

**ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF REPORT**

APPLICATION NUMBER..... COA-2025-02-0370
DATE..... March 19, 2025
PETITIONER..... Maelyn Ehrman/Arcollab as agent for Brad Foster
REQUEST..... Fencing/Screening
LOCATION..... 183 W. Clayton St.
PROPERTY INFORMATION..... Tax Parcel # 171A5 D006, W. Downtown, C-D
RECOMMENDATION..... Approval with Condition

REQUEST

The purpose of this request is to seek approval of screening/fencing for a mechanical pen at the rear of the building.

BACKGROUND

Parcel Status: The property is considered contributing to the West Downtown Historic District. This means that changes on the property are reviewed for their impact on the district as well as the property itself. Sanborn Maps indicate the building was constructed in 1916 per a denotation on the 1918 map where the building is first shown.

Parcel History: Previous Certificate of Appropriateness applications on file for this location include an HPC-level review in May of 2022 for a renovation and rooftop addition, an HPC-level review in July of 2022 for a rooftop material change, and a recent staff-level review for a new awning and front entry changes. The structure was constructed for Southern Bell telephone company operations and most recently functioned as an office for a law firm. After the recent renovations, the building is now set up to function as a boutique hotel.

Lot Features: The property is located on the southeast corner of the intersection of Clayton Street and Hull Street. The property has width along Clayton Street of about 53' and depth along Hull Street of about 138'. The structure sits at the Clayton Street property line with the rear half of the property being surface parking. The topography drops about 8 feet front the northeast front corner of the property to the southwest rear corner.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposal is for screening/fencing to serve as a mechanical pen at the southeast corner of the building. This is in the back of the building facing the small parking area off of Hull Street. On the left side of the elevation, there are two balconies. In the middle, there is an exit door, which leads down a short set of concrete steps to the ground and an ADA-accessible concrete ramp to the right. The right corner is slightly recessed, and the ground-mounted mechanical units are housed here.

The proposed fencing/screening is comprised of steel tube posts and perforated metal panels, all with a painted finish. The perforations would be $\frac{3}{4}$ " squares. The fencing will connect to the corner of the building in front of the recessed area and end at the existing retaining wall to the east with a matching gate. The height of the fence will be no more than 6' tall.

RECOMMENDATION

Review of this application references the Downtown set of Design Guidelines, specifically Chapter 3 regarding Rehabilitation of Historic Properties, Chapter 5 regarding Parking Facilities, and Chapter 7 regarding General Design Guidelines. Staff offers the following comments:

Guideline	Met?	Comments
3.26 Do not cover or obscure original façade materials	Yes	Mechanicals placed in the rear of the building, in order to not obscure interesting façade detail. Therefore, the fencing would not obscure anything but the historic brick.
5.6 Minimize visual impacts visible from public right-of-way	Unclear	The proposed screening/fencing would act as a gridded metal wall, which would not necessarily be compatible with the surrounding area. The screening impact would not be less than that of the mechanical equipment behind it.
7.8 Minimize visual impacts of mechanical equipment on the public right-of-way	Yes	Screening/fencing would screen equipment from view.
7.11 Minimize visual impacts of storage and service areas	Yes	Locating service areas away from pedestrian routes/at the rear of the building.

Staff finds that the concept to screen the mechanical area is appropriate as is the location. However, the size and design of the perforations of the proposed screening material will not provide the typical degree of openness or form seen with traditional fencing or railings downtown. Further, it would convey an anomalous industrial character rather than the more common mechanical view. Staff was unable to locate any similar screening/fencing in the Western Downtown Historic District, and does not find the specific screening proposed as appropriate or compatible. Staff recommends that the use of screening be approved with a condition that the applicant work with staff to chose an appropriate material and design.

REPORT FOR:	183 W. Clayton St.	
In evaluating the attached report, the following standards, which are checked, were considered in making a recommendation. Items that are not applicable are marked as such. More detailed descriptions of each item are included in the attached report.		
REVIEWED	NOT APPLICABLE	
X		1. HISTORIC USES OF PROPERTY
X		2. NECESSITY OF PROPOSED CHANGES
X		3. INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC RESOURCE
		4. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CHANGE WILL AFFECT:
X		A. INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING
X		B. INTEGRITY OF THE AREA
X		5. ORIGINAL AND CURRENT USES

Worksheet for 183 W. Clayton Street

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