



PATRICK J. SULLIVAN
DIRECTOR

City of New Bedford

Department of Planning, Housing & Community Development

608 Pleasant St, New Bedford, Massachusetts 02740

Telephone: (508) 979.1500 Facsimile: (508) 979.1575

STAFF REPORT

NEW BEDFORD HISTORICAL COMMISSION MEETING

September 12, 2016

LOCATION: 72 N Water Street
Map 53 Lot 68

APPLICANT: Mount Vernon Group
Architects, Inc.

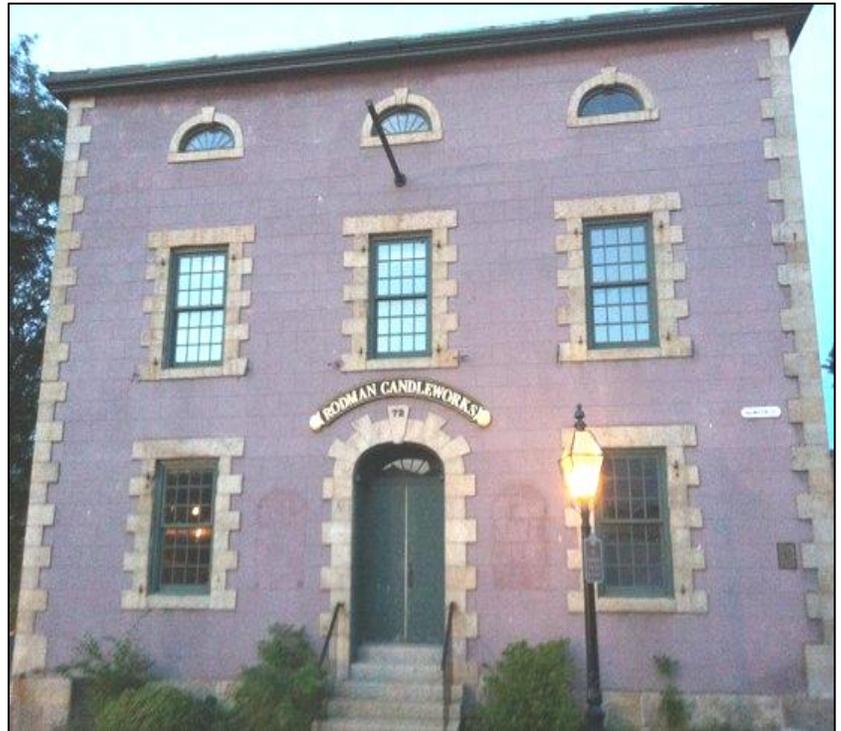
OWNER: New Bedford, Inc.

OVERVIEW: 72 N Water Street, widely known as the Rodman Candleworks, has recently been purchased with the intent to rehabilitate the property for the continued use of a restaurant on the lower level and commercial offices above. This rehab will include a variety of work that requires a Certificate of Appropriateness as well as some work which would likely require a Certificate of Non-Applicability in a separate application.

EXISTING CONDITIONS: The Rodman Candleworks (circa 1815) is distinguished as being the first candleworks in Bedford Village, built for the production and manufacturing of spermaceti candles from whale oil. Constructed in the Federal Style by Samuel Rodman (1753-1835), architect/builder unknown, the building operated as an oil manufacturing business until 1859 and ownership stayed within the Rodman family until 1890.

This three story building has a low-pitched tar hip roof with a wood cornice and integral gutters, granite rubble walls faced with stucco tinted a mauve-taupe color, and a split-faced granite block foundation laid in running bond courses and visible only on the west and south sides. The stucco on the facade (west) and south elevations is scored to resemble ashlar blocks laid in 30 running bond courses but smooth on the north and east elevations. Roughly dressed white granite quoins adorn the northwest, southwest, and southeast corners and frame the door and window openings on the west and south elevations. A one-story, masonry and glass pavilion spans about 75 percent of the north side elevation at the basement level, which is exposed on the north and east.

The main entrance is a flat double-leaf door with a simple elliptical fanlight recessed behind an arched opening centered in the three-bay facade. A similar entrance with a single wood door is centered in the five-bay south side elevation. Basement-level entrances flush with the plane of the exterior wall, some with white granite lintels and side quoining, are located at the west end of the north elevation and three across the rear (east) elevation. The building has regularly spaced, rectangular window openings in each of the first- and second-story bays that contain



12-over-12, double-hung wood sash. The openings in the west and south elevations feature granite lintels, sills, and side quoining. Those on the north and south elevations primarily have segmental-arch tops and no lintels, exterior sills, or quoining. The third-story bays on the west and south elevations contain lunettes with seven-light hopper windows and white granite arched surrounds, keystones, and sills. Eight rectangular third-story openings in the north and east elevations (five of which were cut during the 1978–1979 rehabilitation) contain eight-over-eight, double-hung sash. The window sash all date to 2002.

A major rehabilitation to the building occurred in 1978 and is documented in the architectural plans created by Gelardin, Bruner and Cott, which provide evidence that the restoration decisions were to some extent based on remaining historic fabric, as the plans often specify materials and construction “to match existing details.”

In addition, the alterations that have occurred to the Candleworks in the last two centuries have been documented in the 2009 Historic Structure Report contracted by the New Bedford National Historical Park and written by Architectural Historian, Lauren H. Laham.

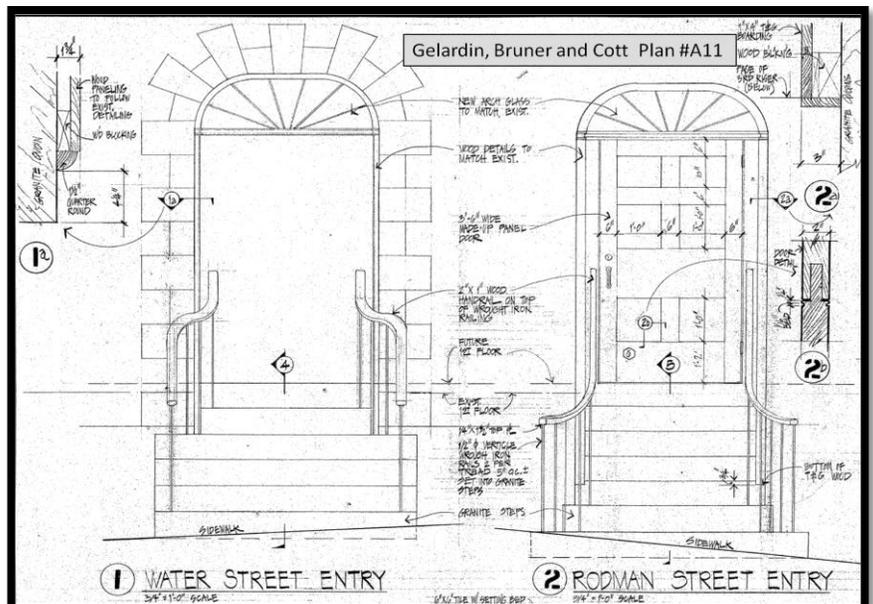
PROPOSAL: As part of an overall building rehabilitation, the applicant is seeking to replace the entry door at N Water Street and install new signage in various locations. Additionally, the applicant seeks to install a new fence and an awning and pavers is being proposed for the courtyard location. (Other types or repairs, paint or replacement of in-kind materials will occur under a separate application for a Certificate of Non-Applicability.)

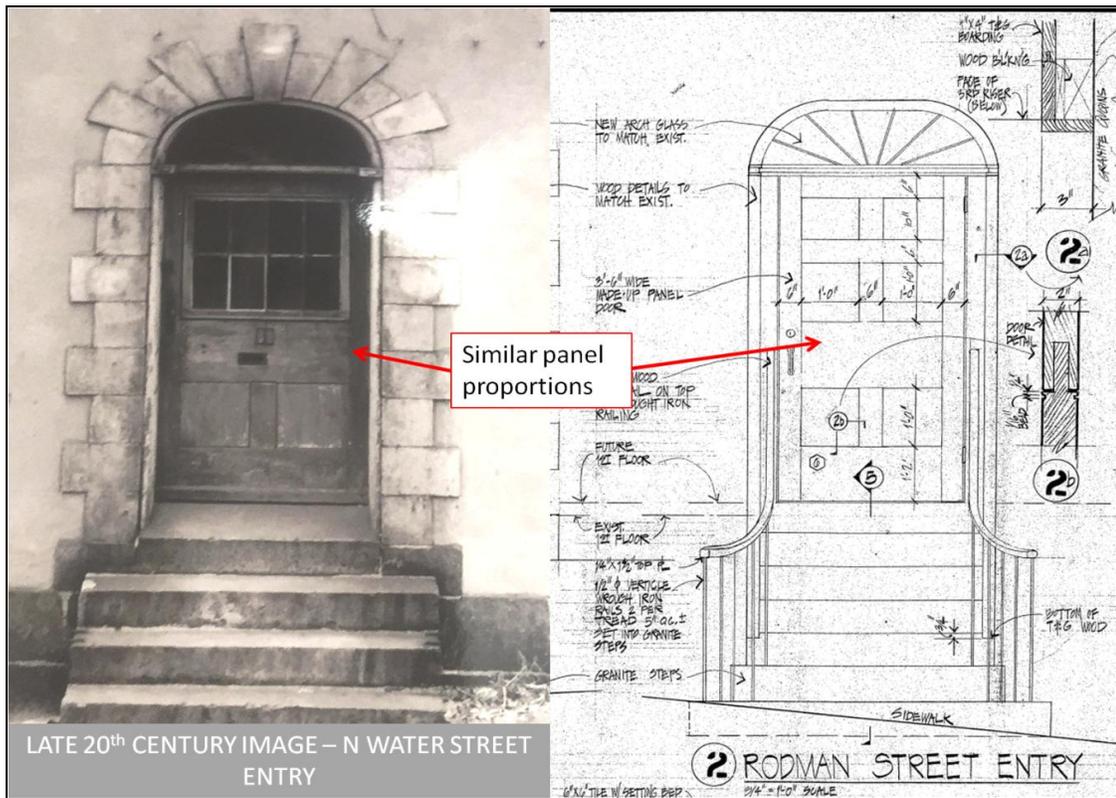
A. DOOR REPLACEMENT

The applicant is proposing to replace the N Water street double leaf doors with a single painted wood door, based on the design, construction, and details of the existing Rodman Street door as well as the 1978 Gelardin, Bruner and Cott architectural plans.

The existing N. Water Street double leaf doors were fabricated and installed as part of the 1978 rehabilitation. These double leaf doors are constructed with flush panels, a cut bead and a wide lock rail. This rare type of door construction is called *Bead and Flush*, and its only other local occurrence is at the Spring Street Friends Meetinghouse (1821). The door paneling matches the entry side paneling in its design, construction and dimensions.

The existing door at the Rodman Street entry is also a replica door installed as part of the 1978 rehabilitation, and unlike the N Water Street entry, is a single door with the same *Bead and Flush* construction. The Rodman Street door is not being replaced.

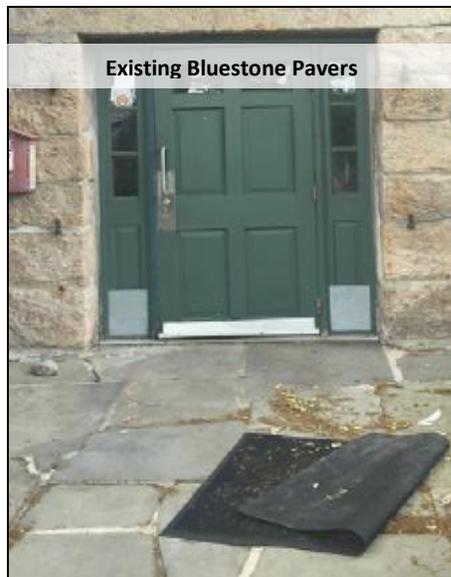




An undated late twentieth century photo taken prior to the 1978 restoration confirms that a single door, similar to the one at the Rodman Street entry, at one time existed at the N Water Street entry, and may be the original door. The photographed door has an eight paned glass panel in its upper section, with two panels below. It is difficult to discern from the photo whether the lower panels are recessed or flush with a bead. The glass panes were most likely added at a later date by cutting out the upper solid panels. Based on the dimensions of the Rodman Street door depicted in the 1978 architectural plans, the panel, stiles and lock rail dimensions of the N Water Street door in the photo match the Rodman Street door.

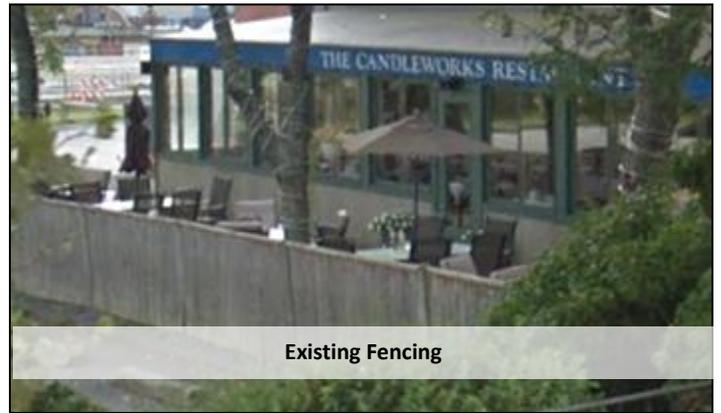
B. PAVERS

Universal access to the building is through the lower level courtyard entrance, which is below the grade of N Water Street. The walkway from the parking area to the lower level entrance currently consists of broken and uneven bluestone set in failing concrete. The applicant is proposing to replace the bluestone with a dark grey architectural slab concrete paver in various sizes to emulate the color and design of the bluestone but with a material change that will hold up better than the bluestone over the long term.



C. FENCE

The applicant proposes to replace an existing unpainted wood fence which separates the courtyard outdoor dining patio from the parking area with a 54" high painted wood fence based on the design of the "typical" fence used throughout the District. This same type of fence is also proposed to act as screening for the HVAC condensor unit adjacent to the lower level entry, as well as for the dumpster pad located at the southeast corner of the building. (See attached site plan for locations.)



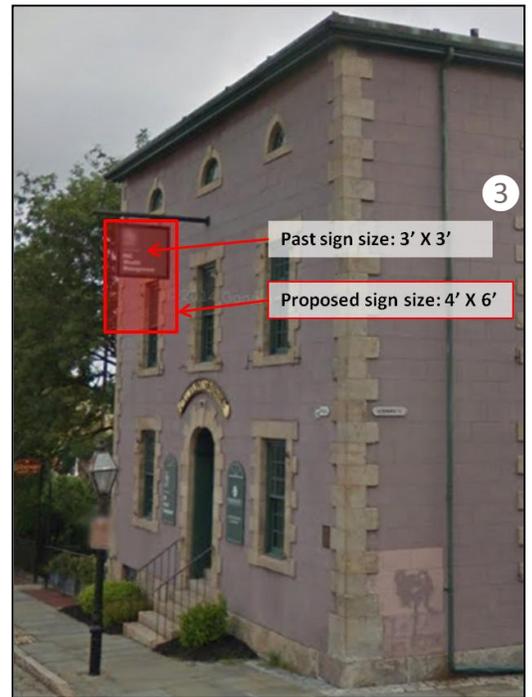
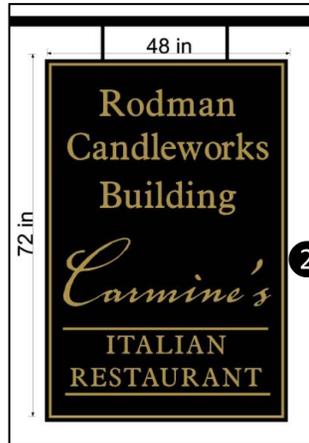
D. SIGNAGE

Replacement signage is proposed in several locations throughout the property. The existing "Rodman Candleworks" sign located above the 72 N Water Street entrance, which acts as the building's identifier, will remain (1).



All of the proposed building signage is constructed of carved, high density urethane foam, painted black with 22kt goldleaf lettering.

The proposed blade (projecting) sign (2) to be located above the N Water Street entry is an unlit double sided, 48" wide by 72" long sign that will be installed on an existing bracket (3).

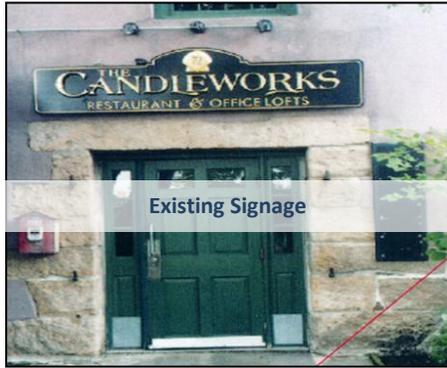


A second existing bracket (4) is also located at the N Water Street entry to the Courtyard, which serves as the main entry to the restaurant located in the lower level of the building. The proposed blade sign (5) is double sided, 20" wide by 22" long and will be installed on the existing bracket. The sign would be unlit.



Discussion regarding signs continues on the following page.

The applicant also proposes to replace two existing building signs currently located on the north façade of the building at the courtyard level: a wall sign, 26" X 96" above the lower level entrance, and a directory sign, 15" X 46" adjacent to the entry.



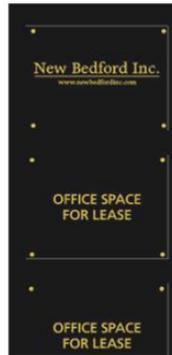
Existing Signage



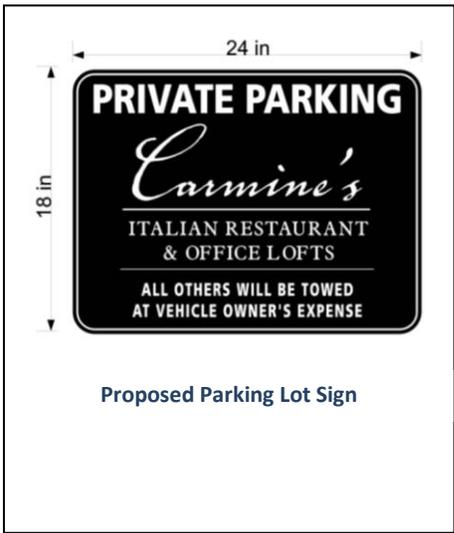
Proposed Wall Sign

Lighting for the wall sign previously exists. Both are being replaced with signs of the same design and dimensions.

An aluminum parking lot sign/s are also being proposed, however the location(s) were not specified by the applicant. The city's Municipal Code of Ordinances allows lots that are used for parking to have one ground sign at each entrance, not to exceed two (2) signs.



Proposed Directory Sign



Proposed Parking Lot Sign

An unlit ground sign exists at the corner of Elm Street and the JFK Boulevard. It currently has white painted posts which are 12' in height. The applicant is proposing to replace the current panels with new panels of the same size to reflect the building's new occupants and uses.

The panels will be constructed of medium density overlay (MDO) plywood, painted white with black lettering.

The ground sign as presented will require a variance because of the proposed size of the top portion (30 SF) exceeds that which is allowed under zoning (25 SF). If the applicant reduces that section accordingly, it would not require the variance.



Existing Ground Sign



Proposed Ground Sign

E. AWNING

The glass pavilion attached the north façade of the building has a slight pitched roof with a fabric awning along the edge. This awning is currently blue in color with white lettering and served as additional signage to the former restaurant in the lower level.

The applicant is proposing to replace the blue awning with black fabric and white lettering.



FOR BOARD MEMBER CONSIDERATION: In 2006, the NBHC formulated and adopted a policy, *The Priority of Historic Structures*, in which all structures within the District were ranked according to their level of historical and architectural significance. The purpose of this ranking is to apply the suitable and consistent standard of review, documentation, and treatment for each individual property.

The Rodman Candleworks is considered a “Priority 1” structure, as it is individually identified in the National Historic Landmark nomination for the District and is classified as “mission essential” in the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park’s enabling legislation.

Due to the Candlework’s level of historical and architectural significance, the National Park Service, within its Historic Structures Report, recommends that the treatment approach for the structure is **preservation** as it is defined in *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*.

In addition, the Massachusetts Historical Commission holds a Preservation Restriction on the Rodman Candleworks which is in place to ensure the preservation of the architectural and historical integrity of the building.

STATEMENT OF APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: *The Bedford-Landing District Design Guidelines*, adopted by the New Bedford Historical Commission, are based on *The Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. The first treatment, **preservation**, places a high premium on the retention of all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair. It reflects a building’s continuum over time, through successive occupancies, and the respectful changes and alterations that are made.

The Standards recommend that all work on historic structures follow these four principles:

- Deteriorated architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced wherever possible.
- When replacement of original building material is necessary, new materials should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.
- Replacement of missing architectural features should be accurately duplicated based on historical or physical evidence rather than conjecture.
- Repair methods, such as surface cleaning of the building, should be undertaken using the gentlest methods possible.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS:

Given the number of alterations and requests put forth in this application, staff recommends that the NBHC consider taking four separate votes to reflect each of the following areas being considered:

DOOR REPLACEMENT

Based on the existing documentation, staff recommends the approval of the proposed single door with the condition that the door match the bead and flush construction and proportions of the Rodman Street door, as well as the N Water Street entry side panels. The architectural detail of the door panel bead is illustrated as Section #2b in Gelardin, Bruner and Cott's 1978 drawing #A11, and should be used as a reference for door construction purposes. Staff further recommends that an additional condition stipulating that similar door hardware to what currently exists should also be utilized on the new door be included in the decision and that such condition should require staff approval prior to installation.

PAVERS

Because bluestone, due to its condition and its installation in concrete, makes it unsuitable for replacement in-kind, staff recommends the approval of the proposed paver. The location of the pavers is below sidewalk grade and the color and material design is appropriate for the landscape setting and preferable for a universal access location.

FENCE

Staff recommends approval of the fence at the proposed locations and dimensions with the condition that the fence be painted in the color green to match the existing building trim.

SIGNAGE

- All of the proposed building signs' material and design compliments the architecture of this significant resource and great care should be taken with their installation. However the scale of the N Water Street bracket sign (24 sq. ft.) distracts from the building's main façade. Staff recommends the Commission give consideration to a sign of lesser scale than which is being proposed.
- The proposed aluminum parking lot sign did not specify location(s). Staff recommends their approval with the condition that their locations at each parking lot entry be determined by the Commission or be delegated to planning staff.
- The canopy signage is similar to what has been allowed in the past and staff recommends its approval as presented.

The current ground sign at Elm Street and JFK Boulevard was modified and its height increased from 8' to 12' in 2010 and is larger in scale than what is normally approved within the District. The proposed top sign component has an area of 30 square feet. Municipal Code of Ordinances stipulates that ground signs within the Mixed-Use Business Districts not to exceed 25 square feet in area. As such, the proposed sign should be reduced to 25 square feet, which will provide better compatibility to the site.

The applicant has proposed signage components with a white painted background with black lettering. The light color of the signage will act to exaggerate the size of the ground sign, and staff recommends that the sign posts and sign components be painted either black or dark green with white lettering in an effort to reduce the scale of the ground sign.



SITE LOCATION



NORTH WATER STREET VIEW (WEST)



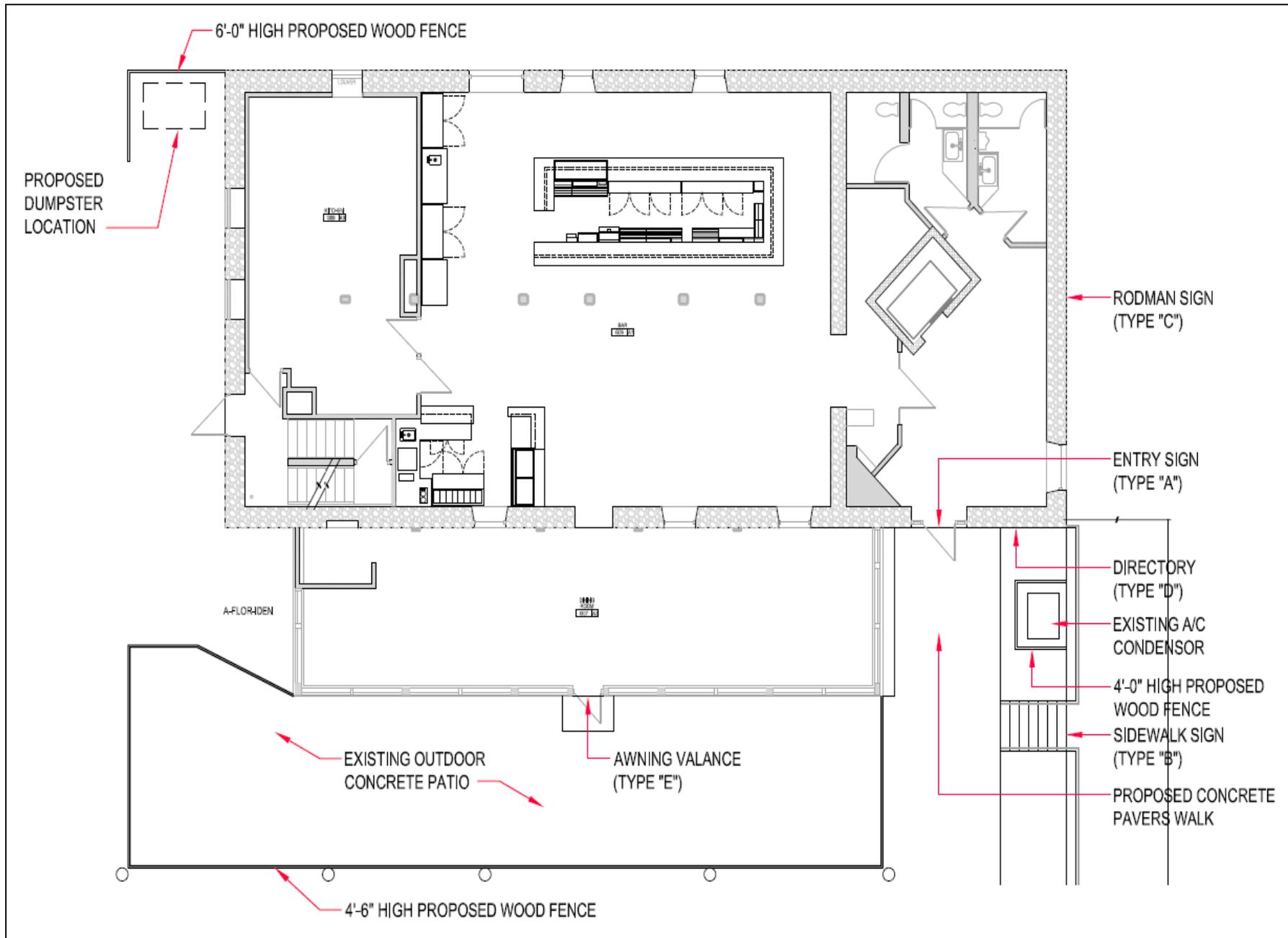
RODMAN STREET VIEW (SOUTH)

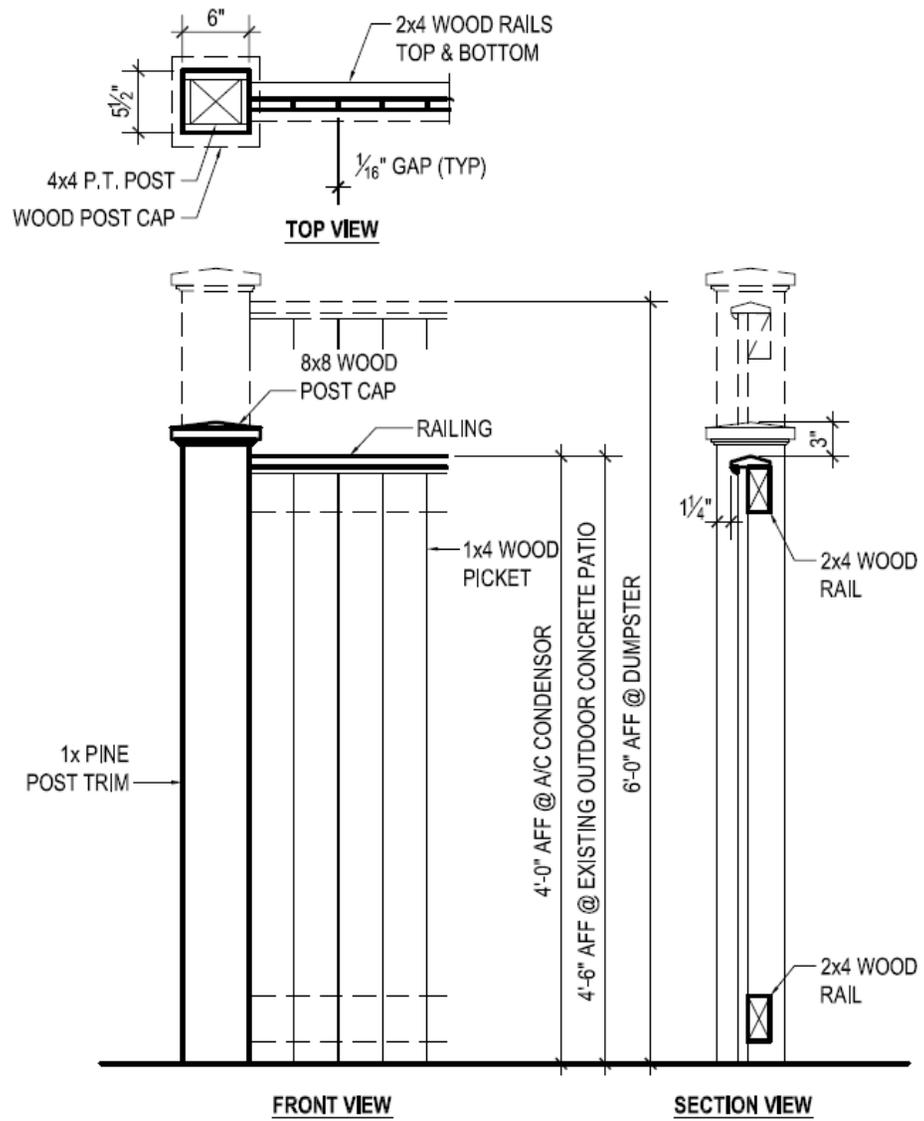


JFK MEMORIAL HIGHWAY VIEW (EAST)



ELM STREET VIEW (NORTH)





TYPICAL FENCE USED IN THE HISTORIC DISTRICT

NOTE:
WOOD FENCING SHALL BE PAINTED GREEN TO MATCH EXISTING.

PROPOSED WOOD FENCE (NOTE NO SPACING BETWEEN PICKETS)