

**BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
STAFF REPORT**

Date: July 6, 2015

CASE NUMBER 5981/4384/4357

APPLICANT NAME Alabama Hotels, LLC

LOCATION 251 Government Street
(Southwest corner of Government Street and South Joachim Street)

VARIANCE REQUEST **SIGN:** Sign Variance to allow a non-painted wall sign, a corner wall sign, a wall plaque, and a vertical sign on a balcony in a T5.2 Sub-District in the Downtown Development District.

ZONING ORDINANCE REQUIREMENT **SIGN:** The Zoning Ordinance allows painted wall signs; however, corner signs, wall plaques, or vertical signs on a balcony are not allowed in a T5.2 Sub-District in the Downtown Development District.

ZONING T5.2

AREA OF PROPERTY 0.74± Acres

TRAFFIC ENGINEERING COMMENTS No Comments

CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT District 2

ANALYSIS The applicant is requesting a Sign Variance to allow a non-painted wall sign, a corner wall sign, a wall plaque, and a vertical sign on a balcony in a T5.2 Sub-District in the Downtown Development District; the Zoning Ordinance allows painted wall signs; however, corner signs, wall plaques, or vertical signs on a balcony are not allowed in a T5.2 Sub-District in the Downtown Development District.

The applicant has submitted a sign package illustrating a 450 square foot back-lit aluminum sign on the South elevation facing Interstate 10, a wall sign that wraps around the Northeast corner of the building, a 4.7 square foot wall plaque, and a 21 square foot vertical sign on a balcony on what appears to be the East elevation.

As the site is located in the Church Street East Historic District, the applicant submitted their sign package to the Architectural Review Board (ARB) for review at its March 4, 2015 meeting. The ARB decided to approve the submitted sign package subject to the site obtaining the necessary variances from the Board of Zoning Adjustment, however, it should be noted that the sign package submitted to the ARB is somewhat different than what has been submitted for the variance application.

The sign package submitted to the ARB consisted of: a 311 square foot back-lit aluminum sign on the South elevation facing Interstate 10, a 15.6 square foot wall sign that wraps around the Northeast corner of the building, and two 20 square foot vertical signs attached to balconies on the North and East galleries. The substantial difference in the sizes of some of these signs may need to be reviewed by the ARB, and the discrepancy in the number of signs makes it difficult for staff to conduct a thorough review of the proposal. It should also be noted that the applicant has expressed to staff the desire to have window decal signage, however no information has been submitted to determine if this is still the applicant's desire, or if it will meet the Downtown Development District regulations for window decals.

The Zoning Ordinance states that no variance shall be granted where economics are the basis for the application; and, unless the Board is presented with sufficient evidence to find that the variance will not be contrary to the public interest, and that special conditions exist such that a literal enforcement of the Ordinance will result in an unnecessary hardship. The Ordinance also states that a variance should not be approved unless the spirit and intent of the Ordinance is observed and substantial justice done to the applicant and the surrounding neighborhood.

Variances are not intended to be granted frequently. The applicant must clearly show the Board that the request is due to very unusual characteristics of the property and that it satisfies the variance standards. What constitutes unnecessary hardship and substantial justice is a matter to be determined from the facts and circumstances of each application.

The applicant states:

Alabama Hotels, LLC is applying for a sign variance in order to obtain approval for a plaque, a vertical sign on the back of the building, a vertical sign on the balcony, & a sign for our bar "The Corner".

The existing building was constructed in 1940 with one main facade. That facade is now overshadowed by the government plaza on the Joachim Street elevation. The Government Street elevation is mainly blocked above the first level by large Spanish oaks that line the street. The architect and designer struggled to develop signage that could clearly identify the hotel. In doing so, they opted to have the large signage face I-10. It would not be identifiable from the interstate if it were not large scale. The building is historic (and in the historic district) so the blade signage at the balconies is designed to blend better with the building—yet still identify the building as a hotel to passersby on Government St. This signage package has been reviewed by the Hilton franchise as the hotel will be a Hilton upon grand opening.

As described above, the typical viewing angles of the building are obstructed by the government plaza building on one side and the Spanish oaks on the other.

Finally, the hotel is different from neighboring properties because is attached to a county owned parking garage.

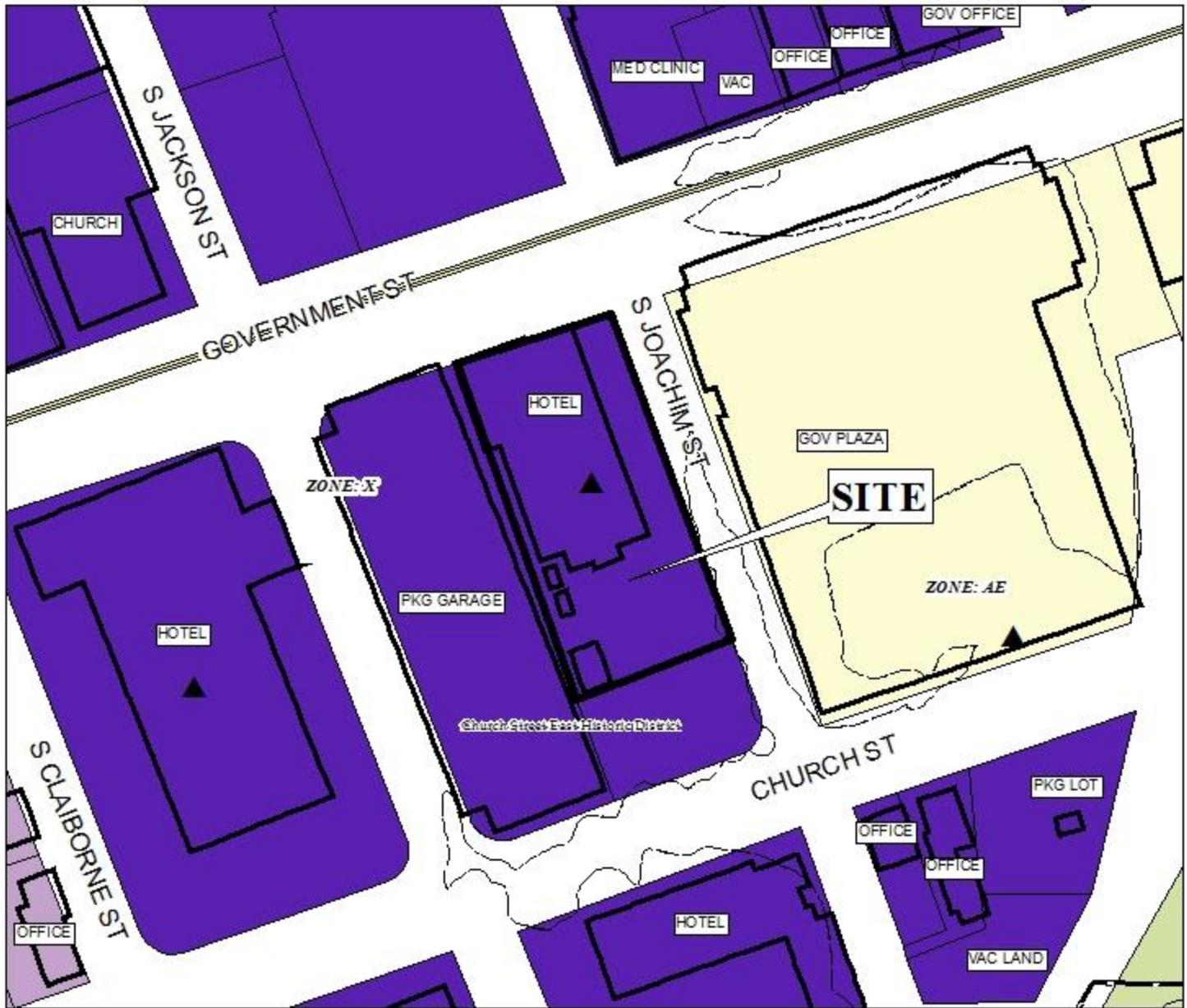
The applicant has submitted two different sign packages for review to the ARB and the Board of Zoning Adjustment making it difficult to consider the merits of their variance requests. Based on the information submitted with this application, there does not appear to be a hardship, and most of the signs could be re-designed to comply with sign regulations for a T5.2 Sub-District in the Downtown Development District.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends to the Board the following findings of fact for Denial:

- 1) approving the variance will be contrary to the public interest in that the proposed signage could be modified to comply with the Downtown Development District;
- 2) special conditions do not exist and there are no hardships which exist that prevent the applicant from providing signage in compliance with the Downtown Development District; and
- 3) the spirit of the chapter shall not be observed and substantial justice shall not be done to the surrounding neighborhood by granting the variance because the intent on the prohibition of the various proposed signs is to encourage the use of the types of signs now allowed by the Downtown Development District.

BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT VICINITY MAP - EXISTING ZONING



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

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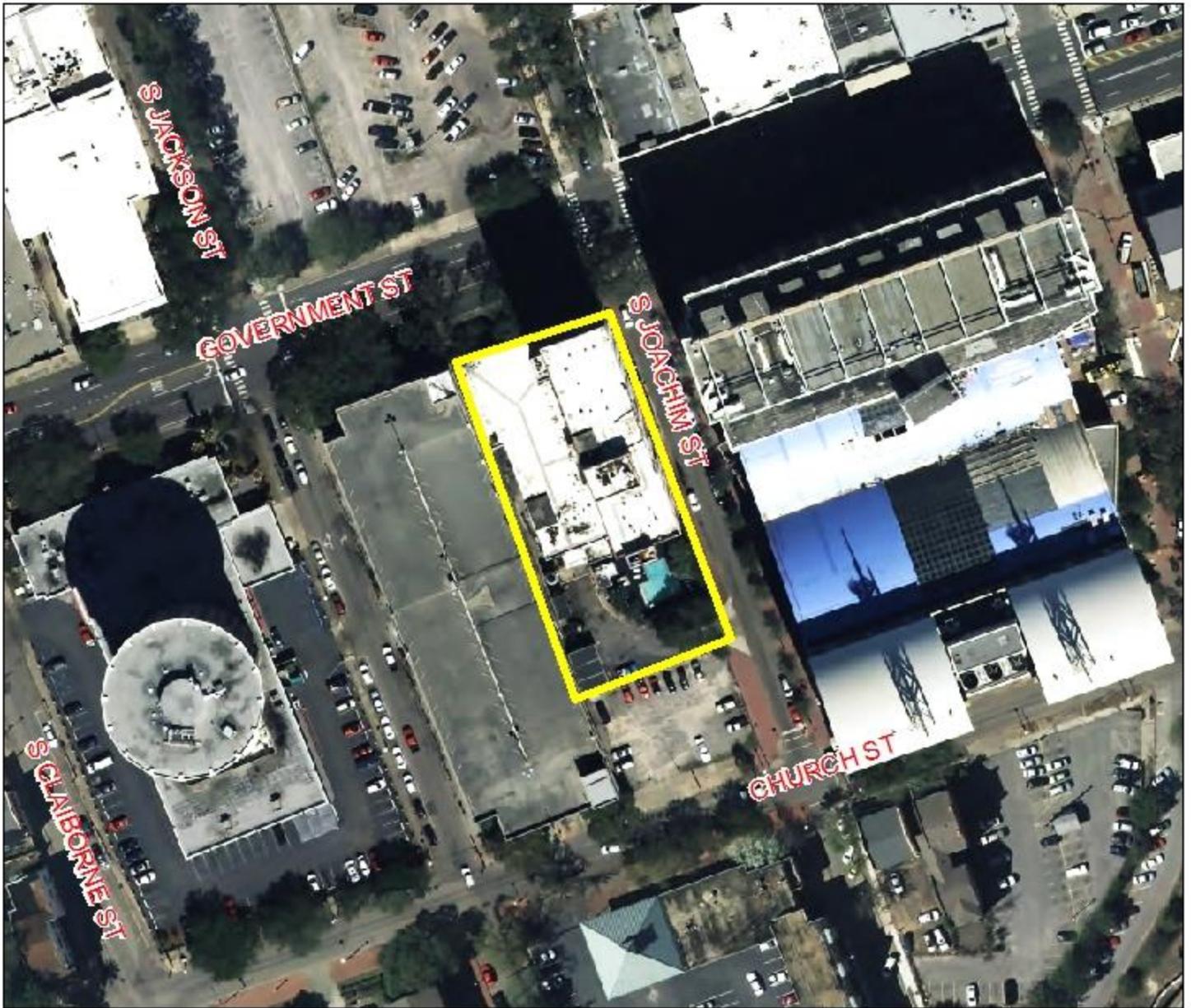
APPLICANT Alabama Hotels, LLC.

REQUEST Sign Variance

 R-A	 R-3	 T-B	 B-2	 B-5	 MUN	 SD-WH	 T5.1
 R-1	 R-B	 B-1	 B-3	 I-1	 OPEN	 T3	 T5.2
 R-2	 H-B	 LB-2	 B-4	 I-2	 SD	 T4	 T6



**BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT
VICINITY MAP - EXISTING ZONING**



The site is surrounded by commercial units.

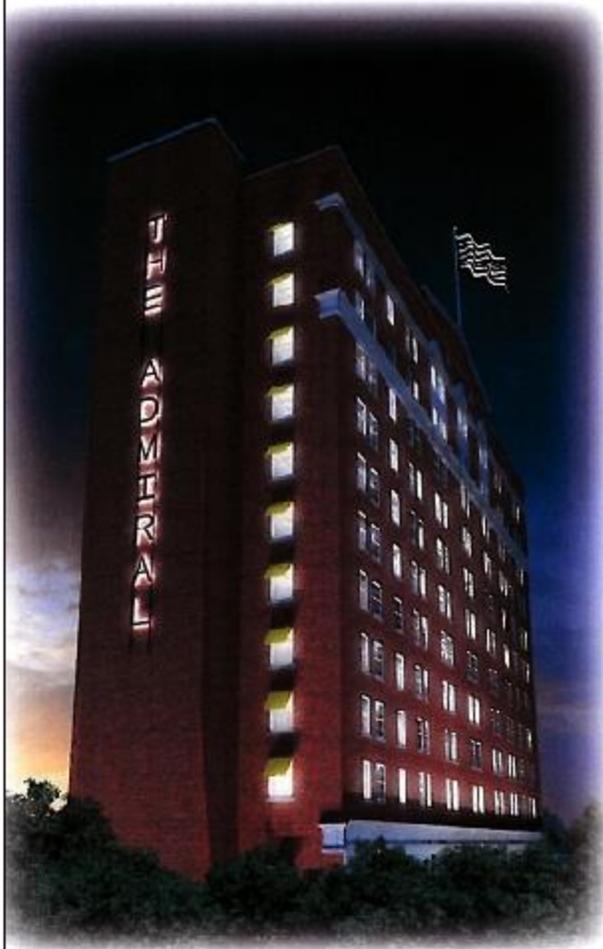
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DETAIL SITE PLAN



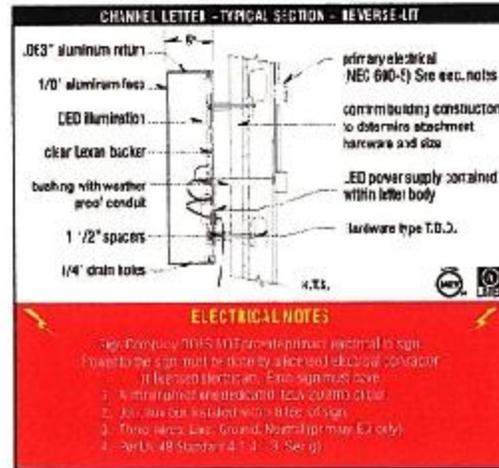
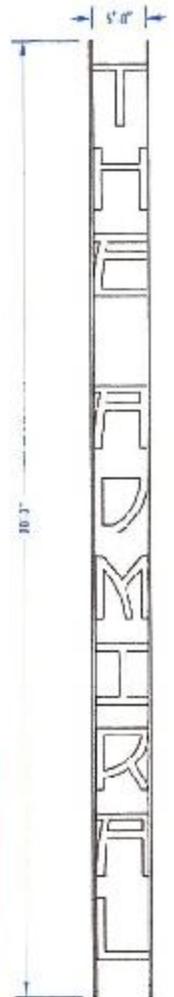
Typeface: *Nouveau Riche (modified)*

Reverse illumination channel letters painted *Mathews dark bronze*

Illumination by soft white LED with internal power supply

3"x3" aluminum side rail raceway tubes tubes carry 120v DC to letters. One primary penetration required on building fascia.

Mounting to brick facade with non corrosive hardware - *Hilti Dwik-Con*.
Size TBD



ELECTRICAL NOTES

- 1. See Appendix 2015 MTD (note primary electrical is not covered to the sign must be done by a licensed electrical contractor if licensed electrician. Final sign must have:
- 2. All raceway installed with 3 lbs. of vinyl
- 3. Three wires: Line, Ground, Neutral (primary only)
- 4. Per UL 48 System 4-1-3-3 (See g)

CL primary building ID
SCALE: 3/32" = 1"

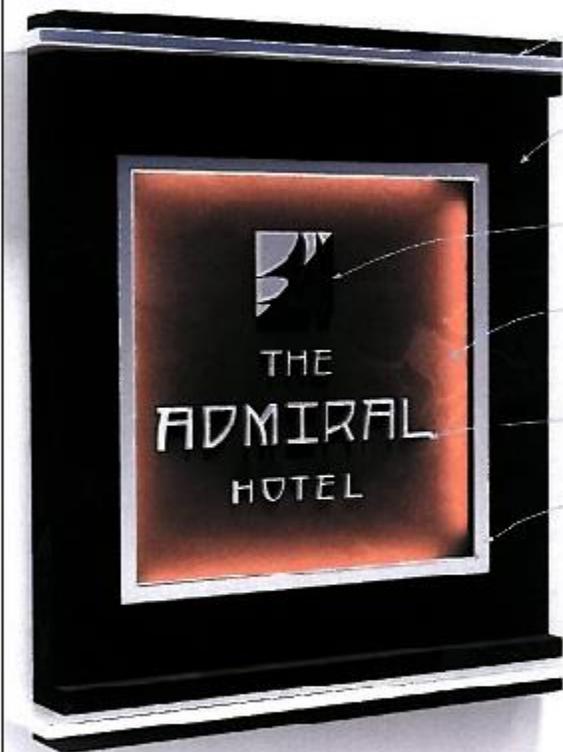
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decorative bands
standard aluminum finish

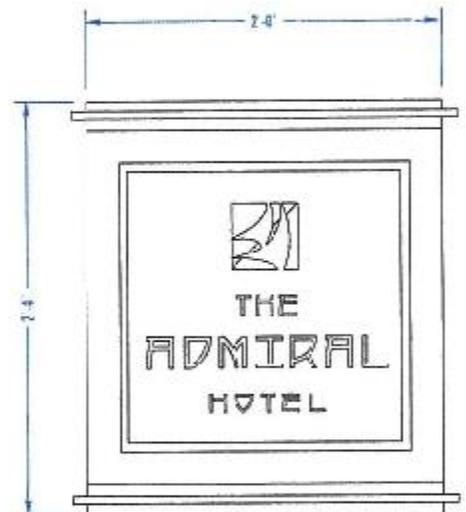
aluminum bars and
cabinet

dimensional logo
metal and painted finish

soft white LED
cove lighting around
perimeter

dimensional copy
finished metal

inset aluminum border
standard finish



SP.2

(2) hotel wall IG signs

SCALE 1/2" = 1'

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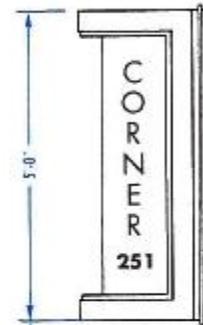
decorative bands
standard aluminum finish

aluminum bars and
cabinet.

soft white LED
cove lighting around
perimeter.

dimensional copy
finished metal

inset aluminum border
standard finish



88" clearance to grade

SP3

2 sided wall sign to wrap corner

SCALE 1/2"=1'

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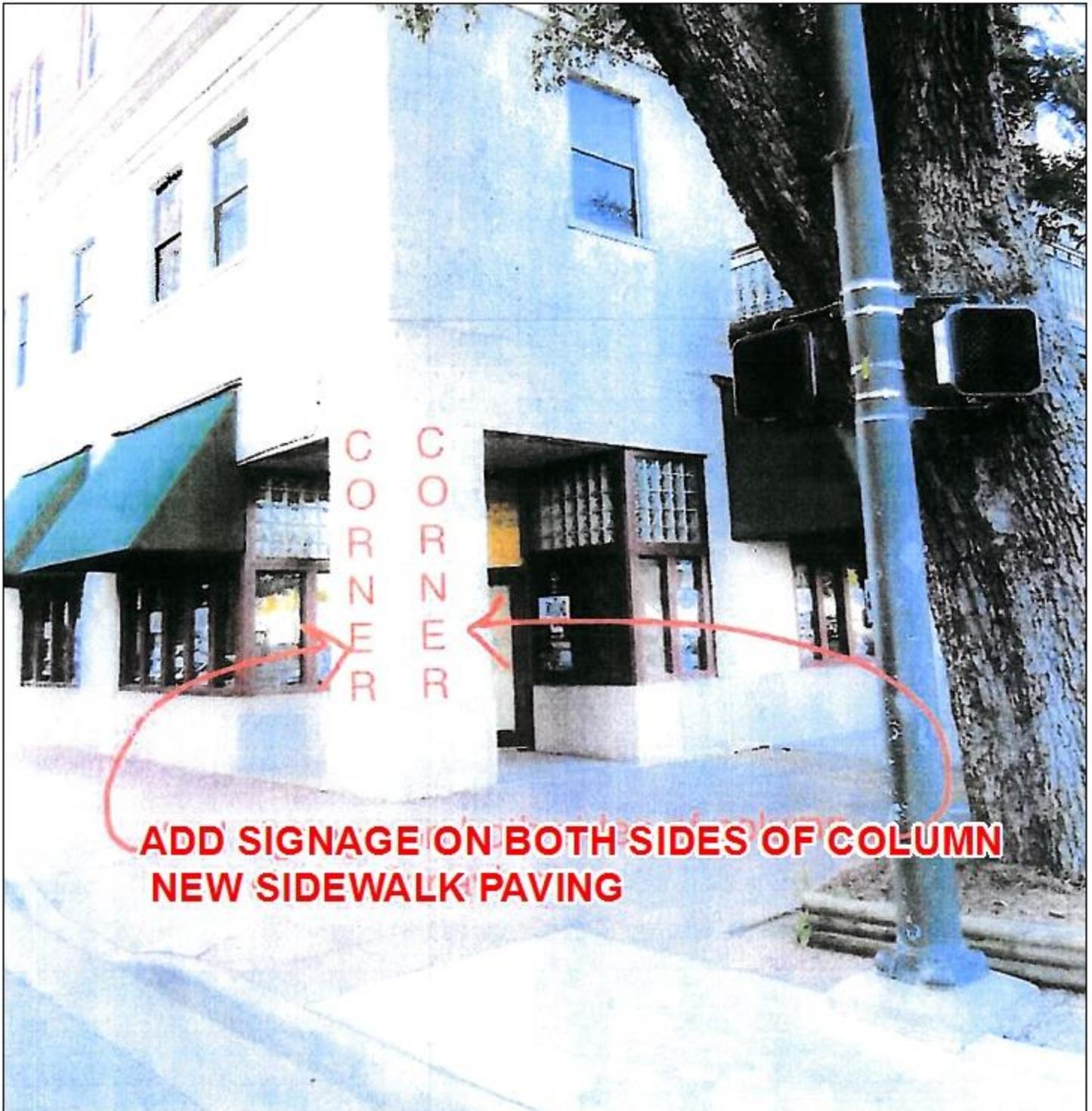
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NTS

DETAIL SITE PLAN



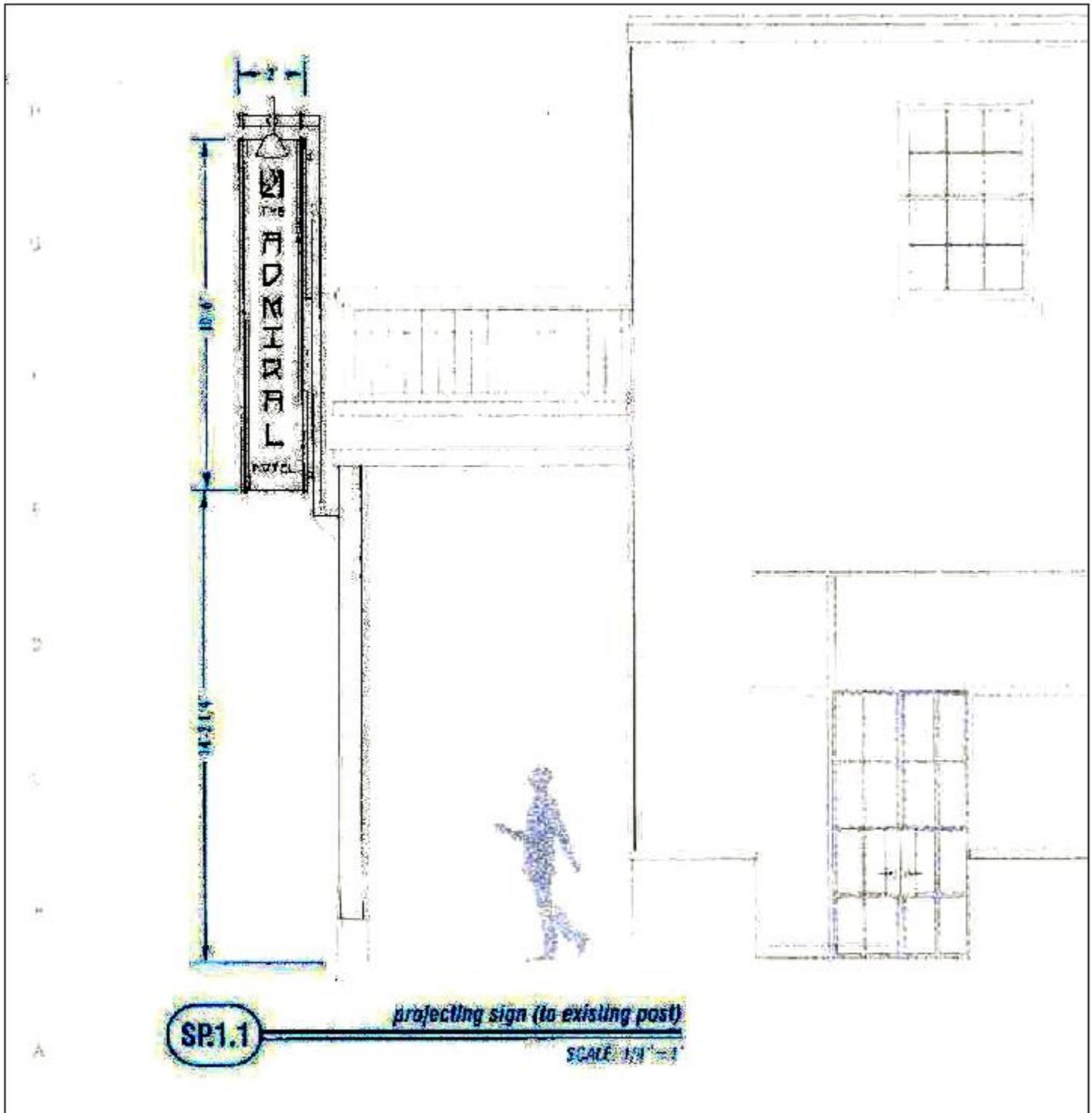
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