



## DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES – PLANNING DIVISION

REPORT: 397 Capitol Ave, Hartford, CT 06106

For consideration: November 18, 2020

### STAFF REPORT

**TO:** HARTFORD PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
**FROM:** Kate Montgomery, Consultant  
Email: [oneplan@hartford.gov](mailto:oneplan@hartford.gov)

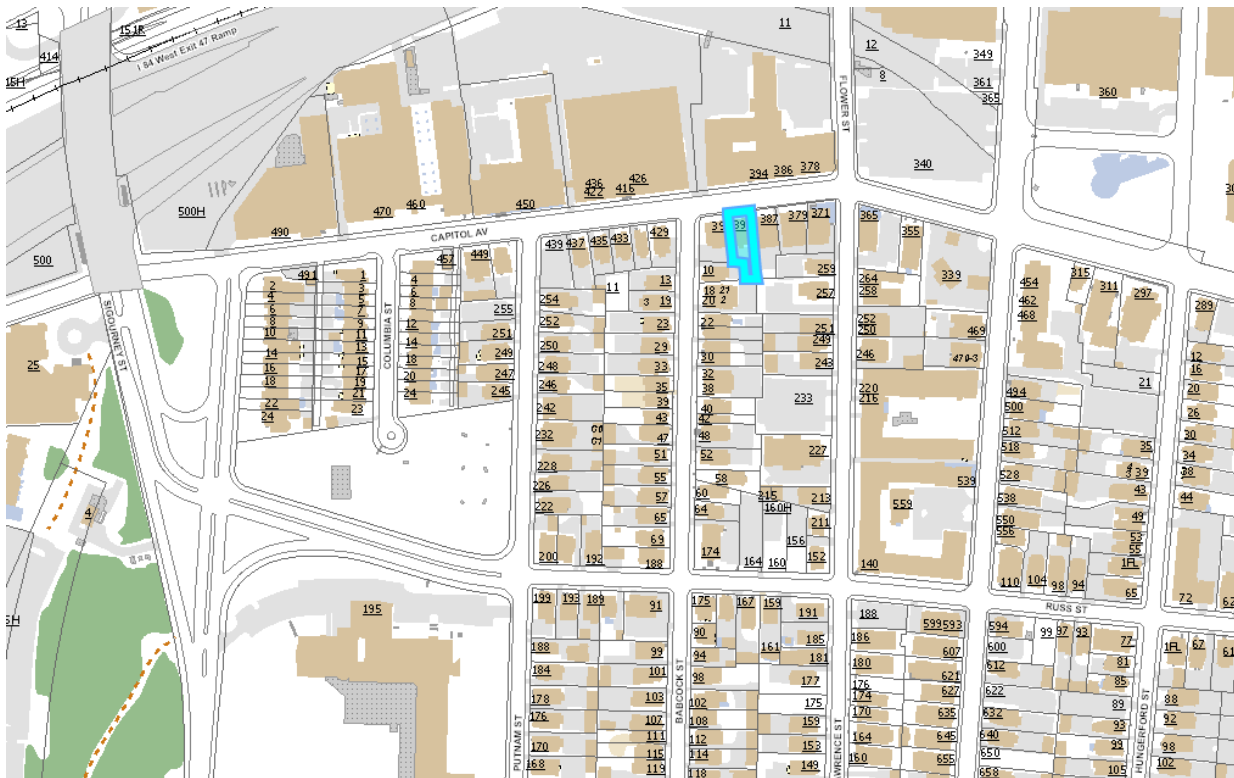
**PROJECT:** 397 Capitol Ave  
PARCEL ID: 202-423-076

**ZONE:** MS-1      **HISTORIC DISTRICT:** Frog Hollow National Historic District

**TYPE:** ARTICLE XII HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION  
Sec. 28-170 through 28-221

**APPLICANT:** Denise Rivera / Capitol Mini Mart, LLC.

**OWNER:** Gordon Properties, LLC.



Location Map

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The mixed-use residential building at 397 Capitol Ave is a 3-story red brick masonry structure built in 1930. The upper levels are residential with first floor storefronts constructed on Capitol Ave.

**Proposed Project:** The applicant seeks to open a Grocery Store in an existing first story storefront unit at 397 Capitol Avenue. This application is for the installation of the proposed 9'x32" aluminum graphic sign that reads "Capitol Mini Market," with a yellow background and images of a full grocery cart and the gold dome of the Capital Building, above the storefront entrance.

### **LEGAL STANDARD**

The Commission reviews and acts upon all applications for Document of Suitability. No person or entity may, without first applying and obtaining the approval of the Commission, file an application for a demolition permit, or for a building permit for any protected property as designated in the Historic Preservation Ordinance Sec. 28-219.

### **STANDARD SPECIFIC TO THE USE**

The commission shall adopt the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Hartford Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings.

According to page 37- "Façades" of the adopted ***Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings*** "On appropriately renovated buildings the original details, materials and scale have been retained. The addition of inappropriate details and materials can erode the original character of the building."

According to page 38- "Storefronts" of the adopted ***Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings*** "A storefront design should clearly project the product or service being offered inside. This communication is accomplished by means of signs, logos, symbols, displays and the use of exterior surface materials and colors."

According to page 39- "Storefronts" of the adopted ***Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation***; "Using inappropriately scaled signs and logos or other types of signs that obscure, damage, or destroy remaining character-defining features of the historic building." is NOT recommended and "If features of the structural system are exposed such as brick walls, cast iron columns, roof trusses, posts and beams, vigas, or stone foundation walls, they may be important in defining the building's overall historic character."

### **FINDING OF FACTS**

**CURRENT USE:** Mixed Use  
**YEAR BUILT:** 1930

**PROPOSED USE:** Grocery  
**STYLE:** Triple-decker/ Half Perfect Six

**Particular Mention in historic nomination:** n/a

**Current Conditions:** This building is in fair condition, but the commercial storefronts have lost or covered historic character and details and the adjacent storefront has oversized signage.

**Condition of other properties in neighborhood:** Other properties on this block of Capitol Ave are neighborhood service, eating places, commercial and multi-family residential uses. Several are residential that have retail additions set ahead of the face of the original building and have lost some of their historic character. Buildings range from poor to good condition.



Figure 1. Google Streetview, dated June 2019. View of 197 Capitol and neighboring structures. The red box identifies the subject storefront constructed between the Half Perfect Six/Triple Decker style residential building, characteristic to the Frog Hollow District, and the commercial storefronts of the neighboring house.



Figure 2. Photo by Staff, Nov. 2020. A roll up security door has been installed on the façade since the 2019 street view image was taken. The Capitol Mini Market sign, which is the subject of this application, has already been installed. The storefront was designed as a contious façade on this property and the trim has been painted to separate it from the salon storfront next door.





September 2008



June 2011



June 2017



June 2019



November 2020

Figure 3. Google Streetview, 2008-2019, Photo by Staff, Nov. 2020. This block of Capitol Ave has been reclaimed and restored over the past several years. The subject parcel has possessed many different signs and



been primarily a mini mart or market over the past several years. The requested sign shown in the last photos, is similar style, size, and location to the previous E&J Mini Market sign shown in the June 2019 Streetview.



Figure 4. Google Streetview, dated June 2019. Depicts the variety of commercial, residential, and mixed-use buildings on the block. Some have been restored and others have lost or covered most of their historic details and architectural features.



Figure 5. Google Streetview, dated June 2019. Signage and façade at Red Rock Tavern (at the southeast corner of the block) and Capitol Lofts (across the street).



Figure 6. (Left to Right) Photo by Staff, Nov. 2020. Google Streetview, dated July 2017 & June 2011. Modern projecting sign and façade at Banh Mee storefront (recently relocated downtown). The projecting sign mimics the past, but not original, sandwich shop sign seen in 2017 and “Snack-It Jamaican Restaurant”

Sign seen in 2011. The modern graphic and materials are matching the time period of the building façade but do not cover or detract from the historic character.



Figure 7. Photo by Staff. Signage on the restored storefronts of Capital Ice Cream and Story and Soil have simple lettering and graphics which do not cover or obscure the historic façade.

**COMMENTS RECEIVED** (None received as of November 3, 2020)

### **ANALYSIS**

The additional of commercial facades to the front of residential buildings is not recommended by the Preservation Guidelines. The properties on this street were used as the examples and can be seen on page 33 of *Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings* (“Preservation Guidelines”). The Preservation Guidelines do not directly address signage in great detail do but state, “signs should not disturb continuous line of the lintel” and the huge lintel sign shown in the graphic on page 37 is out of scale, and similar to the sign on the other storefront on the property. Pertaining to storefronts, the Preservation Guidelines are generally looking for the preservation of original features, repetition, continuity, and unity across a façade. The facades on this block of Capitol Ave



were additions to the original residential structures and were not designed as a continuous streetscape. The unfortunate addition of a roll up security door to the façade of the 397 Capitol has covered some of the historic features, broken the repetition of the façade, and dominates the character of the storefront.

According to the storefront section of the Preservation Guidelines, “a storefront design should clearly project the product or service being offered inside. This communication is accomplished by means of signs, logos, symbols, displays and the use of exterior surface materials and colors.” The previous E&J Mini Market sign (Figure 1) and the proposed aluminum Capitol Mini Market sign (Figure 2) are modern materials graphic signs which are not consistent with historical styles or materials. The grocery cart and image of the capital building can be beneficial to marking in a multilingual community. The restored facades on the block have new signs with simple lettering which aid in re-establishing the historic character of the block but a variety of sign types, styles, and materials still exists. Newer materials and styles can be seen in the projecting signs for Red Rock Tavern and Banh Mee. However, these signs are simple logos or text and do not cover the original façade or detract from the district. While the scale of the lettering on the subject sign is larger than some of the new signs, is it not unreasonable and in general mimics the scale of the sign at Capital Ice Cream. The subject sign covers the painted brick behind but does not extend beyond the remaining sign panel area, which may have originally held additional wood molding.

Staff believes that wood or metal individual letters or a simplified painted sign would be more appropriate and consistent with the *Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings* and the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. However, the sign does not detract or cover any historical features and clearly conveys what is sold inside. The existing installed lights above the sign and the roll up security door detract from the remaining character of the façade more than the sign itself.

#### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of this application with the following conditions.

1. Upon the opening of the Market, the metal pull-down security door should be removed and an effort should be made to repair or restore the intended detailing.

**A draft resolution follows.**

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Application and supporting documents.
2. Pages 33, 36-38 from *Guidelines for Renovations and Additions to Historic Buildings*

**REVIEWED,**

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Aimee Chambers, Director



**CITY OF HARTFORD  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION RESOLUTION  
397 CAPITOL AVENUE  
HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROPOSAL**

- Whereas,** The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission reviewed the application for a wall sign on the storefront at 397 Capitol Ave; and
- Whereas,** The property is located in the Frog Hollow National Historic District; and
- Whereas,** The structure is a 3-story brick masonry, Half Perfect Six building with first floor commercial additions; and
- Whereas,** The subject storefront is part of the façade addition to the Half Perfect Six building and the store is located between the original structure and the neighboring house to the west which also possesses commercial façade additions.
- Whereas,** The applicant seeks approval for of a 9'x32" aluminum graphic wall sign that reads "Capitol Mini Market," with a yellow background and images of a full grocery cart and the gold dome of the Capital Building, located above the storefront entrance; and
- Whereas,** The proposed work is not consistent with the City's Historic Design Principles;
- Now therefore Be It
- Resolved,** The City of Hartford Historic Preservation Commission hereby **approves/denies** the proposed 9'x32," Capitol Mini Market, sign at 397 Capitol Ave.
- Be It Further,
- Resolved,** This 18th day of November 2020.



USE- P&Z-ADMIN-2020-1320  
Historic-P&Z-COMM-2020-0279  
Sign Permit-P&Z-ADMIN-2020-1321

EnerGov App. #: \_\_\_\_\_

City of Hartford  
Department of Development Services  
Planning Division

Return Form to the Planning Desk at the  
Licenses & Inspections Division Counter  
860-757-9239  
260 Constitution Plaza  
Hartford, Connecticut 06103-1822



For Assistance Contact Planning Division  
860-757-9040  
250 Constitution Plaza, 4th Floor  
Hartford, Connecticut 06103-1822  
<http://planning.hartford.gov>

## PLANNING AND ZONING APPLICATION

PLEASE CHECK THE ACTION(S) YOU ARE APPLYING FOR:

- |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning Appeal                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Approval of Location | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic Review |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Zoning Permit:        | <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning Variance      | <input type="checkbox"/> Lot Combination            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Signage/Use/Accessory |   | <input type="checkbox"/> Liquor Permit              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Site Plan                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Zoning Map Change    | <input type="checkbox"/> Special Permit             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision/Lot Line Revision    |   |   |

Receiving Federal Funds:

- ☐ Yes ☒ No  
☐ Demo ☐ Add. ☐ Repair

### 1. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Property Address: 397 Capital Ave City: Hartford State: CT Zip Code: 06134  
Zoning District: (<http://assessor1.hartford.gov/default.asp>) \_\_\_\_\_ Parcel ID: \_\_\_\_\_  
Property Owner: Gordon Properties, LLC  
Property Owner's Address: 397 Capital Ave City: Hartford State: CT Zip Code: 06134  
Phone: 860-895-2218 Email: GordonpropertiesLLC@gmail.com

### 2. APPLICANT

☐ Please check if "Applicant" is the same as "Property Owner"

Name of Applicant: Capital Mini Mart, LLC File Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: 397 Capitol Ave City: Hartford State: CT Zip Code: 06154  
Phone: 860-709-5757 Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. PRIMARY POINT OF CONTACT:

Name: Ernesto Crespo  
Phone: 860-709-5757  
Email: AI.DeniseRivera@gmail.com

**4. PROJECT NARRATIVE**

Describe your application action(s) and provide as much detail as possible. Attach additional pages if necessary:

I am applying for permit to open a <sup>Grocery</sup> Convenience Store.  
 I will be providing Convenience Services to  
 the Community. We will be selling grocery items  
 and juice, chips and Cookies.  
 Sign 9' X 32" made out of Aluminum

**\*\* Please complete the following sections as they pertain to the actions you are applying for. \*\***  
 Be sure to sign the application in Section 5 on the last page.

**A. COMPLETE IF APPLYING FOR ZONING MAP CHANGE:**

Proposed Zone: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the existing use of land and buildings in the zone change area:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the proposed use of land and buildings in the zone change area:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Reason for this request: \_\_\_\_\_

**B. COMPLETE IF APPLYING FOR ZONING APPEAL:**

Are you an aggrieved party? (Check one): ☐ Yes ☐ No

Permit or Violation number: \_\_\_\_\_

State your reason for appealing the decision of the administrator or enforcement officer :

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**C. COMPLETE IF APPLYING FOR ZONING VARIANCE:**

State the particular hardship\* or unnecessary difficulty that prompts this application :

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*\*A "hardship" as defined by the Connecticut State Statutes Section 8-6 whereby "with respect to a parcel of land where, owing to conditions especially affecting such parcel but not affecting generally the district in which it is situated, a literal enforcement of such bylaws, ordinances or regulations would result in exceptional difficulty or unusual hardship." Note that "mere financial loss does not constitute hardship warranting granting of variance [unless] loss is so great as to amount to confiscation of applicant's property, [a] variance might be justified."*

**D. COMPLETE IF APPLYING FOR SUBDIVISION, LOT LINE REVISION, OR LOT COMBINATION****Lot Subdivision/Lot Line Revision:**

Number of new lots to be created: \_\_\_\_\_ Area of each of the new lots in square feet \_\_\_\_\_

Street frontage of each of the new lots in feet \_\_\_\_\_

**Lot Combination:**

Address of lots to be combined \_\_\_\_\_

Map/Block/Lot for each property to be combined: Map \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Lot \_\_\_\_\_

Map \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Lot \_\_\_\_\_

Map \_\_\_\_\_ Block \_\_\_\_\_ Lot \_\_\_\_\_

(Map/Block/Lot and address information can be found at <http://gis.hartford.gov/parcelviewer/index.html>)

**E. COMPLETE IF APPLYING FOR HISTORIC REVIEW**

**IMPORTANT:** HISTORIC COMMISSION APPROVAL MUST FIRST BE OBTAINED BEFORE ANY BUILDING OR DEMOLITION PERMIT WILL BE ISSUED FOR WORK ON HISTORIC PROPERTIES. NO WORK MAY BEGIN UNTIL A BUILDING PERMIT IS ISSUED

☐ Please check if photographs are included with application (required for certain projects)

Proposed work includes:  
(Check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Repairs	<input type="checkbox"/> Addition	<input type="checkbox"/> New construction	<input type="checkbox"/> Demolition	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify)
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If proposing demolition, provide reason (attach additional pages if necessary):

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Current materials being repaired/replaced: \_\_\_\_\_

Materials/products being used in work: \_\_\_\_\_



**F. COMPLETE IF APPLYING FOR A SIGN PERMIT**

1. Is this sign proposed outside of the Buildingline? ☐ Yes ☒ No  
Maximum extension from the Buildingline: \_\_\_\_\_ ft. \_\_\_\_\_ in.

2. Is this sign proposed outside of the Streetline? ☐ Yes ☒ No  
Maximum extension from the Streetline: \_\_\_\_\_ ft. \_\_\_\_\_ in.

3. Is this sign illuminated? ☐ Yes ☐ No

4. Engineer Name (if any): \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Minimum distance from lowest point of sign to sidewalk: \_\_\_\_\_ ft. \_\_\_\_\_ in.

6. Maximum height of sign from lowest established grade: \_\_\_\_\_ ft. \_\_\_\_\_ in.

7. Distance from the nearest outdoor sign: \_\_\_\_\_ ft. \_\_\_\_\_ in.

8. Square feet of surface for one face of the sign: \_\_\_\_\_ ft. \_\_\_\_\_ in.

9. Wording on the sign (include all words): Capitol Mini Mart

Description of work (attach additional pages if necessary):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**NOTE:** Please submit two copies of all drawings drawn to scale. Sign drawings should include the dimension of the sign. Elevation of building should include the location of proposed and existing signs. Site plans should include the location of proposed and existing signs and their distance from Buildinglines and Property lines.

**5. SIGNATURE(S)**

*By signing below, I certify that all work will be done in strict accordance with the LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL CODES. Further, all work covered by this application has been authorized by the owner of this property. No work shall commence until all determinations have been made and the proper permits have been obtained.*

X Signature of Applicant: Denise Rivera Date: 8-27-2020

Printed Name of Applicant: Denise Rivera

X Signature of Property Owner: [Signature] Date: 8/27/2020

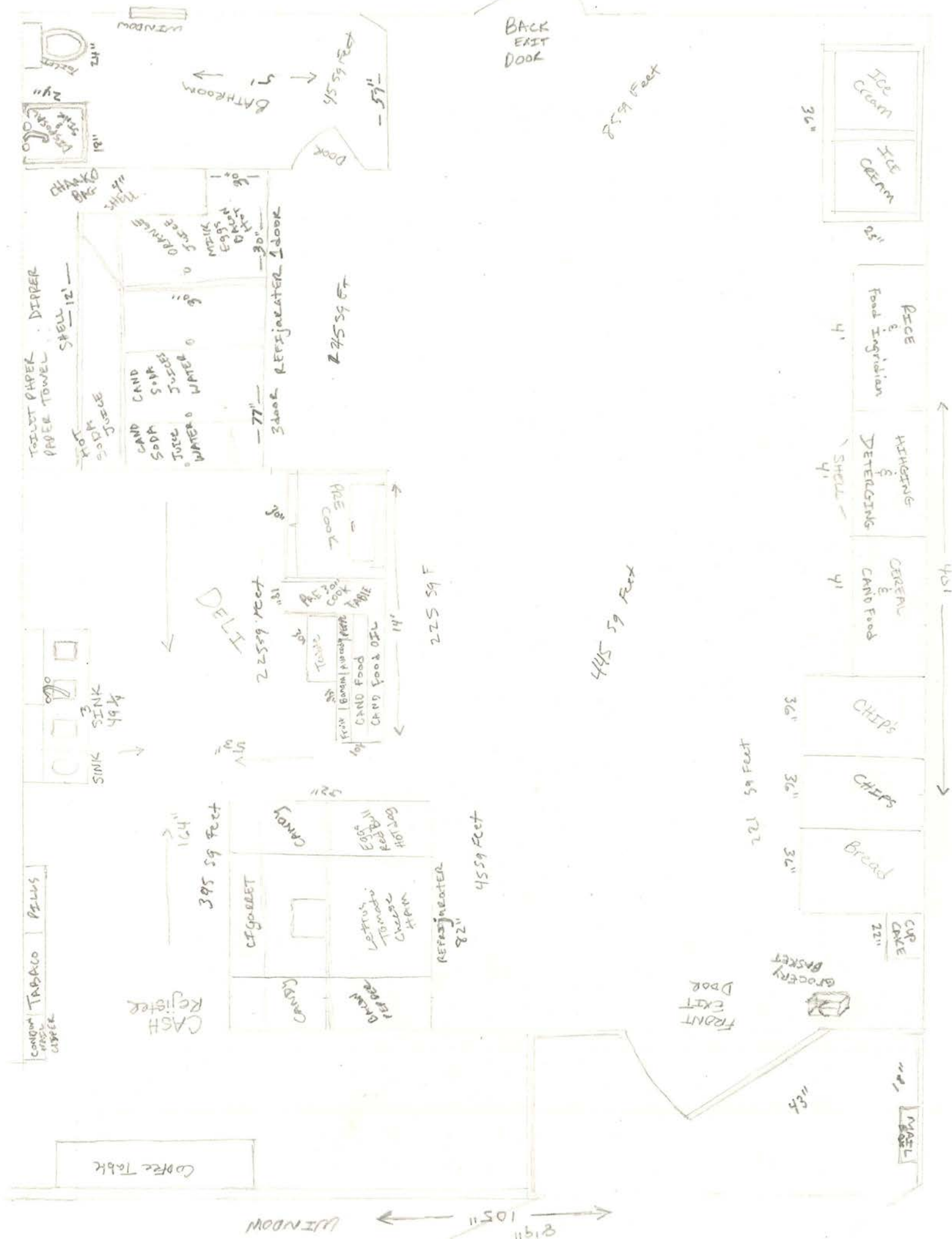
Printed Name of Property Owner: BARBARA JORDAN





9' x 32"









DO NOT PARK  
NO HAZARDOUS  
WASTES ACCEPTED  
CAUTION CAUTION

**ALL WASTE**  
INC.  
**1-800-443-3867**  
[www.allwaste.com](http://www.allwaste.com)

**TRASH  
ONLY**





CITY OF HARTFORD DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
PLANNING DIVISION

Make an appointment: 860-757-9221  
oneplan@hartford.gov

ZONING PERMIT CHECKLIST

ZONING PERMITS ARE REQUIRED AS FOLLOWS (SEC. 1.3.2)

- ☐ Before the issuance of a building permit, by notation on the building permit form
- ☐ For a change of use if no building permit is required
- ☐ A separate zoning permit, if no building permit is required
- ☐ To allow an accessory use in connection with lawfully established principal use per Sec. 3.4.1
- ☐ For temporary events per Sec. 3.7

**\*\*APPLICATIONS MUST INCLUDE MATERIALS AND INFORMATION REQUIRED TO ASSIST STAFF AND THE DECISION-MAKING BODIES IN THEIR CONSIDERATION OF THE APPLICATION. APPLICATIONS, PLANS, AND PAPERWORK MUST BE SUBMITTED ON A USB FLASH DRIVE, AND WITH ONE PAPER COPY OF ALL PLANS. ONCE APPROVED, YOU MUST SUBMIT 3 PAPER COPIES OF APPROVED PLANS, AND A USB FLASH DRIVE WITH REVISED PLANS IF REQUIRED.**

**PHYSICAL COPIES OF PLANS MUST BE DRAWN TO A SCALE LEAST 18 X 24 FORMAT AT MINIMUM\*\***

PLEASE INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

Required Submitted

- ☒ ☐ Zoning Permit Application
- ☐ ☐ State of CT Liquor Permit
- ☐ ☐ Plot Plan showing all existing and proposed building and structures and their dimensions, including pools, detached garages, sheds, patios, decks
- ☒ ☐ Scaled Floor Plan(s) indicating use and size of all spaces *Square Footage*
- ☐ ☐ Elevation Drawings showing building height based on building type requirements in Sec. 4.0
- ☐ ☐ If a variance was granted, provide recorded copy
- ☒ ☐ Sign Drawings with dimensions, include sign type, and location of sign, projection (distance from building)
- ☐ ☐ Aerial photo or GIS map of garden beer location, showing a fenced area around the beer garden, and size and dimension of garden area

*Add shelving/coolers items in each section, add total square footage for each space*

- ☐ Full Menu (For Restaurant Use, and Restaurants with drinking)
- ☐ Security Plan (for temporary liquor permits)
- ☐ Odor Control Plan
- ☐ Ventilation Plan
- ☐ Noise Mitigation Plan
- ☐ Material Characteristics
- ☒ Waste Disposal Plan *Garbage Disposal Company / contract*
- ☐ Transportation Study
- ☐ Security Plan
- ☐ Other: *Regs supplied*
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Floor plan to show dedicated space for goods under section 3.3.4  
Picture of dumpster location*

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Applicant's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 10/16/2020  
Meeting Scheduled Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Property/Address: 397 Capitol Ave  
Proposed Use: Use + Signage  
Zone: \_\_\_\_\_

Staff Reviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## MIXED USE RESIDENTIAL OVER COMMERCIAL

*First floor of residential building converted to commercial use*

### NOT RECOMMENDED

- Retail addition set ahead of face of original building. One story retail add-on inconsistent with building.
- Inappropriate materials and detailing.



RESIDENTIAL OVER COMMERCIAL



RESIDENTIAL OVER COMMERCIAL



# Downtown Guidelines

## INFILL BUILDINGS

New infill buildings should be designed to harmonize with the existing character of the street or area.

### ■ SIZE

A new building should fill the space defined by the adjacent buildings.

### ■ HEIGHT

A new building should respect the continuous roofline formed by neighboring buildings.

### ■ MATERIALS

Materials such as concrete, steel, brick and stone convey a sense of dignity and permanence. Materials such as vinyl, EIFS and other materials of limited durability should be avoided.

### ■ FAÇADE RHYTHM

Along the street, the repetition from building to building of similarly positioned door and window openings creates a rhythm which should be repeated on the face of the new building.

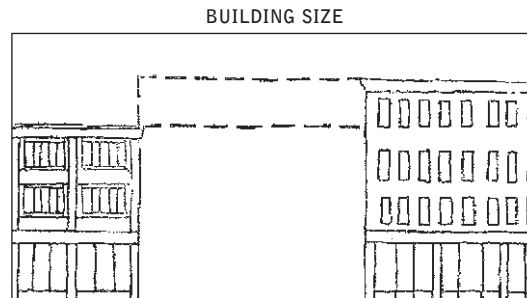
### ■ FAÇADE OPENINGS

The combined area of openings on the new façade should not exceed about 1/3 of the total façade area.

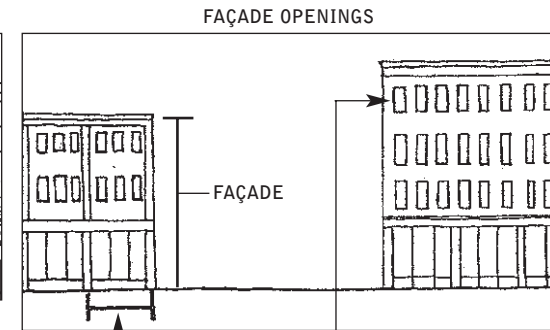
### ■ STREET LEVEL USES

Small scale retail spaces with pedestrian oriented façades can be used at street level to screen larger buildings which are not pedestrian oriented, such as parking garages or storage facilities.

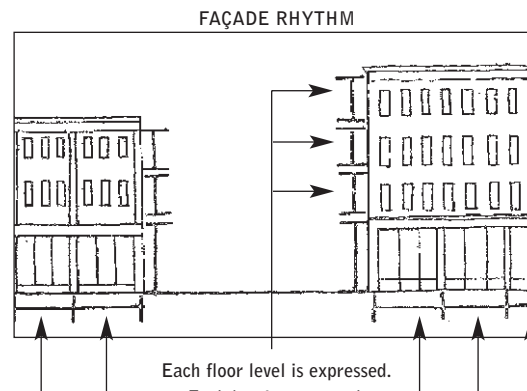
*These guidelines do not preclude developing a contemporary design for new buildings. In fact, it is rarely advisable to design a new building to look like an older one.*



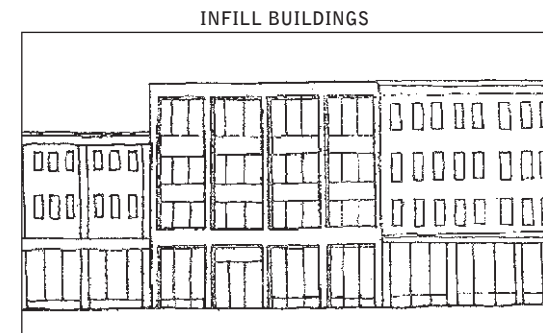
New building should fill volume and respect the roof lines defined by the adjacent buildings.



Typical vertical window openings  
Vertical bay proportions  
Openings not more than 33% of façade



Each floor level is expressed.  
Each bay is expressed.



Contemporary infill in historic downtown

The same basic rules which govern home renovations also apply to commercial building improvements:

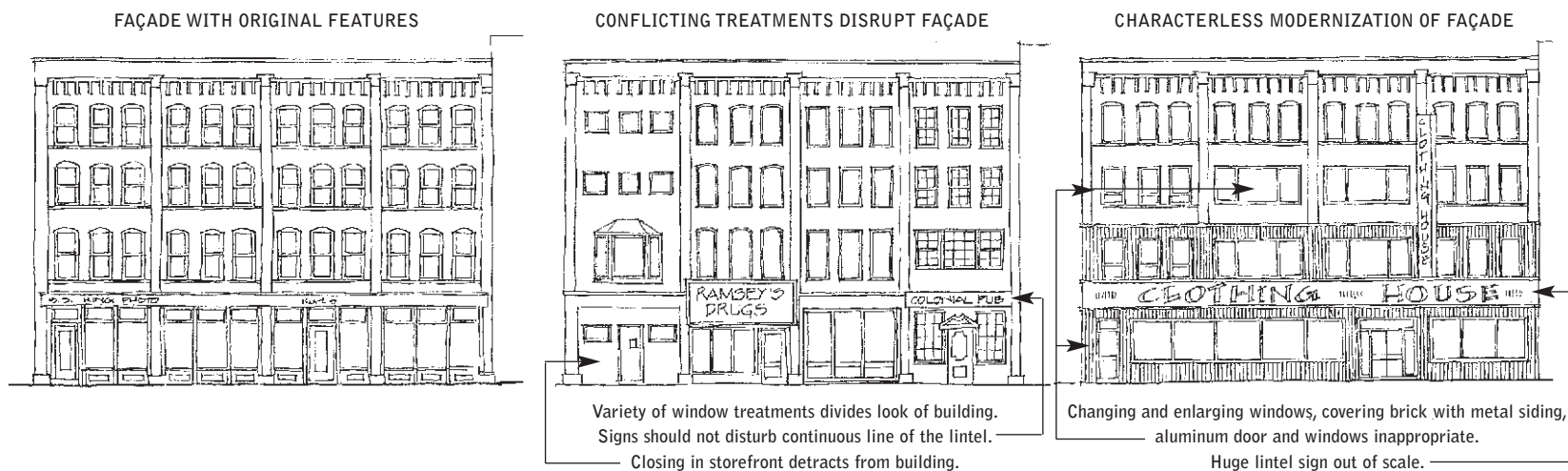
- Any change or addition should be compatible with the original design of the building.
- Whenever possible, retain original details and materials. If it becomes necessary to introduce new elements, or to mix old and new parts, they should harmonize with what already exists.

- Don't try to make a building look older or newer than it really is by using details from other periods. The result will always look somewhat artificial.

On appropriately renovated buildings the original details, materials and scale have been retained.

The addition of inappropriate details and materials can erode the original character of the building.

Attractive storefronts are always designed as part of the building which contains them. By relating to the style and detailing of the upper floors, the storefront becomes an integral part of the total building and actually makes a bolder, more cohesive statement.



# STOREFRONTS

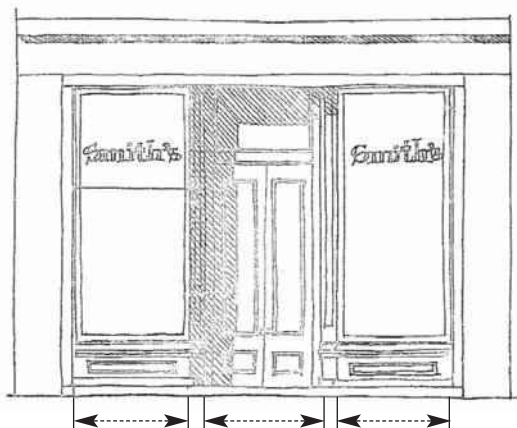
A storefront design should clearly project the product or service being offered inside. This communication is accomplished by means of signs, logos, symbols, displays and the use of exterior surface materials and colors.

The storefront's original design is the best blueprint for a renovation project. Original details and materials should be retained when possible. Decorative features such as columns or brackets which are often repeated across the face of a building give unity and character to the storefront. If it

is impossible to preserve these or other features, try to approximate the original design with different materials.

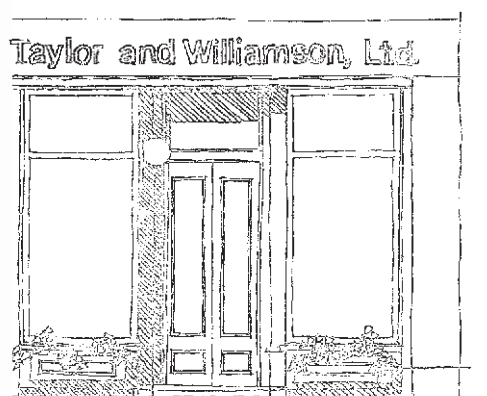
When planning a storefront renovation, remember that the storefront is a part of a larger structure and its design should relate to the building's overall character, the nature of the business and the identity of the owner. This can be accomplished by the introduction of small elements such as signs, awnings and window boxes.

ORIGINAL STOREFRONT



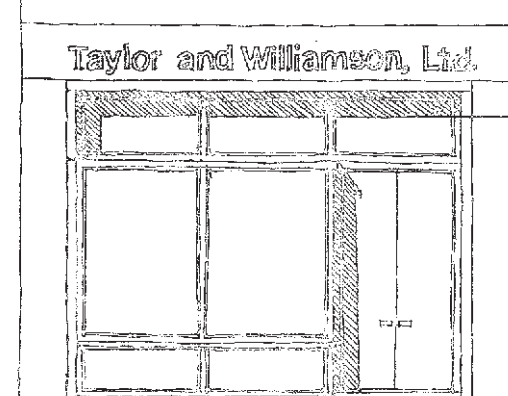
Three part division of storefront relates to design of building above  
Masonry piers carried down from upper floors  
Cast-iron or wood window frames; paneled wood and glass doors  
Wood or cast-iron panels

SIMPLIFIED TRADITIONAL STOREFRONT



Simple painted wooden frame  
Recessed entry with wood and glass doors in original style  
Window boxes reflect panels of older building

APPROPRIATE CONTEMPORARY STOREFRONT



Wood or anodized aluminum frames with simple glass doors  
Recessed transom windows add interest and reflect original style  
Windows below sill replace the wood panels of the original