M E M O R A N D U M
February 3, 2016

TO: Landmarks Board

FROM: Lesli Ellis, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Debra Kalish, Senior Assistant City Attorney
James Hewat, Senior Historic Preservation Planner
Marcy Cameron, Historic Preservation Planner
Angela Smelker, Historic Preservation Intern

SUBJECT: Public Hearing and consideration of a Landmark Alteration Certificate application for changes to the south face of the landmarked St. Gertrude's Academy including the construction of six balconies and modifying windows to door openings, per Section 9-11-18 of the Boulder Revised Code (HIS2015-00313).

STATISTICS:

1. Site: 970 Aurora Ave.
2. Zoning: RL-1 (Residential Low-1)
3. Owner: Academy Equities, LLC
4. Applicant: Jonas DiCaprio, Design Platform
5. Site Area: 104,867 sq. ft.
6. Building Area: 41,670 sq. ft. (approx.)
7. Date of Construction: 1892

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:
Staff recommends that the Landmarks Board adopt the following motion:

The Landmarks Board denies the request for a Landmark Alteration Certificate to remove eight original windows, convert six original window openings to door openings and install six balconies on the south elevation of the landmarked Mt. St. Gertrude Academy as shown on plans dated 12/2/2015, finding that the proposal does not meet the standards for issuance of a Landmark Alteration Certificate in Chapter 9-11-18, B.R.C. 1981, and adopts the staff memorandum dated February 3, 2016 as findings of the board.

This recommendation is based upon staff's opinion that the proposed modifications of an individually landmarked buildings will be inconsistent with Section 9-11-18, Boulder Revised Code (B.R.C.) 1981, and the *General Design Guidelines.*

SUMMARY

- Mount St. Gertrude Academy was built in 1892, with historic additions constructed in 1914 and 1921. The 1892 building and the 1921 additions were gutted by a fire in 1980, and the building was later renovated to become a senior housing community. The building was individually landmarked in 1984 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.
- In November of 2015, the applicant submitted a completed Landmark Alteration Certificate application to modify the fenestration and install balconies on the south elevation of the building at 970 Aurora Ave.
- Due to the extent of alteration proposed to the individually landmarked building, the application was referred to the full Board for review on Nov. 18, 2015. Staff finds the proposed alteration to the original windows and window openings on the south elevation of the individually landmarked Mt. St. Gertrude Academy building to be inconsistent with the criteria for a Landmark Alteration Certificate, Section 9-11-18, B.R.C. 1981, and the *General Design Guidelines.*
- Staff recommends that the Landmark Board deny the application and suggests the applicant to modify the design to retain the historic windows and window openings and explore the possibility of placing balconies on a less-visible elevation of the building.

PROPERTY HISTORY & DESCRIPTION

Mount Saint Gertrude Academy was the first major private educational institution to locate in Boulder, the fourth school to be built in the community, and the first major building to be erected on University Hill.[1] The historic school building is located on the northern half of Block 27 bordered by Lincoln Place on the west, 10th Street on the east, and Aurora Avenue on the north and currently part of a larger campus that houses "The Academy", a senior housing community that encompasses the entire block.

[1] City of Boulder. Historic Building Inventory Form, 1987.

Figure 1. Location Map of 970 Aurora Ave., 2015.

Figure 2. Mt. St. Gertrude Academy shortly after completion.

Construction began on the Romanesque-Revival building in 1892 after being commissioned by four Catholic Sisters of the Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, based in Dubuque, Iowa. Designed by Denver-based architects Alexander Cazin (the 1892 building) with1921 wing additions and chapel designed by George H. Williamson, the building has a U-shape layout facing north. The four-story building features a rusticated stone ground level and red brick on the upper floors with the historic entrance located at the north elevation s dominated by a large two-story stone archway, typical of the Romanesque Revival. Following a near catastrophic fire in 1980, many of the windows and doors were replaced. However, most of two-over-two windows on the south elevation were spared, apparently because the fire had less of an impact on this side of the building. Window openings on the 1892 portion of the building feature low-arch Italianate openings while windows on the 1921 wings are square. All feature rough-cut sandstone sills.

Sisters Mary Theodore, Thecla, Faustina, and Luminia moved to Boulder in 1890 at the invitation of Bishop Matz of Denver. Initially, the sisters rented the Mallon house at 14th and Walnut Streets as their convent, then moved to Martha Decker's house at 13th Street and Mapleton Ave. to be closer to the Sacred Heart Church.

In 1892, the sisters opened the “Academy”, a grand schoolhouse, at what is today 970 Aurora Avenue. At first, Mt. St. Gertrude Academy accepted boys and girls, Catholics and non-Catholics. Within a few years, however, the enrollment was so large that the sisters limited enrollment to only girls. Sister Mary Luminia, the principal, advertised the Academy as a place for, "girls who desire health as well as primary education," and those suffering from or exposed to tuberculosis to the dry, sunny climate of Boulder.

Figure 3. Mt. St. Gertrude Academy students and teaches, 1890s

The Academy offered elementary, secondary, and music education and in 1914, Mt. St. Gertrude Academy began offering boarding. Boarding proved to be popular, so within a short time the fourth story of the building was enlarged to better accommodate the boarders. This remodel involved the removal of the gables which were replaced with less ornate brick construction. During this period, a brick bungalow known as "Loyola" was constructed nearby on 10th St. as a rest home for the sisters. In the late 1910s, Sister Oswald and some "enthusiastic Boulder citizens" raised funds to further expand the building, this time with two wings and a chapel. The project, costing $90,000, was completed in 1921. [2]

Figure 4. St. Gertrude Academy after construction of wings, 1921.

Mt. St. Gertrude Academy's success continued as it expanded its educational offerings and increased its involvement in community activities. However, by the 1960s the school faltered as a shortage of funds prevented the sisters from maintaining and repairing the buildings, so that by1969 the Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary were forced sell Mt. St. Gertrude to the University of Colorado for $150,000.[3] The University used the building to house the Division of Continuing Education and the Bureau of Conferences and Real Estate.

[2] 970 Aurora Ave. Landmark Designation Memorandum dated February 22, 1984.
[3] 970 Aurora Ave. Landmark Designation Memorandum, 5.

In 1980, the building caught fire, which badly damaged the original 1892 building, its bell tower, and the two 1921 wing additions. The chapel, fortunately, was undamaged. Following the fire, the building lay vacant until 1994 when it was listed on the National Register for Historic Places and using historic preservation tax credits, the property was redeveloped for use as an assisted living facility for the elderly, aptly called "The Academy". The redevelopment included the construction of a number of free-standing buildings and rear additions to the school and chapel.

PROPOSED NEW CONSTRUCTION

The applicant proposes to convert six original window openings to door openings and install metal balconies onto the 2nd, 3rd and 4th stories on the south side of the historic 1892 building. Adjacent to the Academy's current main entrance, the south elevation of the historic building faces a parking lot and the current entrance and is has significant visibility from 10th Street.

Figure 5. View of south elevation from 10th St., Mt. St. Gertrude Academy, 970 Aurora Ave., 2016.

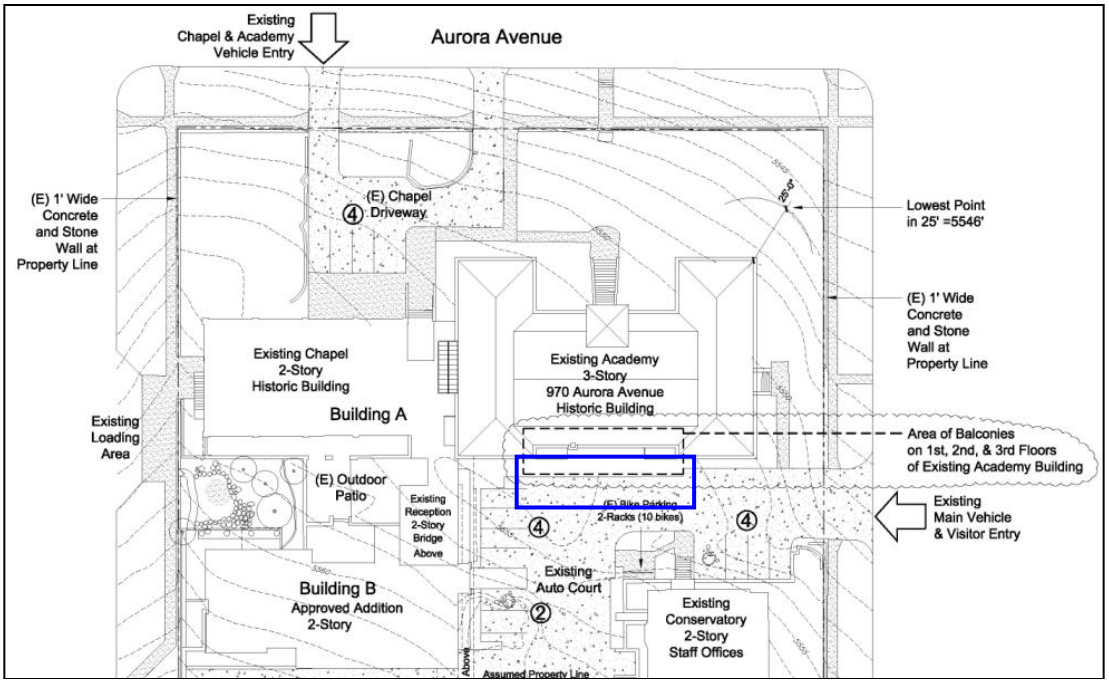


Figure 6. Northern section of proposed site plan. Blue outline marks location of south elevation of building for proposed balconies, 2015.

Figure 7. Existing south elevation as seen from parking lot, 2015.

Figure 8. Existing south elevation. Dashed lines indicate outline of proposed balconies, black hatched boxes indicate extent of proposed masonry demolition.

The proposed enlargement of the window openings would require the removal of six stone sills and the brick below each opening. Eight windows (all that appear to be historic, if not original) are proposed for removal. The width of the openings and the arched lintels are not proposed to change. Information on the structural impact on the arched opening below each new door opening has not been provided. Figure 7 shows the extent of proposed masonry demolition.

Figure 9. Left: Typical window and opening proposed to be removed/enlarged; Right: Three windows proposed for removal; window opening to be enlarged for installation of sliding glass door.

Six window openings on this elevation are shown to be enlarged vertically to accommodate aluminum clad in-swing door 3 ft. in width to fit the opening of the window. Plans note that the existing 3 ft. width and head height will remain; the sandstone sill and brick below each window is to be removed.

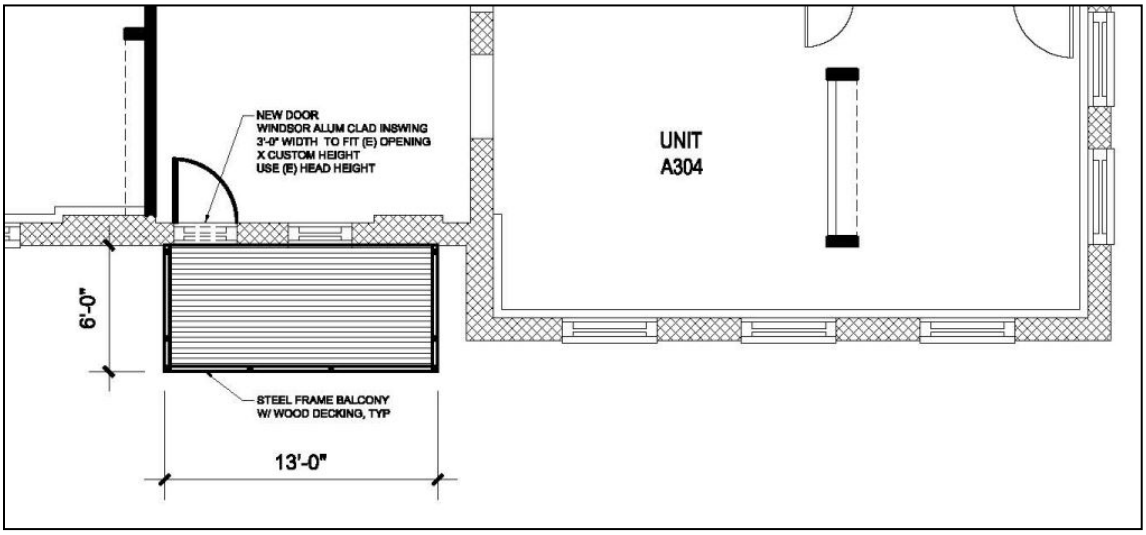


Figure 10. Proposed plan for balcony on the 3rd floor, 2015.

The proposed balcony on the west unit of the second floor (Unit A102) is shown to be fitted with a sliding glass door rather than a single door. Unlike the other balconies where one window will be retrofitted for a door, plans for this unit show the removal of three windows to be replaced with an aluminum clad sliding door to fit the width of the existing opening *(See Figure 8)*.

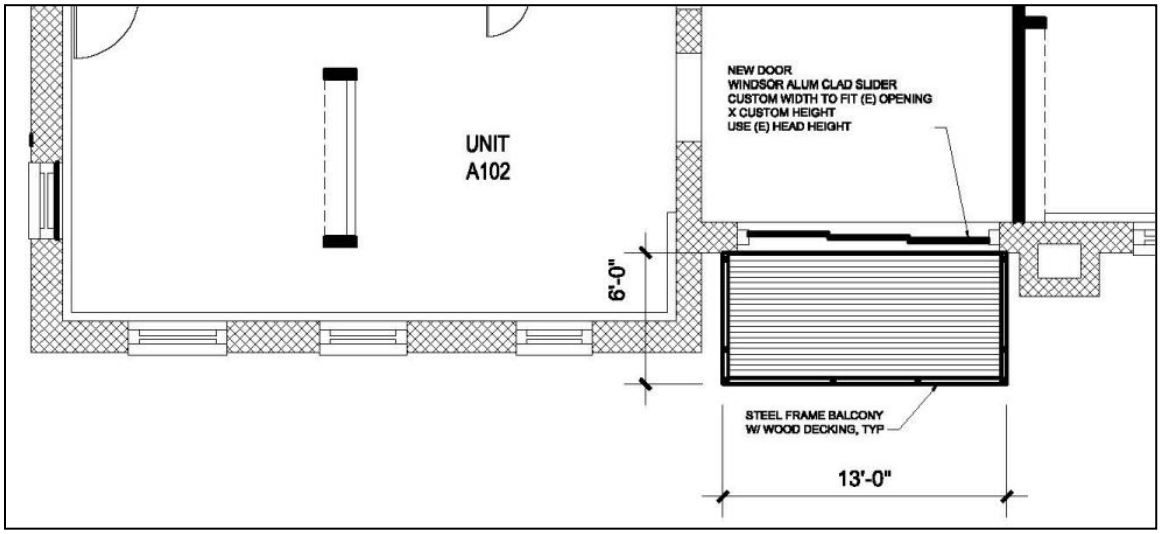


Figure 11. Proposed plan for balcony for Unit A102 on the 1st floor, 2015.

Figure 12. Proposed south elevation with expanded openings and balconies.

Figure 13 & 14. Left: Existing and rendering of proposed south elevation from 10th St.;

The balconies are shown to measure 13 ft. wide by 6 ft. long, with 3′6″ railings. Proposed materials include steel frames with wood decking. Clevis connections, cables attaching the outer corners of the balconies to the masonry, are shown to secure the projecting balconies.

Figure 15. Rendering of proposed south elevation as seen from parking lot.

Figure 16. Existing balcony on the west elevation of the historic building is partially visible behind the Chapel from Lincoln Place.

An existing steel frame balcony similar in design and composition to the proposed balconies can be found on the 3rd floor of the west elevation, measuring 3'6" in height. The balcony is located approximately 120 ft. from the west property line, and is partially visually obscured by the Chapel. Other steel elements are visible on the historic chapel, including the non-historic stair and railing.

CRITERIA FOR THE BOARD'S DECISION

Subsection 9-11-18, B.R.C. 1981, sets forth the standards the Landmarks Board must apply when reviewing a request for a Landmark Alteration Certificate.

(b) Neither the Landmarks Board nor the City Council shall approve a Landmark Alteration Certificate unless it meets the following conditions:

(1) The proposed work preserves, enhances, or restores and does not damage or destroy the exterior architectural features of the landmark or the subject property within an historic district;
(2) The proposed work does not adversely affect the special character or special historic, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of the landmark and its site or the district;
(3) The architectural style, arrangement, texture, color, arrangement of color, and materials used on existing and proposed constructions are compatible with the character of the existing landmark and its site or the historic

district;

(4) With respect to a proposal to demolish a building in an historic district, the proposed new construction to replace the building meets the requirements of paragraphs (b)(2) and (3) above.

(c) In determining whether to approve a landmark alteration certificate, the Landmarks Board shall consider the economic feasibility of alternatives, incorporation of energy-efficient design, and enhanced access for the disabled.

ANALYSIS

1. Does the proposed application preserve, enhance, or restore, and not damage or destroy the exterior architectural features of the landmark or the subject property within a historic district?

The building was constructed in 1892 and individually landmarked in 1984. While extensively modified following a near catastrophic fire in 1980, the building is a well-preserved and intact example of the scholastic Romanesque Revival. Defining characteristics of the building include the arched entrance, projecting square bays, and use of rusticated stone. The building is arguable the most visually prominent building in the University Hill neighborhood.

Staff considers the highly visible south elevation to be secondary as defined in the *General Design Guidelines*. Because of its high visibility and the fact that the repetitive rhythm of same sized openings is a historic character-defining feature of the building, staff considers the proposed alterations to the south face (including the removal of eight historic windows and enlarging six original window openings) does not preserve, enhance or restore the exterior features of the historic property and that such changes will damage and destroy the character of the existing building. The proposed alteration is inconsistent with the treatment of individually landmarked buildings in the *General Design Guidelines* (see Design Guidelines Analysis section).

2. Does the proposed application adversely affect the special character or special historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of the district?

Staff finds that the proposed alterations to the building, including removal of historic windows and alteration of original window openings would adversely affect the special character and historic, architectural, or aesthetic interest and value of the property as it is significantly inconsistent with the *General Design Guidelines* in terms of treatment of historic buildings (see Design Guidelines Analysis section).

3. Is the architectural style, arrangement, texture, color, arrangement of color, and materials used on existing and proposed structures compatible with the character of the existing landmark

and its site?

Staff finds that the proposed alterations and resulting loss of historic material to be incompatible with the character of the landmarked site.

4. Does the proposal to demolish the building within a historic district and the proposed new construction to replace the proposed demolished building meet the requirements of the Land Use Code (B.R.C. 1981) paragraphs 9-11-18(b)(2) and 9-11-18(b)(3) of this section?

Not applicable.

DESIGN GUIDELINES

The Historic Preservation Ordinance sets forth the standards the Landmarks Board must apply when reviewing a request for a Landmark Alteration Certificate and the board has adopted the *General Design Guidelines* to help interpret the ordinance. The following is an analysis of the submitted proposal with respect to relevant guidelines. It is important to emphasize that design guidelines are intended to be used as an aid to appropriate design, and not as a checklist of items for compliance.

The following is an analysis of the proposal's compliance with the applicable design guidelines:

General Design Guidelines			
3.0 Alterations			
3.2	**Roof Decks and Balconies**		
Roof decks are deck areas above the first floor that are contained completely or partially in a roof mass. Balconies are railed or balustrade platforms that project from the building. Second story roof decks or balconies are characteristic of only a few architectural styles found in Boulder. They may be compatible additions, however, if located on the rear and if they are integrated into the primary structure. Second story roof decks or balconies are not appropriate for free-standing accessory buildings and garages. Any decks or balconies above the second story are inappropriate unless based on historic precedent.			
	Guideline	*Analysis*	*Conforms?*
.1	*Locate roof decks or balconies on the rear, not on the front, of the building. Front roof decks or*	Proposed balconies will be located on the rear of the building, however, due to the prominent visibility of this elevation from the	Maybe

	balconies are appropriate only if recreating a documented historic element.	east, and its proximity to the current primary entrance to the building, staff considers the south portion to be a Secondary elevation. Balconies are not a documented historic feature or the Mt. St. Gertrude Academy.	
.2	*Integrate the roof deck or balcony into the structure either by setting it into the building or by incorporating it into the roof structure.*	Balconies are not integrated into the structure or roof.	**No**
.3	*Avoid cantilevered projections from the building, and use appropriately scaled brackets or supports.*	Proposed balconies are cantilevered. Clevis connection (cable) is shown to support the balcony.	**No**
.4	*While current code requirements must be met, new railings should be as close as possible to historic heights. In addition, sensitive design may give the appearance of the lower railing heights found on historic structures.*	Plans show proposed balconies railings to be 3′6″ tall. Proposed cantilevered steel frame balcony design is not based on a historic precedent.	**Maybe**

3.7 Windows, Storm Windows, and Shutters

Windows, the elements that surround them, and their relationship to one another are one of the most important character-defining elements of a historic building and should be preserved. Improper or insensitive treatment of the windows on a historic structure can seriously detract from its architectural character. The relative importance of a window depends on three factors: the location of the window on the building, the historic significance of the window, and its condition. Windows on elevations visible from public ways, particularly the façade, are especially important. A window that has a high level of historic significance, regardless of its location, may also be very important to the historic integrity of the building. The replacement of

historic windows or components, including glass, should be considered only as a last resort.			
Protection of Historic Windows			
	Guideline	*Analysis*	*Conforms?*
.1	*Retain and preserve existing historic windows, including their functional and decorative features, such as frames, glass, sashes, muntins, sills, heads, moldings, surrounds and hardware. Because windows near the façade are particularly critical to the character of historic buildings, their protection may supersede the protection of historic windows elsewhere. In some cases, it may be appropriate to use window elements from rear or side elevations to repair those on the front.*	Proposal requires the removal of eight historic windows on a Secondary elevation. The proposal also calls for the alteration of six original window openings, including removal of the existing sandstone sills and the masonry beneath each opening.	No
.2	*Preserve original window locations; do not move windows from their historic placement.*	While doors are proposed be placed in original window locations in terms of width, masonry removal beneath the window will be required to create an opening tall enough for a door.	No
Window Replacement			
	Guideline	*Analysis*	*Conforms?*
.6	*The location of the window(s) proposed for retrofit or replacement is important in assessing their significance to a historic building. In general, the more important the elevation where the window is located, the less likely that retrofit or replacement will be appropriate.*	Due to the prominent visibility of this elevation from the east, staff considers the south portion to be a Secondary elevation. As such, replacement of intact historic windows on secondary elevations is	No

	Elevations will be categorized as primary, secondary or tertiary, using the methodology set out in the Window & Door Replacement Application and Survey. • *Replacement of intact historic windows on primary elevations is rarely appropriate.* • *Replacement of intact historic windows on secondary elevations is generally inappropriate.* • *Replacement of intact historic windows on tertiary elevations can occur provided it does not compromise the historic integrity of the building.* *(See "Definitions")*	inappropriate. ***Secondary Elevation*:** *Typically a side of a building that has less public visibility, and may have fewer significant character defining features than on the façade. An elevation that has visibility from an alley may be considered a secondary elevation.*	
.7	*The historic significance of the windows proposed for replacement must also be assessed. In general, the more significant a window is to the building as a whole, the less likely that a retrofit or replacement will be appropriate. The appropriateness of a window replacement will be determined, in part, based upon characterization of the window as either 'Very Historically Important', 'Historically Important', or 'Non-Historic' (See Definitions).*	Staff considers the windows on the south elevation to be Historically Important, as they are have "retained integrity from the period of significance and [are] an integral part of the historic design or is essential to the understanding of the architectural type or style." Staff considers the original window openings with stone sills and arched lintels to be Historically Important.	No
.10	*If, through the Window & Door Application & Survey, it is determined the window may be*	Proposal is to make window openings larger to accommodate doors.	No

	replaced (Class III & IV), the window opening itself should be carefully preserved. It should not be made larger or smaller to accommodate a differently sized window.		
.11	*If, through the Window & Door Application & Survey, it is determined the window may be replaced (Class III & IV), the same material as was the original is most appropriate; however, other materials may be considered if the operation, dimension, profile, durability, and finish are the same. Synthetic materials are generally inappropriate. Synthetic materials rarely duplicate the surface texture, reflective and detail qualities of original materials.*	Aluminum clad doors are proposed to replace the existing windows.	No

3.8 Doors and Storm Doors

Front doors and primary entrances are among the most important elements of historic buildings. The original size and proportion of a front door, the details of the door, the door surround, and the placement of the door all contribute to the character of the entrance. Property Owners may wish to replace their historic doors to improve energy efficiency. Research indicates that, in most cases, however, the energy efficiency of an old door can be increased to that of a new replacement door by weather-stripping and the application of an interior or exterior storm door system. However, if a property owner wishes to request a landmark alteration certificate to replace doors on a contributing or individually landmarked building, the steps as outlined in the historic Window and Door Replacement/ Retrofit Application Guidelines must be followed.

	Guideline	*Analysis*	*Conforms?*
.7	*If, through a Window & Door Application Survey replacement is found to be appropriate, the*	Not applicable; introduction of new doors.	N/A

	replacement door should match the original as closely as possible. If documentation of the original door is not available, then the appearance of the replacement door should be based on original doors on similar historic structures.		
.10	*Doors in additions and new structures should reflect the proportions (height and width) of doors in the existing structure and/or the district.*	Doors are shown to be single-light aluminum clad door. West unit on first floor proposed to introduce a sliding glass door. Single-light doors have historic proportions; sliding glass door is a modern feature.	Maybe
.11	*Doors should be trimmed with materials similar in scale, proportion, finish, and character to those used traditionally.*	Original width and arched lintel proposed to be preserved. Treatment of proposed door sill not detailing in application materials.	Maybe

FINDINGS

Mt. St. Gertrude Academy at 970 Aurora Ave. was constructed in 1892, with historic additions completed in 1914 and 1921. The property was designated as an individual landmark in 1984 and was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1994.

The alterations are proposed on the south elevation (rear) of the 1892 portion of the building. The south face is highly visible from 10th Street and retains its architectural integrity, and as such, staff considers the south elevation to be a secondary elevation.

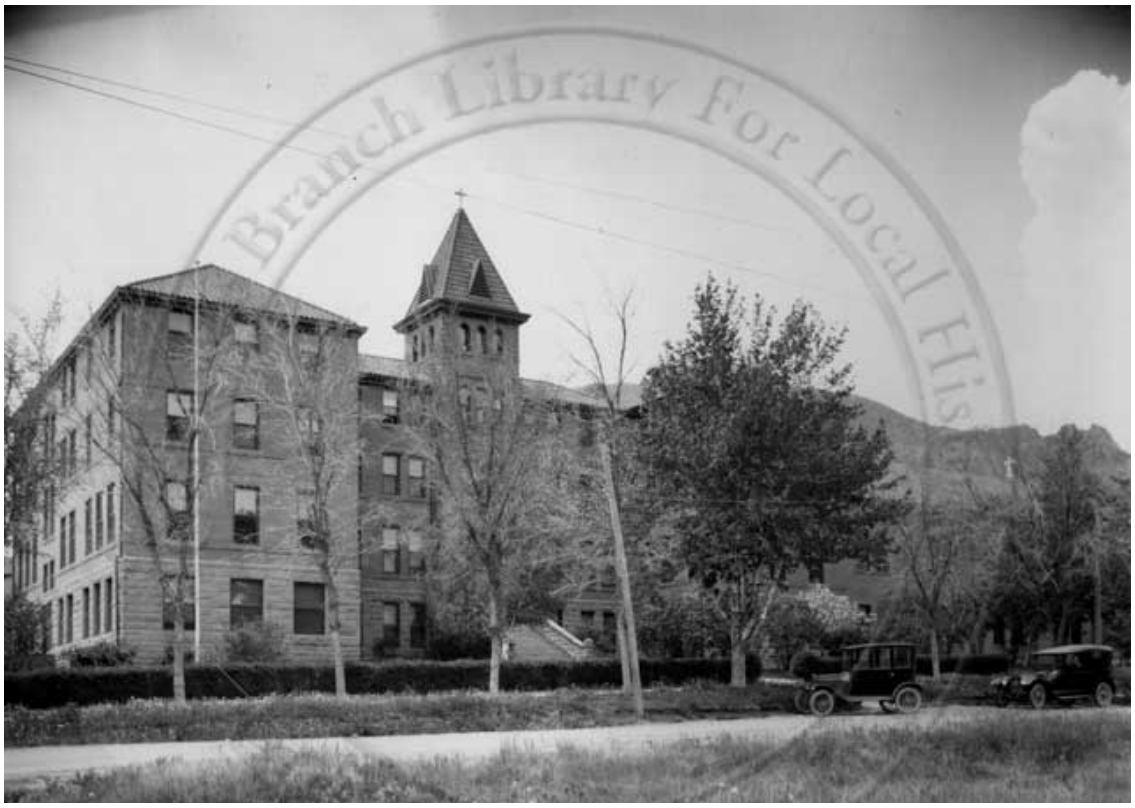
Proposed changes, including the removal of eight historic windows and loss of the stone sills and original masonry, are substantially inconsistent with the historic preservation ordinance, Chapter 9-11 of the Boulder Revised Code 1981 and Section 3 of the *General Design Guidelines.*

Staff considers issuance of a Landmark Alteration Certificate for the proposed alteration to the individually landmarked building to be inconsistent with Section 9-11-18, B.R.C. and the *General Design Guidelines*.

ATTACHMENTS:

A: Historic Photographs
B: Photographs
C: Plans and Elevations

Mt. St. Gertrude Academy, north elevation, c. 1892-1910.



Mt. St. Gertrude Academy, north elevation, 1921.

Mt. St. Gertrude Academy, south elevation, c. 1940s.

Mt. St. Gertrude Academy, south elevation, c. 1950s.

Mt. St. Gertrude Academy, north elevation, 1992.

Mt. St. Gertrude, north elevation, 2002.

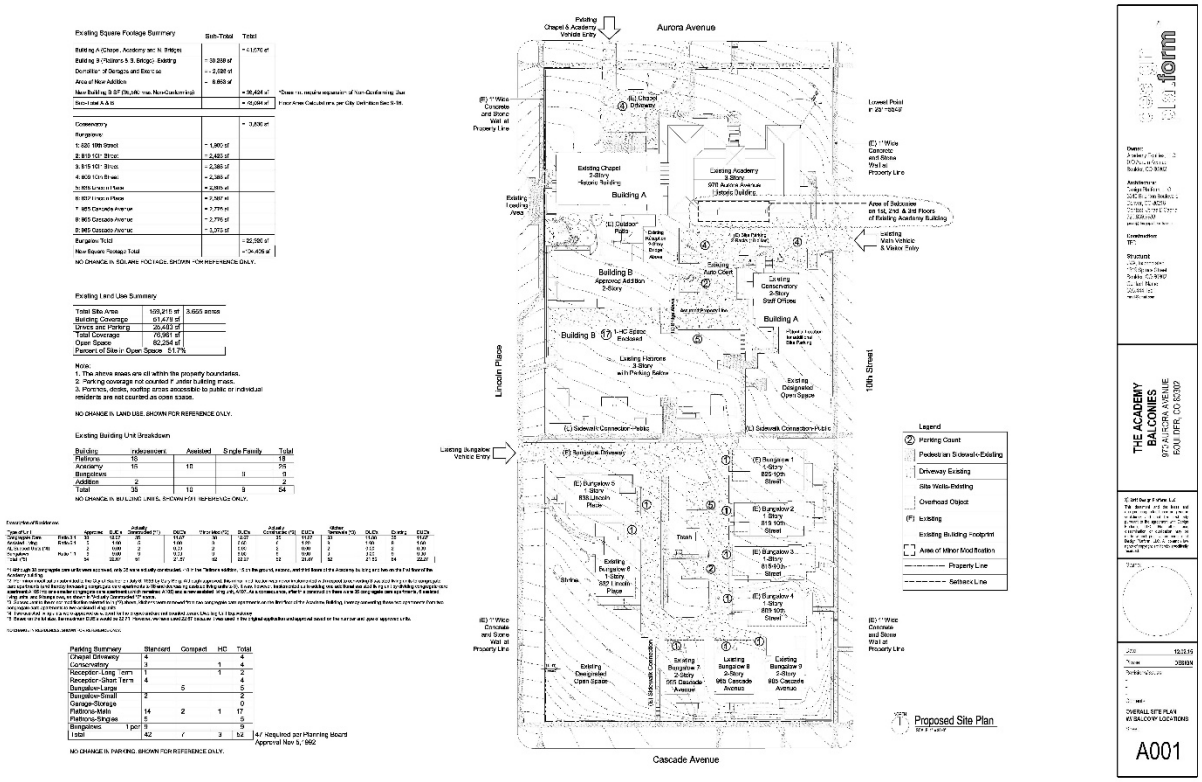
South elevation of Mt. St. Gertrude from 10th Street, 2016

South Elevation of Mt. St. Gertrude from Parking Lot, 2016

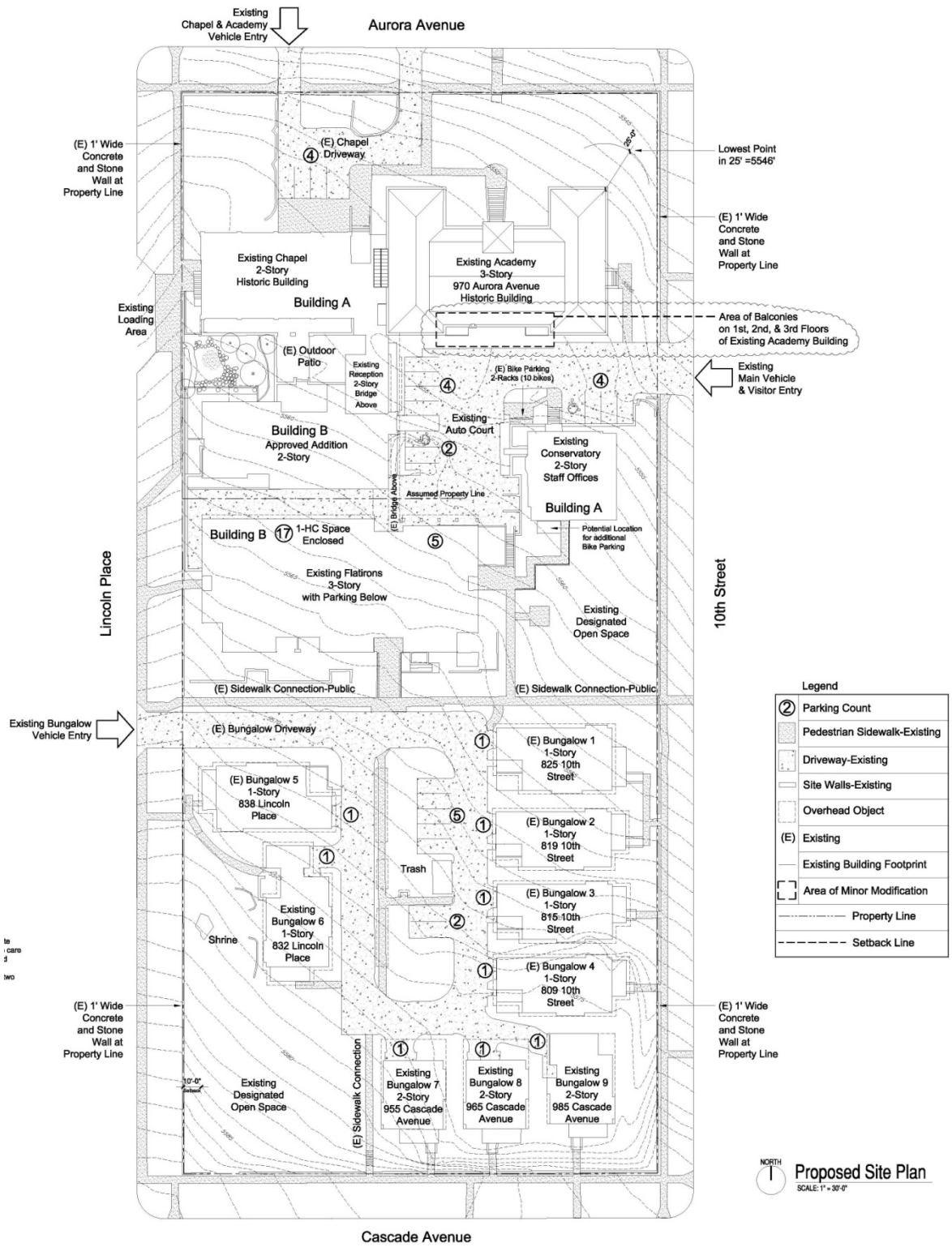
South Elevation, Mt. St. Gertrude, summer 2015

South Elevation, Mt. St. Gertrude, Fall 2015

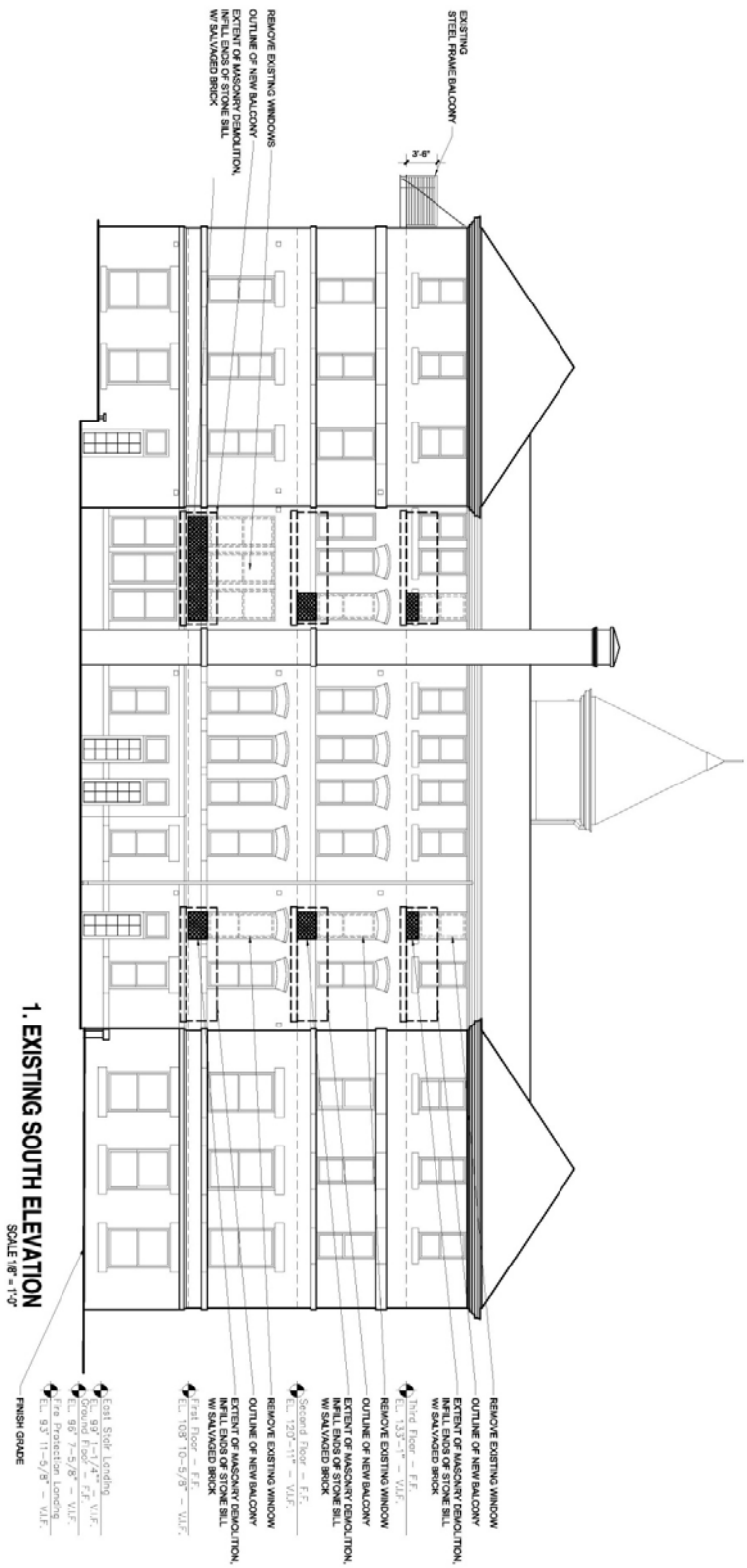
Historically Important Windows, south elevation St. Gertrude Academy 2016



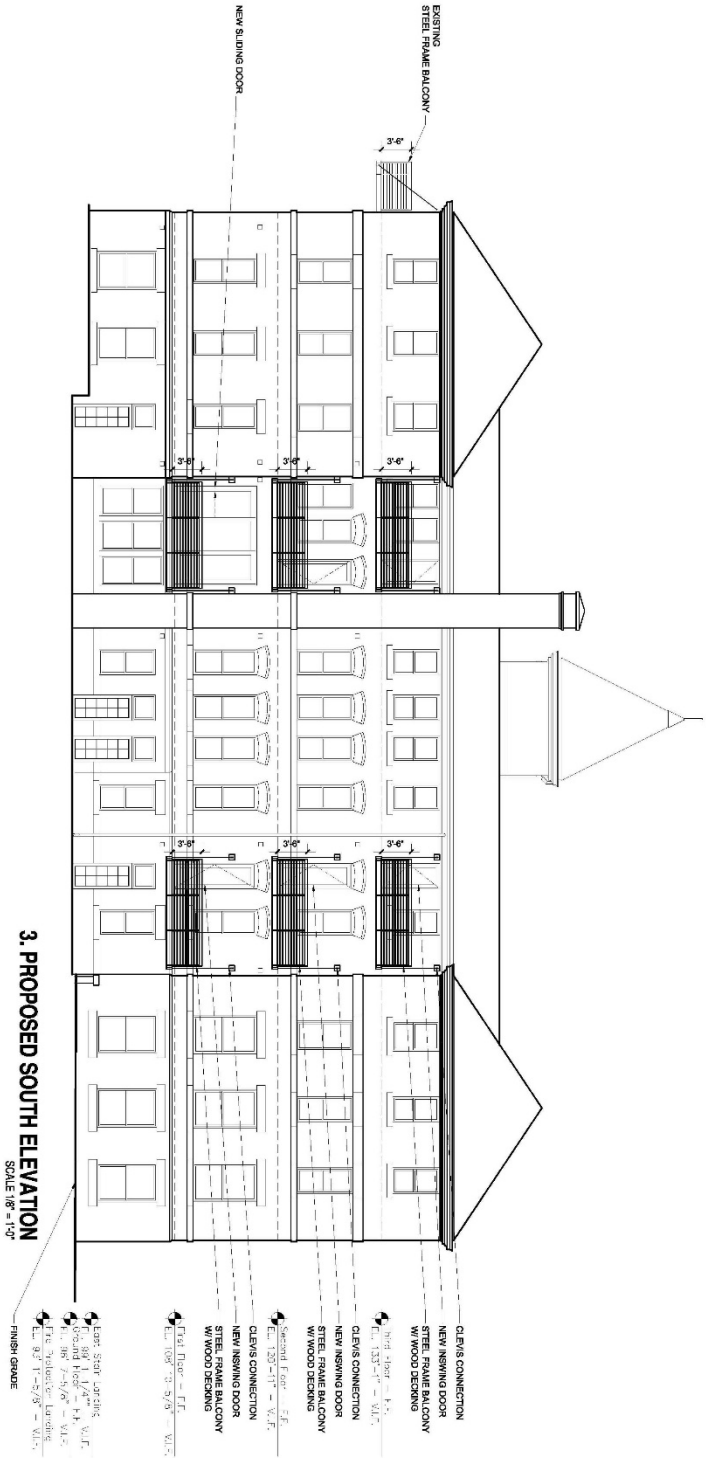
Proposed Site Plan, 2015.



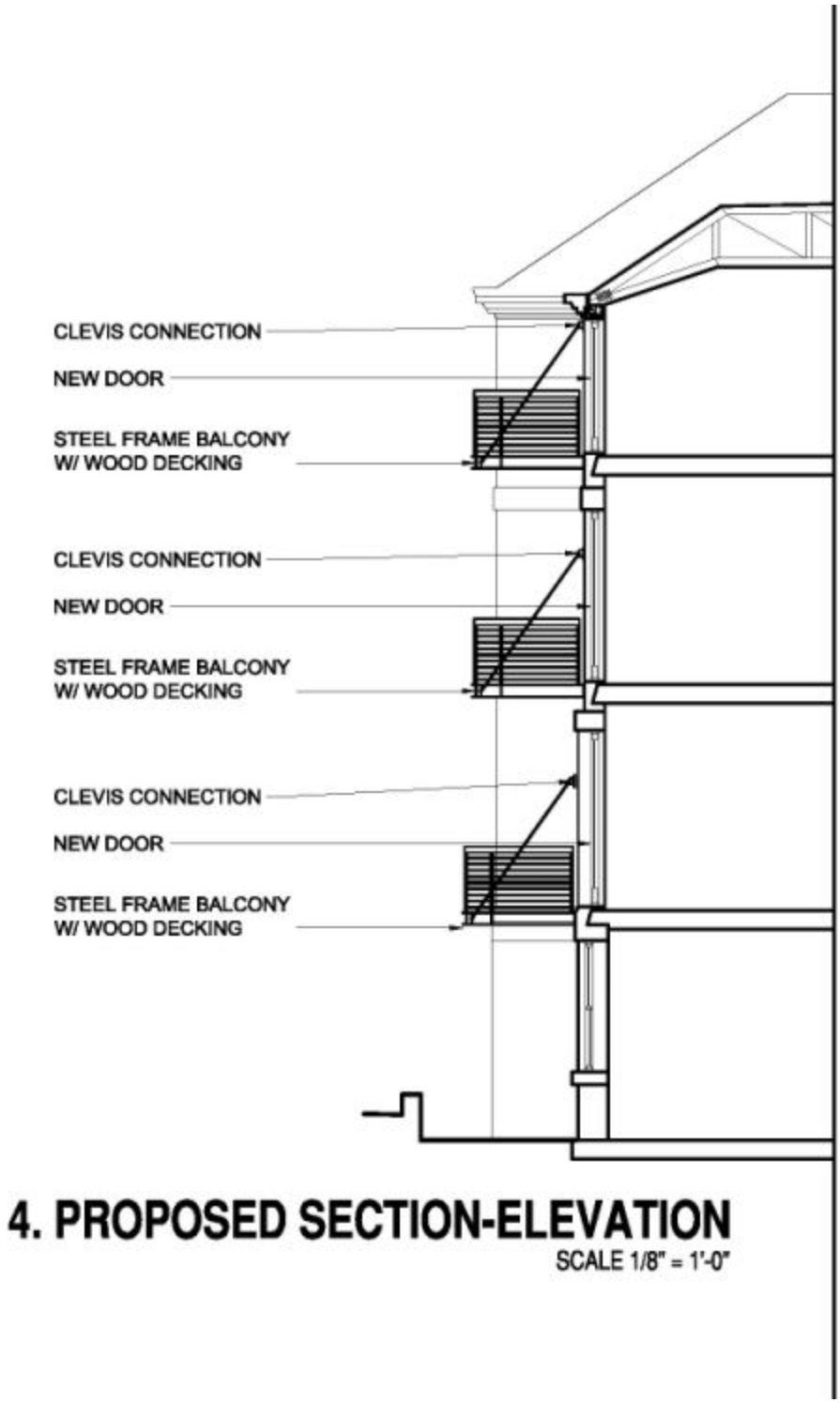
Proposed Site Plan, 2015.



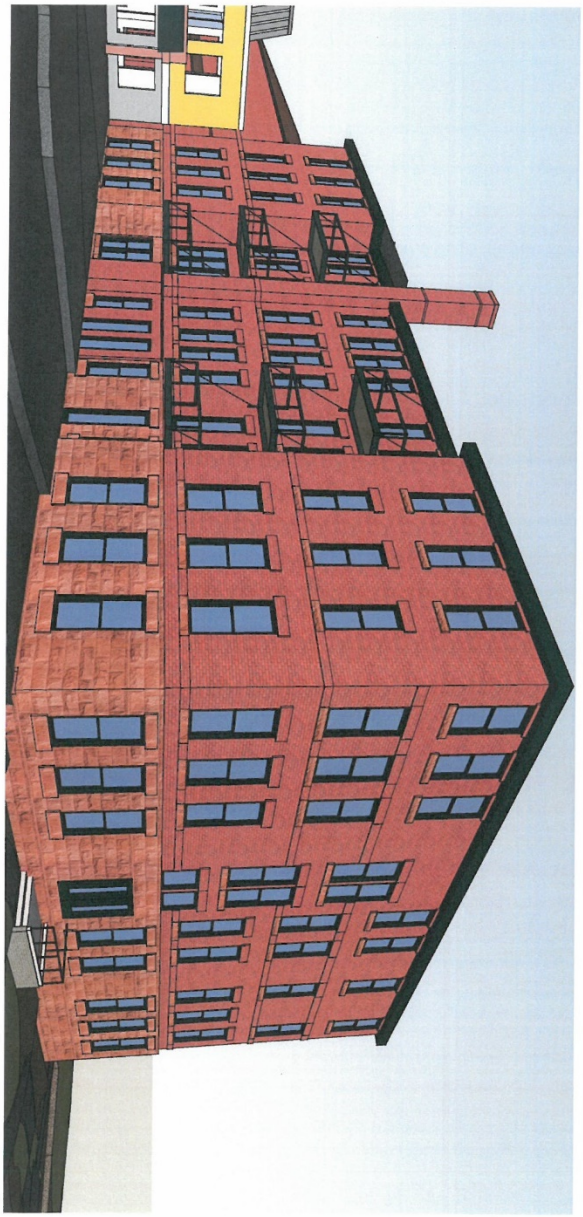
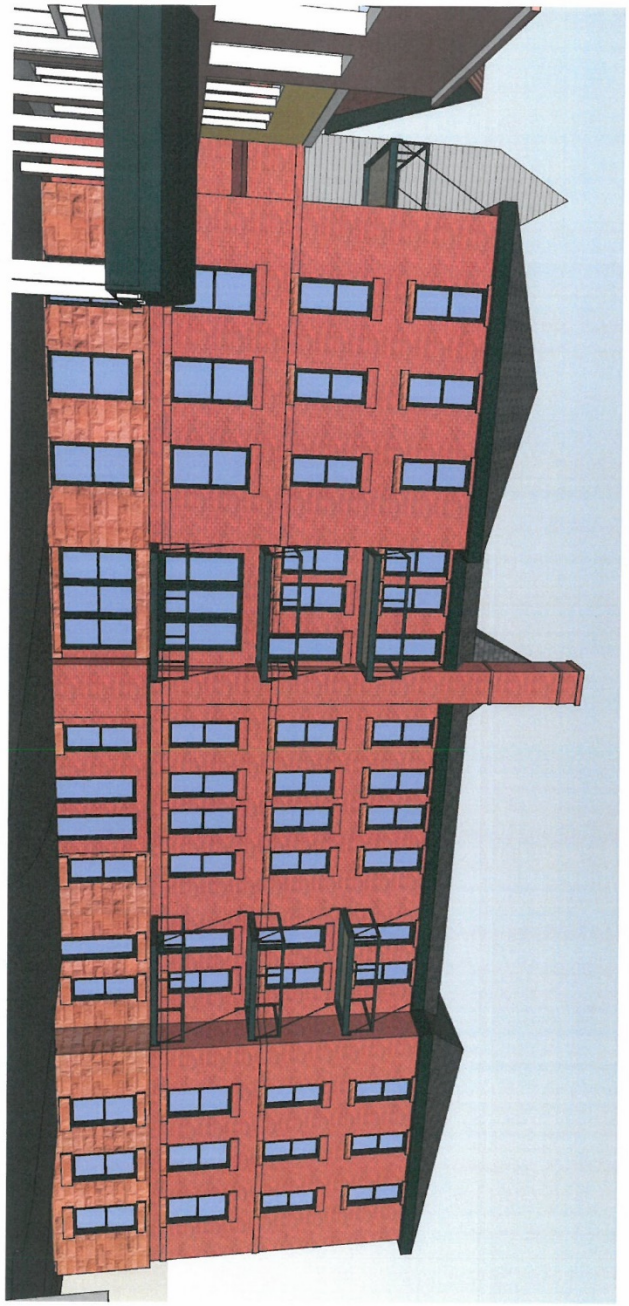
Proposed Modifications, South Elevation, 2015.



Proposed Modifications, South Elevation, 2015.



Proposed Modifications, South Elevation, 2015.



Proposed Modifications, South Elevation, 2015.