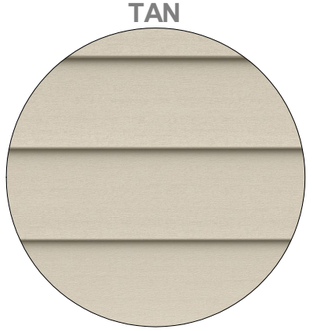
BRICK VENEER ARCHES



STANDING SEAM METAL ROOF / SIDING

HORIZONTAL WOOD PAINTED BROWN

HORIZONTAL WOOD PAINTED TAN

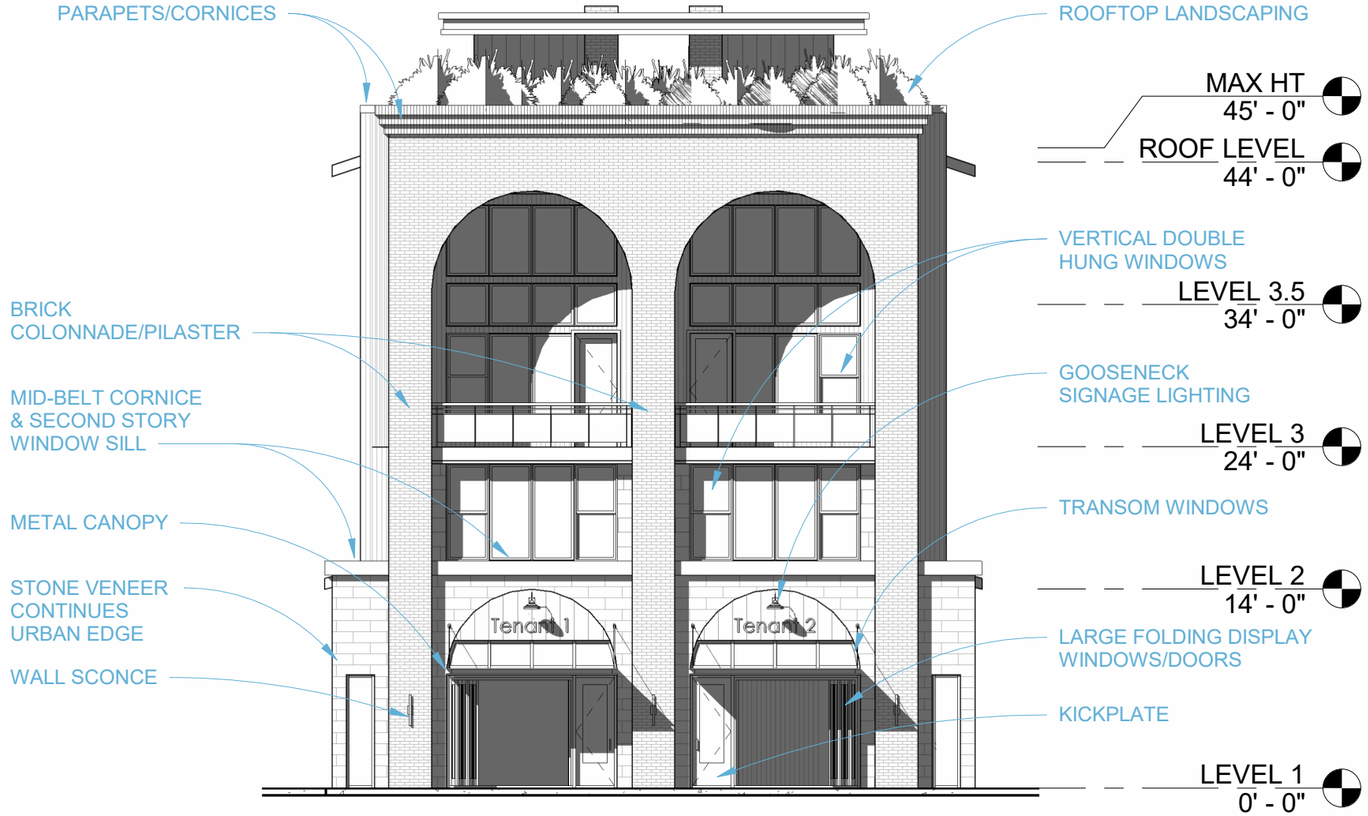


VERTICAL WOOD PAINTED DARK

GREEN ROOF

EAST ELEVATION:

THE STRAND ST FACADE (EAST ELEVATION) WILL CONTINUE THE URBAN EDGE W/ A STONE FACADE THAT TERMINATES AT A MID-BELT CORNICE AT LEVEL 2 THAT ALSO FUNCTIONS AS A SECOND STORY WINDOW SILL. A FULL HEIGHT ARCH BRICK COLONNADE INTERSECTS THE HORIZONTAL URBAN EDGE AND TAKES THE EYE UPWARD TO THE ROOF LANDSCAPING LOCATED ABOVE THE CORNICE. THE COLONNADE FRAMES THE TWO MAIN BUIDLING ENTRANCES AS WELL AS THE RESIDENTIAL UNITS ABOVE, TWO OF WHICH CONTAIN COVERED DECKS OVERLOOKING THE WATERFRONT. LARGE OPERABLE STOREFRONT GLAZING GREETS THE PEDESTRIAN LEVEL COMPLETE WITH METAL AWNINGS OVERHEAD FOR ADDED WEATHER PROTECTION. TRANSOM WINDOWS SIT JUST BELOW THE EXTERIOR SIGNAGE THAT IS DOWNLIT FROM SIMPLE FARMHOUSE STYLE WALL SCONCES.



1 **EAST ELEVATION (STRAND ST FACADE)**
3/32" = 1'-0"

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

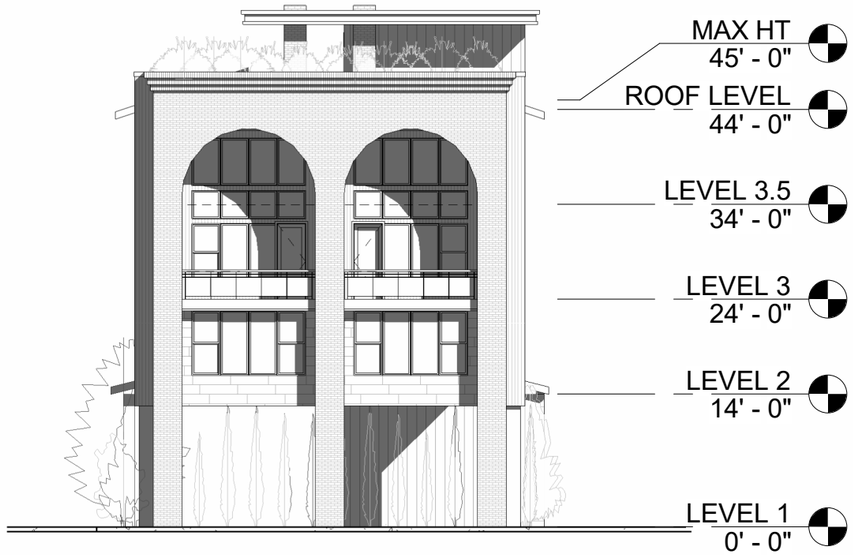
SOUTH ELEVATION:

THE TWO BRICK COLONNADES THAT FRONT S 1ST ST AND STRAND ST ACT AS A BOOKENDS TO THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT, AND METAPHORICALLY TO THE CONNECTION BETWEEN OLDE TOWNE AND THE NEW WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT.

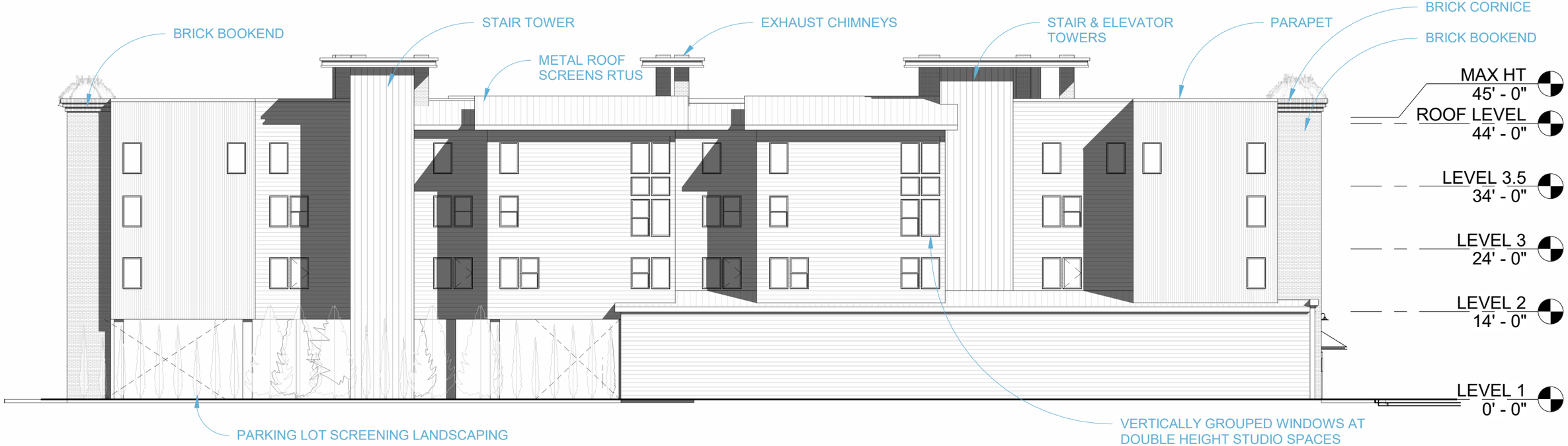
IN ORDER TO BREAK UP THE 200' BUILDING LENGTH, THE ZONING CODE REQUIRES 8' MINIMUM RELIEFS FOR EVERY 30' IN BUILDING LENGTH. THIS RESTRICTION HELPED DEFINE THE RESIDENTIAL LIVING SPACE AS SHOWN IN THE LARGER BUMP-OUTS.

PER THE OLDE TOWNE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN GUIDELINES, WINDOWS ARE VERTICAL IN NATURE AND FOLLOW THE RULE OF TWICE THE HEIGHT AS THE WIDTH WHERE POSSIBLE. DOUBLE HUNG WINDOWS ARE USED FOR VENTILATION PURPOSES, THOUGH CASEMENT WINDOWS ARE USED IN BEDROOMS FOR PROPER EGRESS. STUDIO UNITS HAVE DOUBLE HEIGHT SPACES THAT CAPTURE THE WATERFRONT VIEW AND ARE GROUPED IN A VERTICAL ORIENTATION WITH SMALLER WINDOWS RATHER THAN USING FULL HEIGHT STOREFRONT GLAZING.

STAIR AND ELEVATOR TOWERS BREAKS THE HORIZONTALITY OF THE BUILDING BY USING A VERTICALLY APPLIED MATERIAL. ROOFTOP ACCESS IS PROVIDED TO THE RESIDENTS FOR 360 VIEWS OF OLDE TOWNE.



1 **WEST ELEVATION (S. 1ST ST)**
1/16" = 1'-0"



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

AERIAL VIEW LOOKING SW

AERIAL VIEW LOOKING NE

STRAND ST PERSPECTIVE LOOKING NW