

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: DECEMBER 17, 2025

TO: CHAIR AND MEMBERS OF THE
BOARD OF ARCHITECTURAL REVIEW

FROM: HISTORIC PRESERVATION STAFF

SUBJECT: CONCEPT REVIEW OF 806 NORTH COLUMBUS STREET
BAR CASE # 2025-00373

October 16, 2025, BAR Public Hearing Minutes

BOARD ACTION: The Board of Architectural Review received a presentation and heard public testimony on the proposed concept review of 806 North Columbus Street.

SPEAKERS:

Ken Wire, attorney for the applicant, introduced the project

Jonathan Kuhn, project architect, presented the design

Graeme Douglas, 808 Snowden Holloway Way, was opposed to the project and indicated that the drawings do not correctly show the proposed building height. He further questioned the inclusion of 5 parking areas at the rear of the site.

Kate Zernes, 814 N Columbus, stated that the proposed design is not compatible with the other properties on this block or blocks further to the south.

David Maron, 804 N Columbus, said that the proposed buildings should be more similar to adjacent buildings in terms of massing and location relative to the front property line. He also noted that the proposed building will be in front of the bay window on his house.

Paige Maron, 804 N Columbus, noted that the block mostly consists of historic townhouses instead of the modern development to the west of the project site. She felt that the proposed buildings are too tall for the block and should not include the fourth floor.

DISCUSSION:

Ms. del Ninno stated that if the proposed buildings were two stories with a setback third floor and the front edge of the building were aligned with the neighboring structures, that would be more compatible with the neighboring buildings. She suggested that the proposed design align

with the cornices on the historic structures. She also stated that historic structures are typically either brick or siding and not a combination of the two.

Ms. Miller suggested that the overall building height should be lower and that it should be set back to align with the neighboring structures.

Mr. Adams asked about the interior ceiling heights and suggested that these may be lowered to reduce the overall building height. He also praised the variation in widths in the proposed townhouses.

Ms. Pratt suggested that given the predominance of siding on the block that siding may be a better exterior choice than brick.

Ms. Zandian said that the building should be set back to align with the neighboring structures and the overall height should be lowered.

CONCEPT II UPDATE

On October 16, 2025, the BAR held a Concept Review for the proposed redevelopment of the property at 806 North Columbus Street. The proposed development will include the construction of three townhouses on the currently vacant lot.

There were a variety of comments from Board members but there was general agreement with the use of this lot for individual townhouses. Some specific comments from the Board included the following:

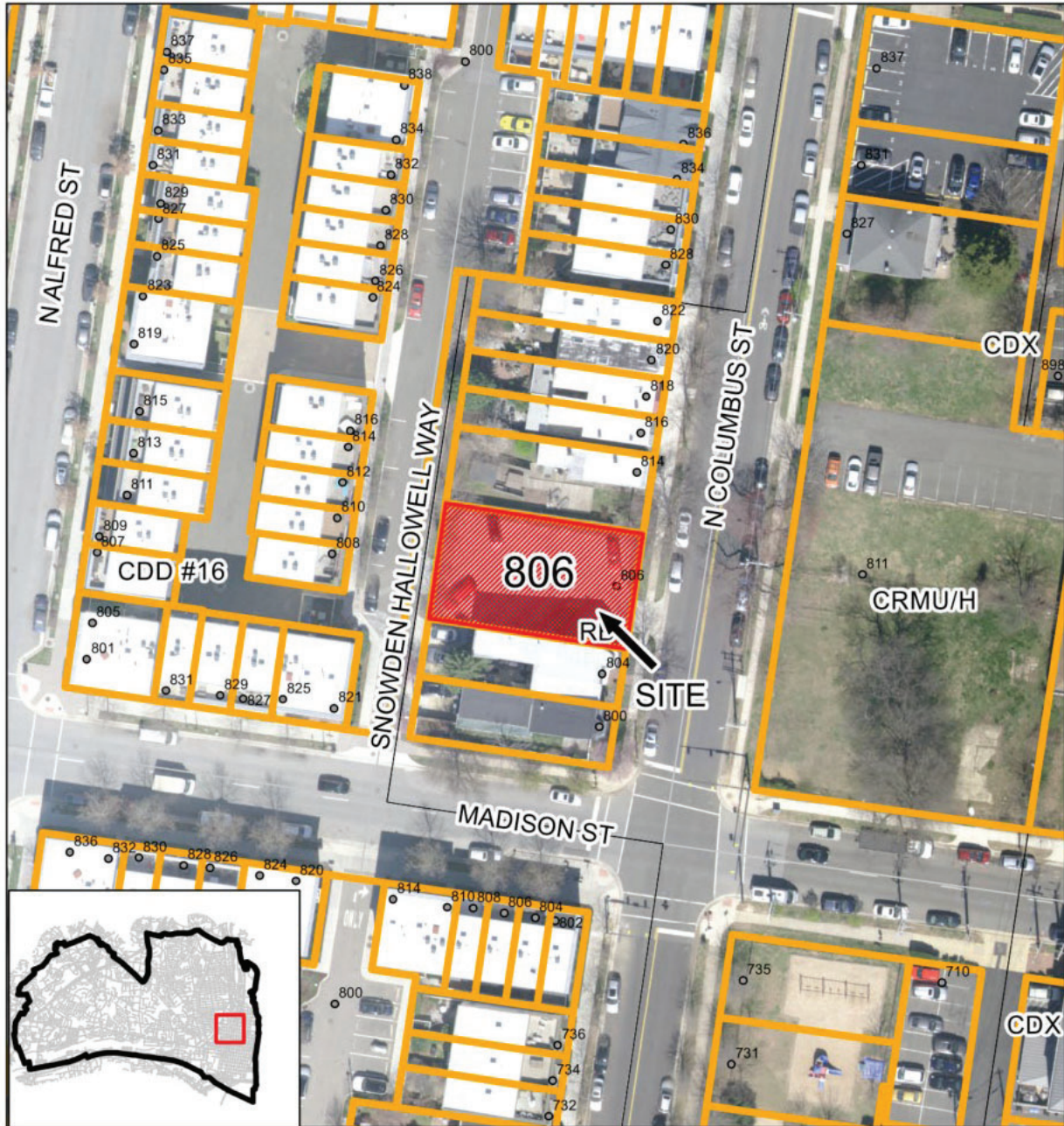
- There was concern regarding the height of the proposed structures related to the nearby historic buildings. Board members discussed options to reduce the overall perceived height.
- Some Board members discussed the relationship of the proposed townhouses to the front property line, suggesting that the proposed buildings be moved away from the sidewalk to be more closely aligned with the neighboring properties.
- There was a discussion regarding the exterior material for the proposed buildings with some concern being raised regarding the combination of brick and siding.
- Board members raised questions regarding the configuration and enclosure of the rear yards.

I. SUMMARY

The applicant is requesting BAR Concept Review for the development of the vacant property at 806 North Columbus Street into three townhouses.

The Concept Review Policy was adopted in May 2001 and amended and restated in 2016 (attached). Concept Review is an optional, informal process at the beginning of a Development Special Use Permit (DSUP) application whereby the BAR provides the applicant, staff, Planning Commission, and City Council with comments relating to the overall appropriateness of a project's height, scale, mass, and general architectural character. These comments are not binding on the BAR or the applicant. The Board takes no formal action at the Concept Review stage but will

provide comments and may endorse the direction of a project's design by a straw vote. If the Board believes that a building height or mass, or area proposed for construction is not appropriate and would not be supported in the future, the applicant and staff should be advised as soon as possible. This early step in the development review process is intended to minimize future architectural design conflicts between what is shown to the community and City Council during the DSUP approval and what the Board later finds architecturally appropriate under the criteria in Chapter 10 of the Zoning Ordinance and the BAR's adopted *Design Guidelines*.



BAR#2025-00373 Parker-Gray
806 North Columbus Street

N



0 30 60 120 Feet

II. SITE CONTEXT AND HISTORY

Site Context

The project site is located on the west side of the 800 block of North Columbus Street with Snowden Hallway Way, a public alley, to the west of the site. The group of three townhouses will be connected to one another and to the north side of 804 North Columbus Street immediately to the south of the project site. Given this configuration, the east and west sides of all three townhouses will be visible from a public right of way as will the north elevation of the north townhouse.

History

The 1877 Hopkins Map shows this block as empty with the owner of the property listed as JW Green. By 1912 the Sanborn Insurance Map shows structures at 804 and 810 N Columbus Street. According to these maps, the property at 806 and 808 North Columbus Street were a part of the property of 810 North Columbus until the middle of the twentieth century.

Phase 2 of the James Bland development was approved by the BAR in 2012 and includes the northern and western portions of the block on which the subject property sits. The structures immediately to the west of the subject property and at the northern edge of this block are part of this multi-unit townhouse development project.

III. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant is requesting a Concept Review for a proposal to develop the site into three attached townhouses. The townhouses will be three stories with a fourth floor that is set back from the front providing access to an accessible roof deck at the third level. The proposed townhouses will be brick on the front and extending to a portion of the north elevation where it changes to fiber cement siding, stretching across the rear of the structures.

Following the last BAR hearing, the applicant has modified the proposed design in response to comments from the Board, staff, and members of the public. The changes are summarized below:

Location of building on site

In the previous submission the front of the proposed townhouses was located at the east property line, aligned with the back edge of the sidewalk. During the Concept Review, there was a discussion regarding how the proposed townhouse would affect the existing structure to the south of the project site. This building is located approximately 4'-0" from the east property line and features a three sided bay on the northern section of the east elevation. The proposed townhouses include a rectangular bay with a recessed entry door. In the previous submission, the southern townhouse was situated with the bay on the south side and the recessed entry on the north side. Combined with the location of the building in front of the existing structure to the south, there was concern that this configuration overwhelmed the bay on the existing building.

In the revised submission, the applicant has made two revisions to address this concern regarding the relationship of the proposed townhouses to the existing building to the south (Figure 1). First, the townhouses have been moved back from the east property line by 3'-0". This places it approximately 1'-0" in front of the existing building instead of the previous 4'-0". Second, the proposed southern townhouse has been mirrored to place the bay on the north side of the lot and the recessed entry on the south side, adjacent to the bay on the existing building to the south of the site. The effect of this is that the front wall of the new townhouse immediately adjacent to the south property line is behind the front of the bay on the existing townhouse. This opens up the view of the existing three sided bay from the street and reduces the overall impact of the proposed townhouses on the existing historic building.

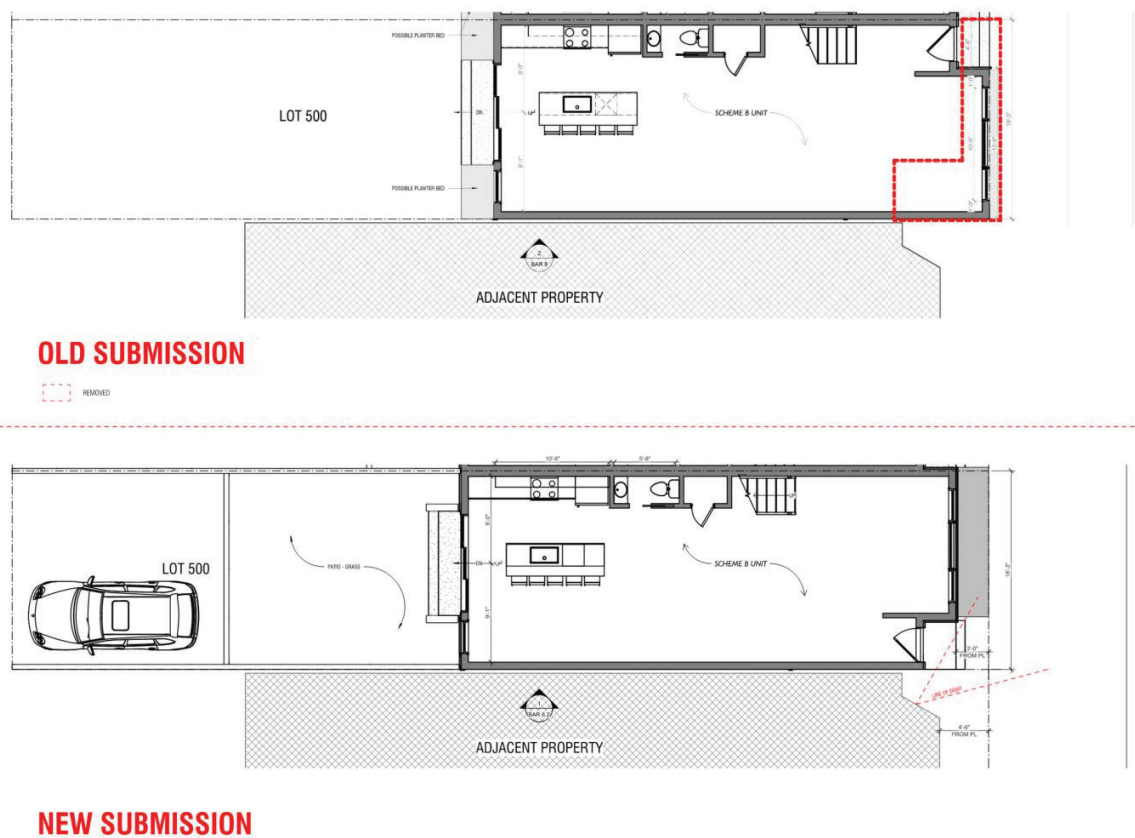


Figure 1: Comparison of previous and proposed configuration of southern townhouse

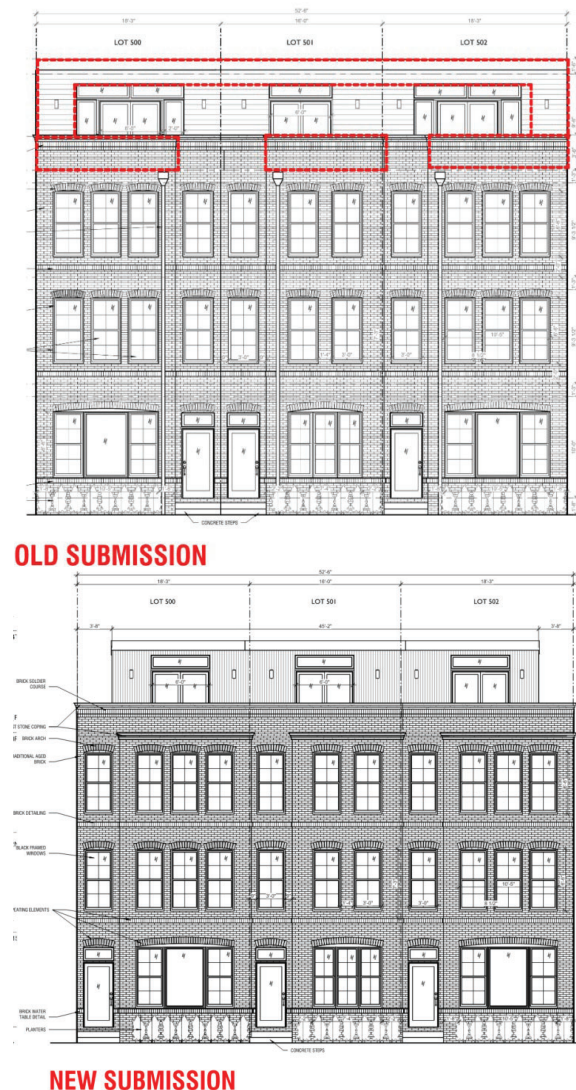
Building massing

During the previous Concept Review there was extensive discussion regarding the size and massing of the proposed townhouses. Some members of the public and Board members expressed concern that the proposed townhouses appeared to be too large in comparison to the existing nearby historic structures. While the building immediately across the street from the project site is a five story multi-unit residential building, the structures on the west side of North Columbus Street range in height from two stories to three stories and include more simple residential structures. In the previous proposal, the townhouses were three stories including a roof deck parapet and a fourth floor that was stepped back from the east and west sides but aligned with the north and south sides of the building.

In order to address the concerns regarding the size and massing of the proposed townhouses, the applicant has revised the design in several ways (Figure 2). To address questions regarding the overall height of the proposal, the applicant has reduced the height of the building from 45'-0" to 42'-6" when measured from grade to the top of the fourth floor enclosure.

As noted during the Concept Review discussion, the visibility of the fourth floor enclosure is limited when viewed from the front because of the step back from the front elevation but when viewed from the north or south, this enclosure was highly visible. To address this concern, the revised design includes a 3'-8" step back for the fourth floor from the north and south edge of the building. The effect of this will be to limit the visibility of this part of the structure and to make it read as a secondary roof structure instead of part of the main block of the building.

In addition to the changes listed above, the revised design reduces the height of the projecting bay from aligning with the top of the parapet to roughly aligning with the roof deck. As the projecting bays make up the majority of the east elevation, this further reduces the perceived height of the townhouses.



West elevation and parking

The last submission did not contain much detail regarding the enclosure of the rear yards and how the parking areas are to be configured. Questions about this came up from members of the public and the Board. To address these questions the applicant is now showing a site plan and rear elevation of the proposed townhouses that depict the horizontal wood fence that will be enclosing the rear yards (Figure 3).

Note that the rear elevation of the proposed townhouses indicates the height for the structure to the south as 32'-0". To clarify, this is the height of the structure at the front of the house at the highpoint of the roof. The roof on this structure is a single slope roof from front to back so the height of the wall at the rear will be lower than 32'-0".



Figure 3: Proposed rear elevation

IV. STAFF ANALYSIS

As a reminder, the BAR's purview in this concept review work session is limited to endorsing the project and providing feedback on its height, scale, mass, and general architectural character. The applicant will ultimately return to the Board for approval of a Certificate of Appropriateness for architectural details, finishes, and colors after City Council approval of the DSUP.

The applicant is proposing to build three new townhouses on the empty lot between 804 and 814 North Columbus Street. The townhouses will be built to the north and south property lines, resulting in the southern townhouse being adjacent to the building at 804 North Columbus and the northern townhouse being separated from the building at 814 North Columbus by the side yard.

Directly across the street from the subject property is the five story, multi-unit residential building at 805 North Columbus Street. Directly on either side of the buildings are two story frame townhouses with a single slope roof. The remainder of the blockface is made up a variety of two story townhouses with the exception of three story buildings at the north end of the block. The James Bland development project included the north end of this block, these make up the three story buildings including two with side gable roofs and the northernmost building which is two stories with a set back third floor.

Staff finds the revisions to the proposed design to be responsive to most of the comments from the Board at the last Concept Review hearing. Much of the discussion at the last hearing was related to the size of the proposed townhouses and how they relate to the nearby historic structures. The revised design addresses these comments by moving the building back from the sidewalk to be more similar to the neighboring property and by shifting the massing at the upper level to minimize the visibility of the fourth floor structure.

The design for the proposed townhouses uses a simple configuration of projecting bays and punched openings. These elements are often found within the historic district and are rendered here in a way that is clearly not historic but recalls the historic fabric. Staff finds the proposal to be consistent with the Design Guidelines direction that new construction should be clearly different than the historic fabric while being compatible with historic structures.

V. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The *Design Guidelines* state that “Building height should generally reflect the existing heights of buildings in the immediate vicinity of the proposed new construction.” When considering the appropriateness of the proposed townhouses it is important to consider all of the nearby building context. The immediate blockface contains mostly two story buildings, including the ones directly adjacent to the project site. Directly across the street from the proposed buildings is a five story multi-unit residential building and the James Bland development lies to the west. This townhouse development contains a variety of different townhouses types including three and four story buildings, most of which include a set back upper level similar to the proposed townhouses. While much of the surrounding context is modern in nature, when considering the proposed height the Board should determine whether the proposal will overwhelm the historic structures that remain.

The rear of the buildings will be visible from the adjacent public right of way and is therefore under the purview of the BAR. These elevations are clad in fiber cement siding with a central three bay wide ganged window on each floor above a similar door at the ground level. At the fourth floor of each building is a set back massing and roof terrace. The drawings seem to indicate windows facing these roof terraces but presumably some of these will be doors providing access to the terrace. While it is typical for the rear elevations of townhouses to be more simple than the primary elevation, staff finds that given the high level of visibility of this portion of the building, the window composition could be more decorative than currently submitted.

As the design progresses, the applicant should continue to develop the design with some of the following factors:

- The large single window in the center of the ground floor bay is inconsistent with glazing in historic bay windows. The applicant should study historic bay windows and reflect similar detailing in this location.
- The proposed windows on the front façade use a four over four lite configuration. This configuration is not typically found in the historic district. The applicant should consider alternate lite configurations.
- The submission shows a brick base at the front façade, a stone base at the rear and no base at the side. A singular base detail should be developed to tie the different portions of the building together.
- Corner boards are inconsistently shown at the corners of the fiber cement siding. This detail should be further refined.
- Some board members expressed concern regarding the mixture of brick and siding on the side elevations. This detail has not been addressed in the revised design. If the two materials are to remain, the applicant should consider how the two materials come together and create a change in plane or reveal to separate the two materials.

STAFF

William Conkey, AIA, Historic Preservation Architect

Tony LaColla, AICP, Land Use Services Division Chief, Planning & Zoning

VI. CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS

Legend: C- code requirement R- recommendation S- suggestion F- finding

Zoning

C-1 Proposed concept review for new three new townhomes will comply with zoning.

C-2 Proposed lots must adhere to RB (Townhouse) regulations under Sec. 3-706.

C-3 Proposed lots show parking not in compliance with Sec. 7-1005:

- Parking cannot exceed 50% of any required yard.

C-4 Proposed concept review must follow all conditions of CDSP2025-00011 and SUB2025-00006.

F-1 Proposed lots are less than 25 feet in width and therefore have no required side yard setbacks.

F-2 Zoning cannot verify FAR compliance until after concept review.

Code Administration

No comments received

Transportation and Environmental Services

- F-1 Comply with all requirements of CDSP2025-00011. (T&ES)
- F-2 The Final Site Plan must be approved and released and a copy of that plan must be attached to the demolition permit application. No demolition permit will be issued in advance of the building permit unless the Final Site Plan includes a demolition plan which clearly represents the demolished condition. (T&ES)

Archaeology

- F-1 According to historic maps and aerial photographs, a single townhouse was built on this lot in the early 20th century. By the 1990s the building was no longer standing, and the property was converted to a small parking lot. The property has the potential to contain significant archaeological information pertaining to the early 20th-century development of north Old Town.
- R-1 Call Alexandria Archaeology immediately (703-746-4399) if any buried structural remains (wall foundations, wells, privies, cisterns, etc.) or concentrations of artifacts are discovered during development. Work must cease in the area of the discovery until a City archaeologist comes to the site and records the finds. The language noted above shall be included on all Final Site Plan sheets involving any ground disturbing activities. (Archaeology)
- R-2 The applicant/developer shall not allow any metal detection to be conducted on the property, or allow independent parties to collect or excavate artifacts, unless authorized by Alexandria Archaeology. Failure to comply shall result in project delays. The language noted above shall be included on all Final Site Plan sheets involving any ground disturbing activities. (Archaeology)

BAR CONCEPT 2

806 N Columbus St
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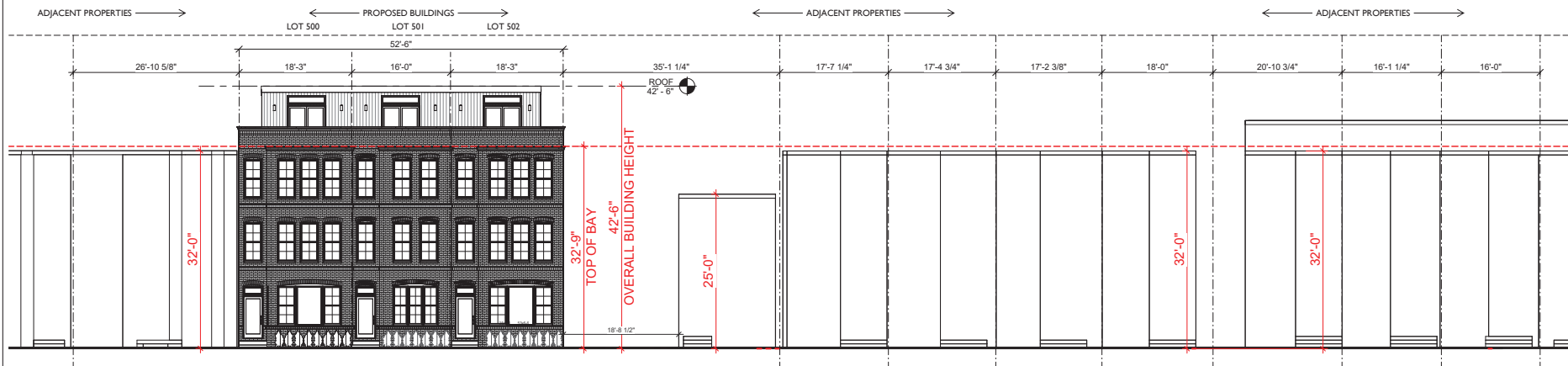
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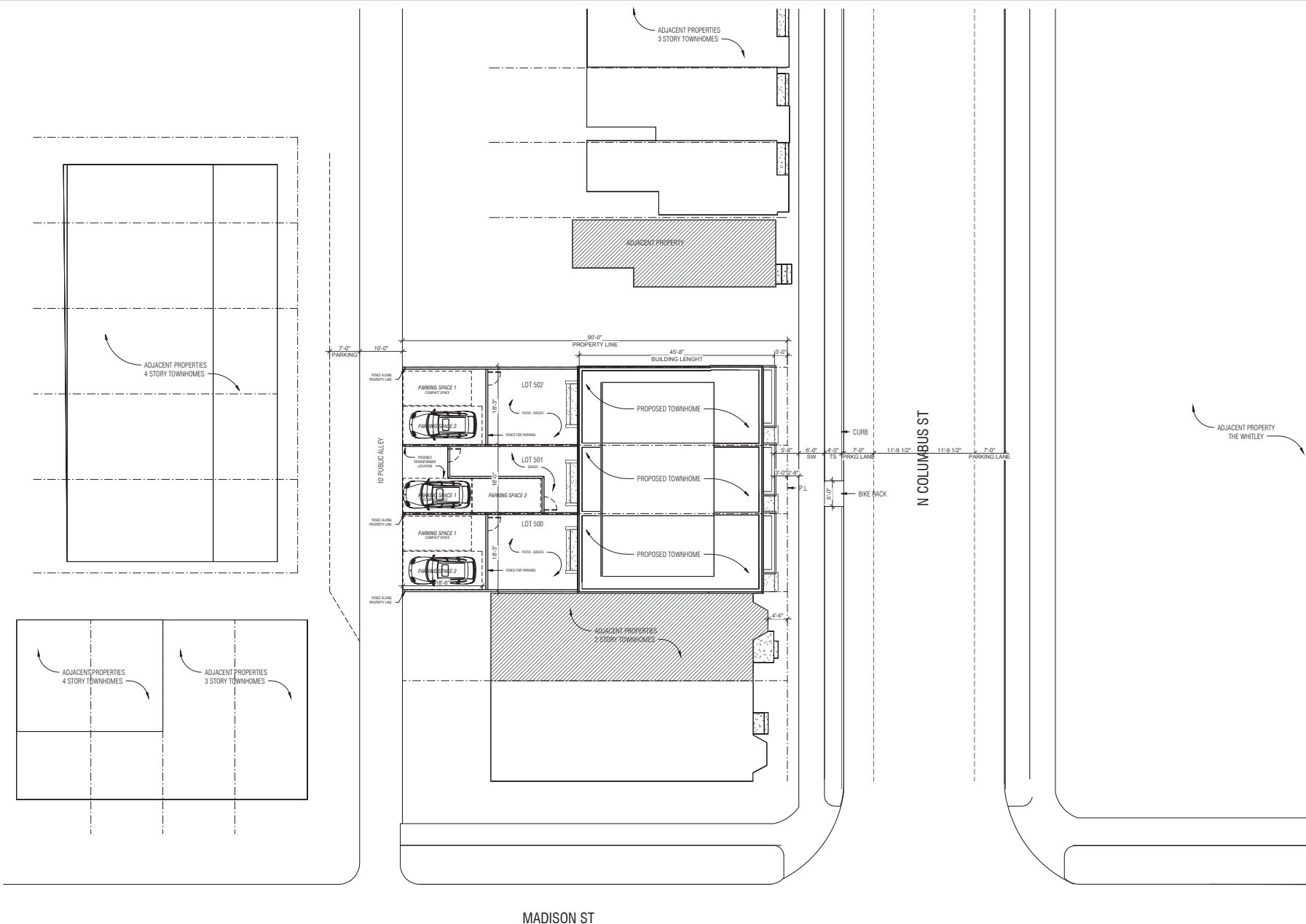
SCALE
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SHEET NO.

BAR 2



1 N COLUMBUS ST ELEVATION
1/8" = 1'-0"



1 PROPOSED SITE PLAN
1" = 10'-0"

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ARCH SITE PLAN

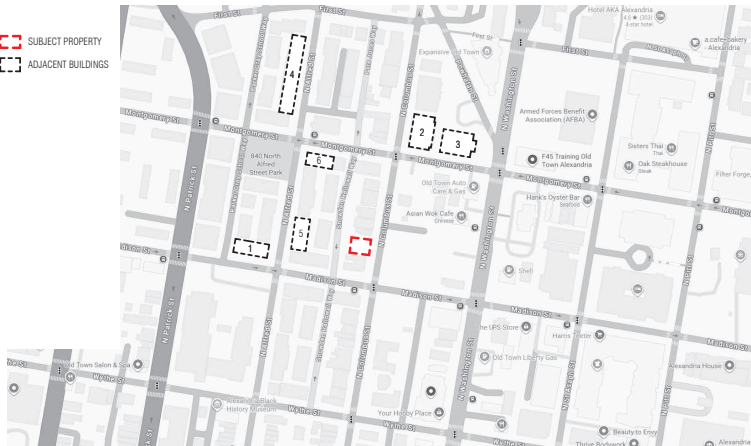
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1" = 10'-0"

SHEET NO.

BAR 3

PRECEDENT PHOTOS:

■ SUBJECT PROPERTY
■ ADJACENT BUILDINGS



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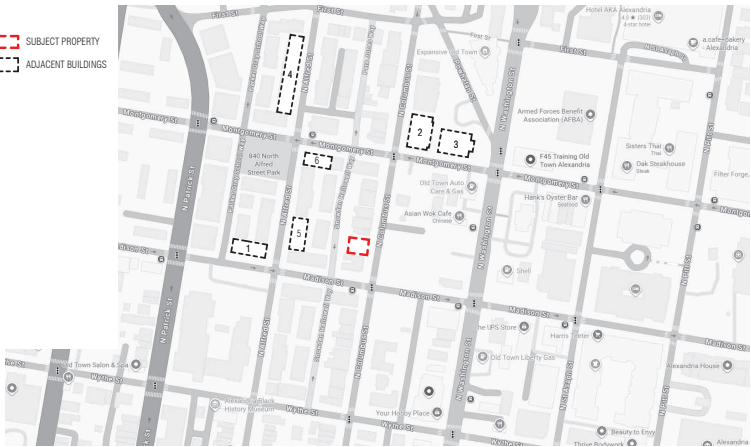
SHEET NAME
PRECEDENT PHOTOS

SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO.

BAR 4

PRECEDENT PHOTOS:



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SHEET NAME
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SCALE
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BAR 5

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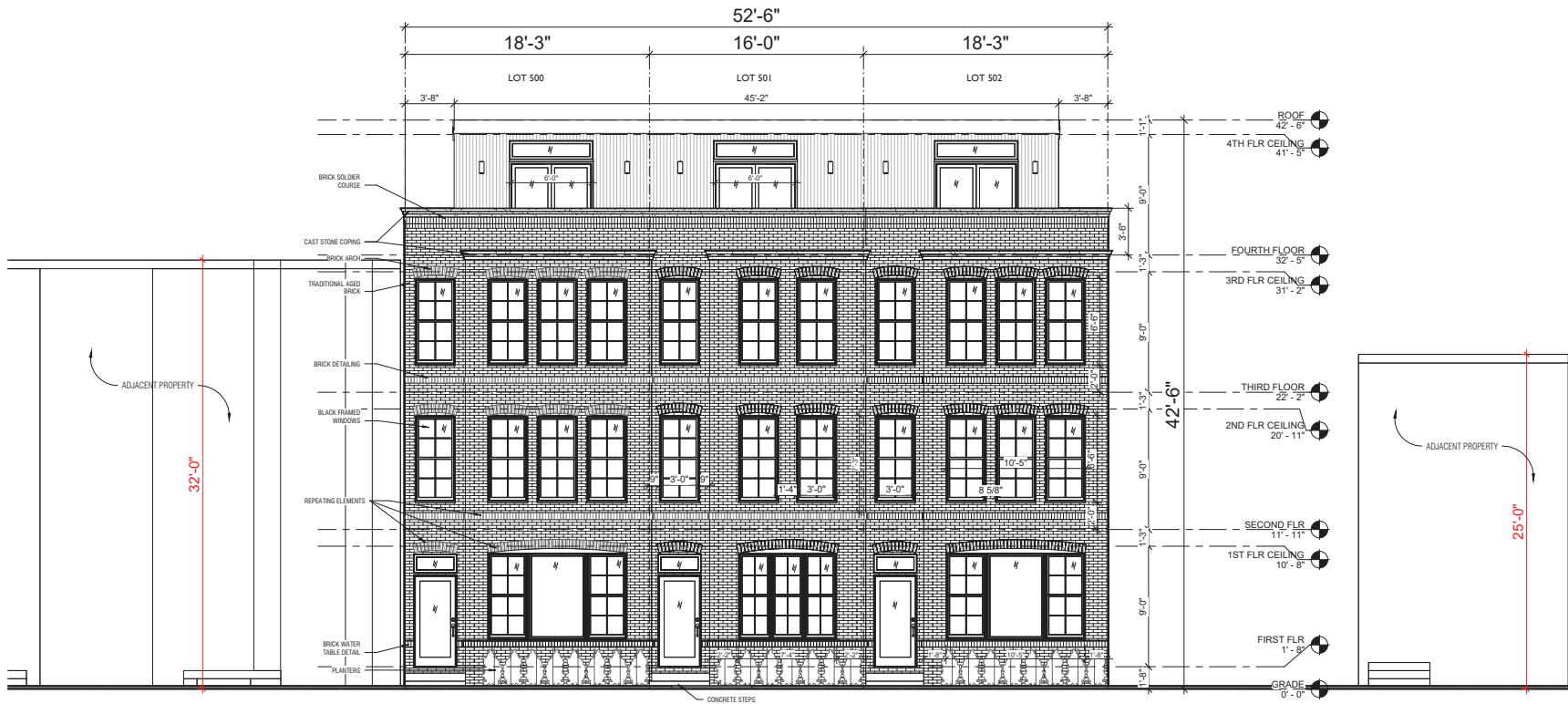
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SHEET NAME
PROPOSED FRONT
ELEVATIONS

SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO.

BAR 6



2 PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"

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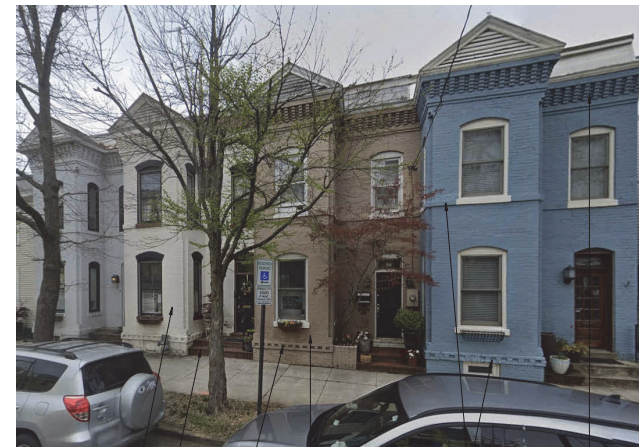
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FRONT ELEVATIONS
PRECEDENT

SCALE
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SHEET NO.

BAR 6.1



BRICK FACADE — BRICK DETAILS — REPEATING ELEMENTS — DETAILED CORNICE —
FRONT STEPS — HISTOCAL BAY —



OLD SUBMISSION



REMOVED



NEW SUBMISSION

1. THE BAY IN LOT 500 WAS FLIPPED TO ACCOMMODATE NEIGHBORING PROPERTY'S SUGGESTIONS, IT NOW PROVIDES MORE NATURAL LIGHT.
2. THE OVERALL HEIGHT OF THE BUILDING WAS REDUCED TO 42'-6".
3. THE ROOF DECK / 4TH FLOOR WAS INSET 3 FT TO REDUCE MASSING.
4. THE ROOF DECK / PARAPET WALL IS NOW SET 3' BACK, AWAY FROM THE BAY TO REDUCE MASSING.

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SEAL

SHEET NAME

FRONT ELEVATION
COMPARISON

SCALE
As indicated

SHEET NO.

BAR 6.2

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SEAL

SHEET NAME
PROPOSED REAR
ELEVATION

SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO.

BAR 7



1 PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"



OLD SUBMISSION



NEW SUBMISSION

1. HORIZONTAL WOOD PLANK FENCE WILL PROVIDE THE REAR WITH MORE PRIVACY.
2. THE OVERALL BUILDING HEIGHT WAS REDUCED 2'-6", ADDRESSING THE MASSING COMMENTS.
3. THE ROOF DECK / GUARDRAIL IS NOW SET 3' BACK, AWAY FROM THE ADJACENT PROPERTIES TO REDUCE MASSING.

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SHEET NAME

**REAR ELEVATION
COMPARISON**

SCALE
As indicated

SHEET NO.

BAR 7.1

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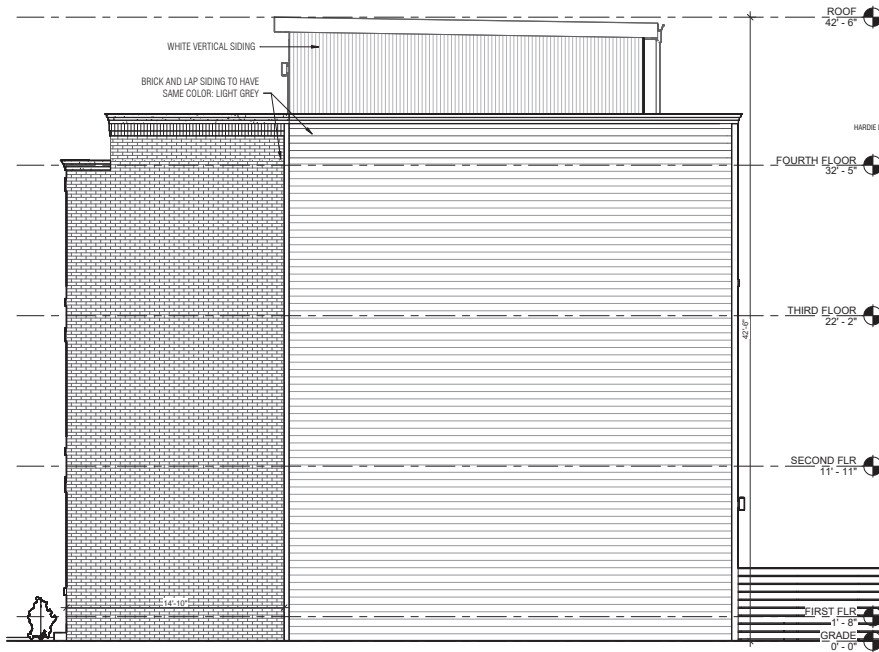
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SHEET NAME
SIDE ELEVATIONS

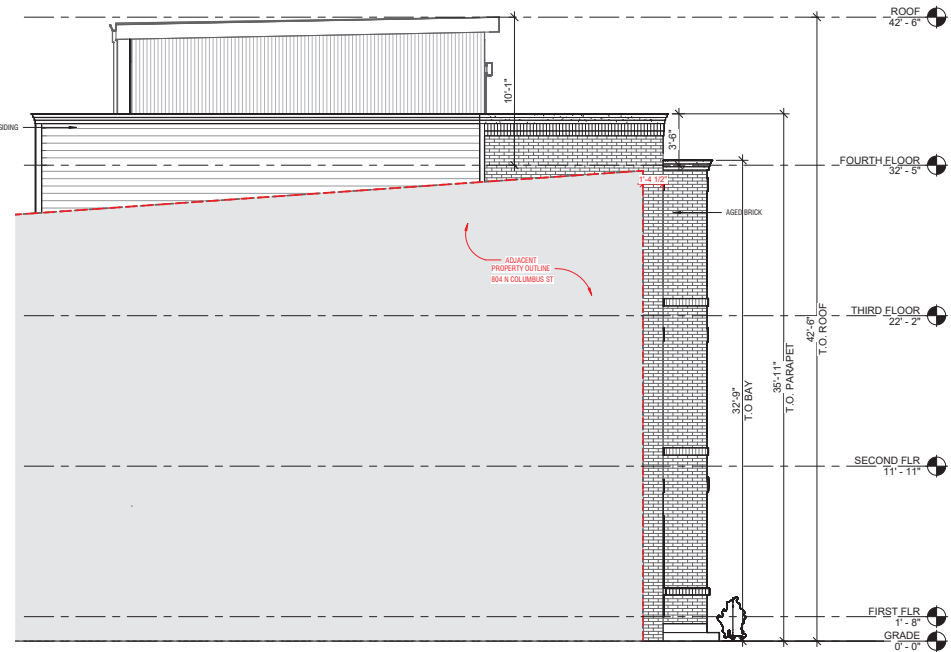
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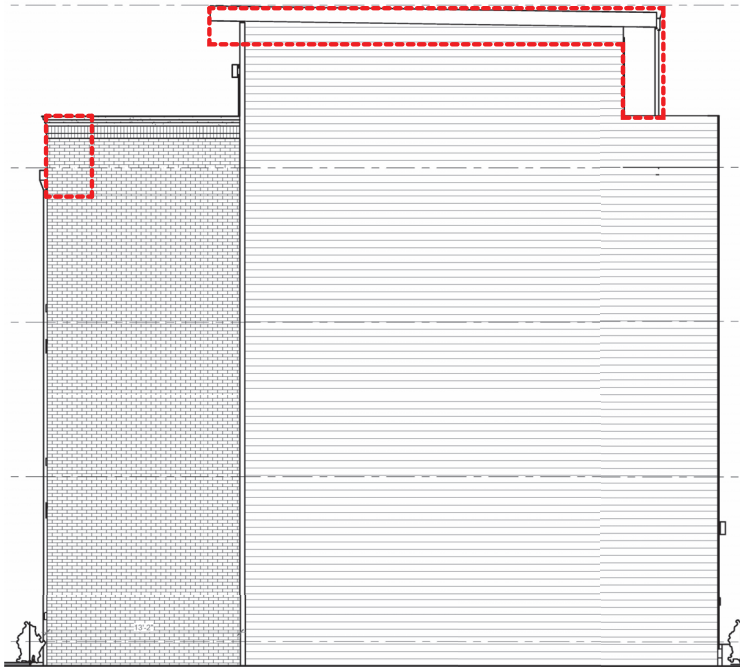
BAR 8



1 PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"

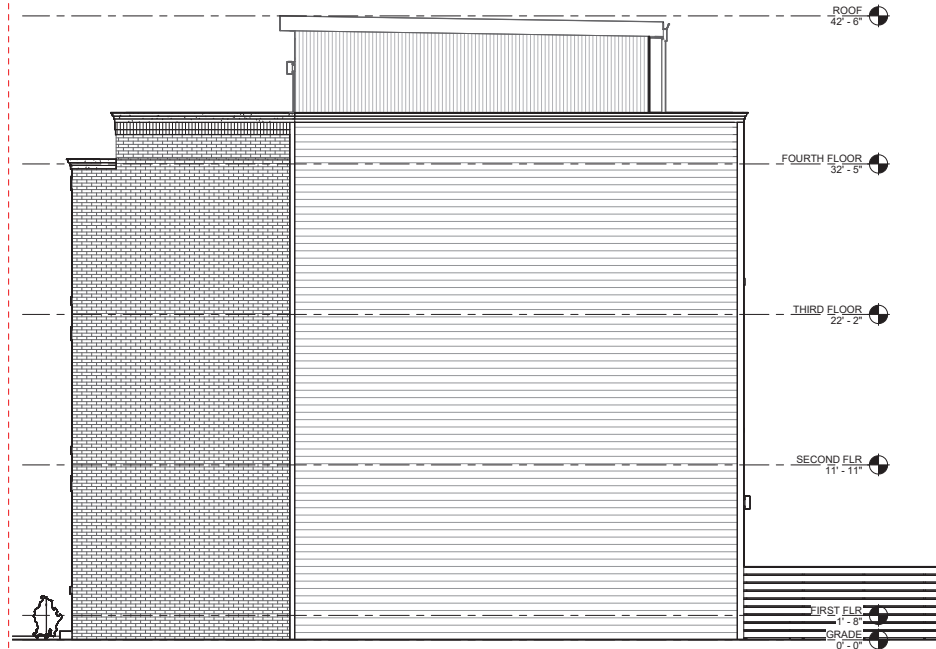


2 PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"



OLD SUBMISSION

 REMOVED



NEW SUBMISSION

1. HORIZONTAL WOOD PLANK FENCE WILL PROVIDE THE REAR WITH MORE PRIVACY.
2. THE OVERALL BUILDING HEIGHT WAS REDUCED 2'-6", ADDRESSING THE MASSING COMMENTS.
3. THE ROOF DECK / GUARDRAIL IS NOW SET 3' BACK, AWAY FROM THE BAY AND ADJACENT PROPERTIES TO REDUCE MASSING.

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SHEET NAME

**NORTH ELEVATION
COMPARISON**

SCALE
As indicated

SHEET NO.

BAR 8.1

 REMOVED

1. HORIZONTAL WOOD PLANK FENCE WILL PROVIDE THE REAR WITH MORE PRIVACY.
2. THE OVERALL BUILDING HEIGHT WAS REDUCED 2'-6", ADDRESSING THE MASSING COMMENTS.
3. THE ROOF DECK / GUARDRAIL IS NOW SET 3' BACK, AWAY FROM THE BAY AND ADJACENT PROPERTIES TO REDUCE MASSING.
4. ADDED THE NEIGHBORING PROPERTY OUTLINE TO VISUALIZE HEIGHT DIFFERENCE PROPOSED.

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REAL

SHEET NAME

SOUTH ELEVATION
COMPARISON

SCALE
as indicated

SHEET NO. _____

BAR 8.2

BAR CONCEPT 2
806 N Columbus St
Alexandria, VA

55

SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO. _____

BAR 9



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BAR CONCEPT 2
806 N Columbus St
Alexandria, VA

ISSUE RECORD
11/06/2025
BAR CONCEPT 2
REVISION SCHEDULE
NO. DATE

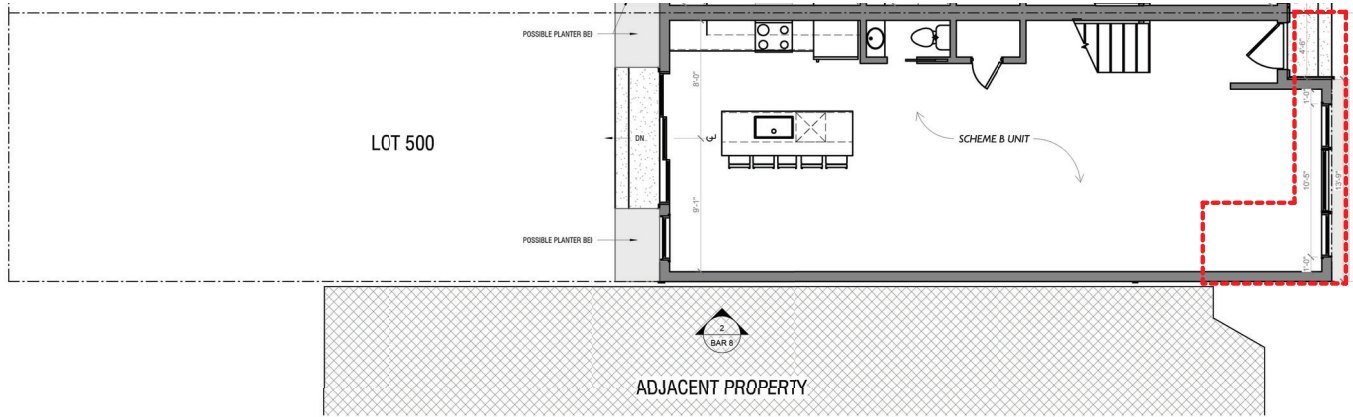
SEAL

SHEET NAME
PLAN VIEW -
COMPARISON

SCALE
As indicated

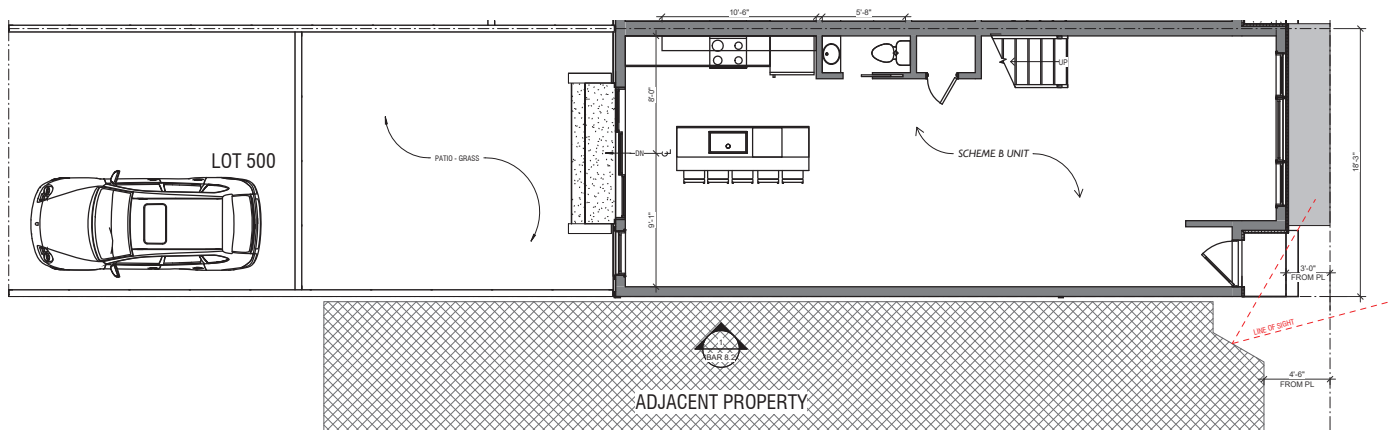
SHEET NO.

BAR 9.1



OLD SUBMISSION

REMOVED



NEW SUBMISSION

1. THE BAY IN LOT 500 WAS MIRRORED TO ACCOMMODATE NEIGHBORING PROPERTY'S SUGGESTIONS. IT NOW PROVIDES MORE NATURAL LIGHT.
2. FENCE IN PARKING/PATIO.
3. THE ENTIRE BUILDING WAS INSET 3 FT FROM PROPERTY LINE.
4. THE ROOF DECK / GUARDRAIL IS NOW SET 3' BACK, AWAY FROM THE BAY TO REDUCE MASSING.



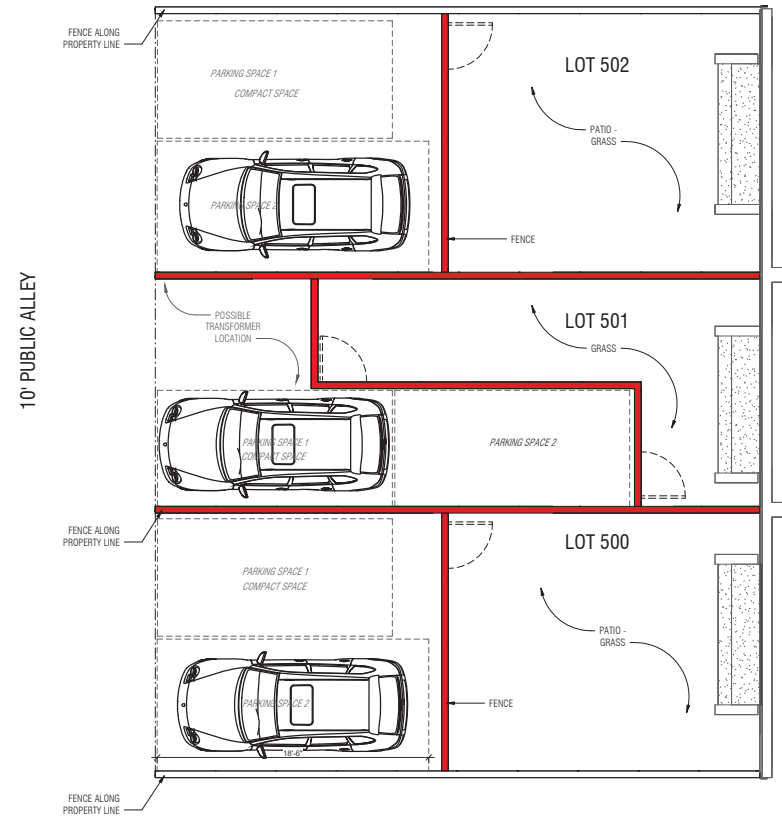
EXISTING ALLEY - FENCE REFERENCE PHOTO



PROPOSED FENCE REFERENCE PHOTO



PROPOSED FENCE REFERENCE PHOTO



OFFICIAL STAMPS

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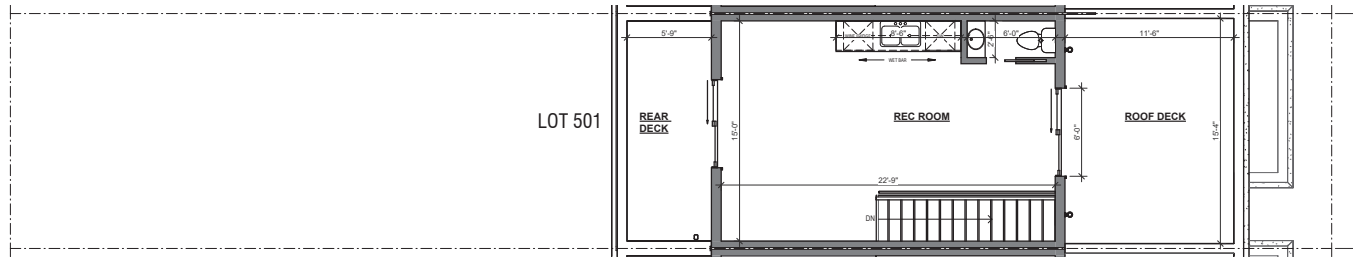
SEAL

SHEET NAME
FENCE DETAILS

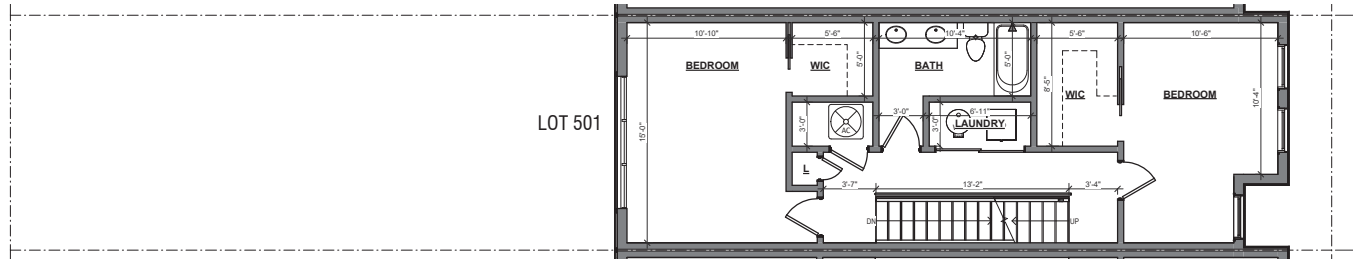
SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO.

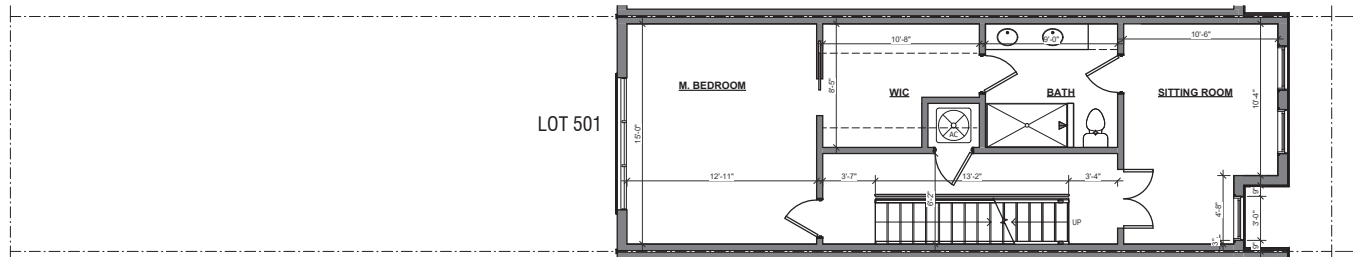
BAR 9.2



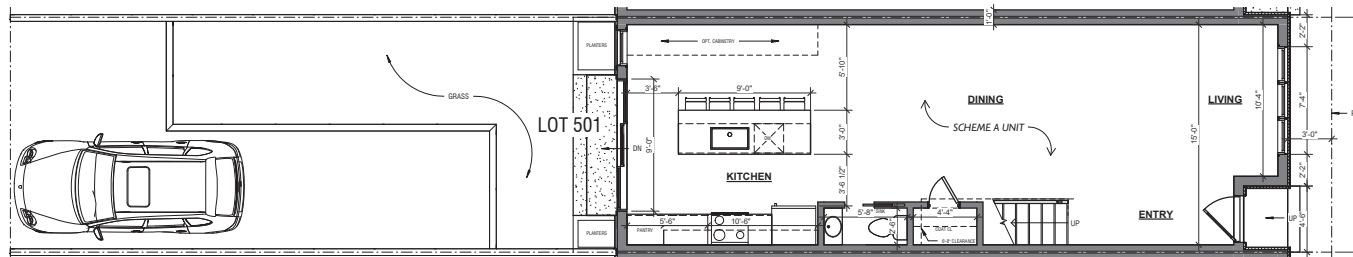
4 PROPOSED FOURTH FLOOR
1/4" = 1'-0"



3 PROPOSED THIRD FLOOR PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0"



2 PROPOSED SECOND FLOOR PLAN
1/4" = 1'-0"



1 PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN A
1/4" = 1'-0"



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SEAL

SHEET NAME
PROPOSED FLOOR
PLANS - SCHEME A

SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO.

BAR 10

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BAR CONCEPT 2

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NO. DATE

REAL

SHEET NAME

PROPOSED FLOOR
PLANS - SCHEME B

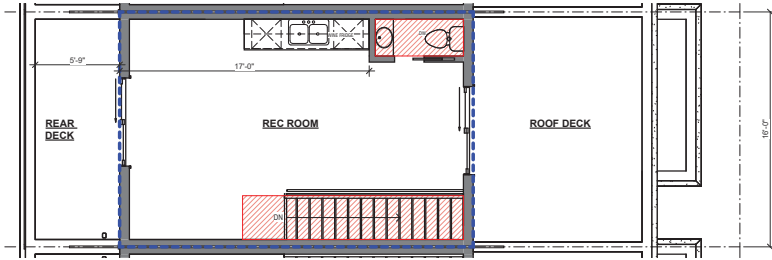
SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO.

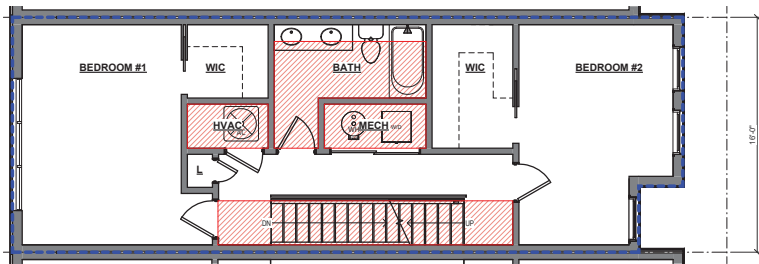
BAR II



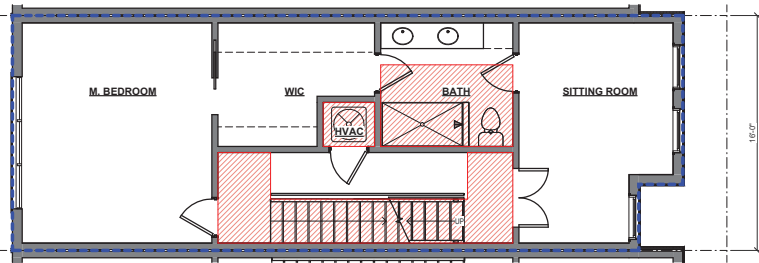
LOT 501 - 16 FT WIDE UNIT - SCHEME A



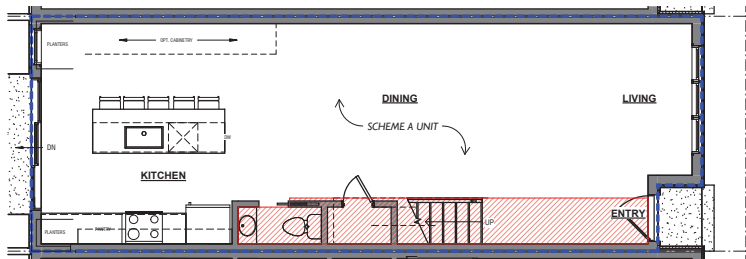
FOURTH FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM



THIRD FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM



SECOND FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM



FIRST FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM

LOT 501 - 16 FT WIDE UNIT - SCHEME A



EXCLUDED FAR:
BATHROOMS
MECHANICAL ROOMS
STAIRS + LANDING AREA

FIRST FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 717.17 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 84.88 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 632.29 SF

SECOND FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 717.17 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 141.80 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 575.37 SF

THIRD FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 717.17 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 141.57 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 598.6 SF

FOURTH FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 385.53 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 58.88 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 325.45 SF

SITE AREA: 1,448 SF
TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA: 2,330.41 SF
TOTAL EXCLUDED FAR: 424.13 SF
TOTAL FLOOR AREA: 2,106.28 SF
TOTAL FAR: 1.48



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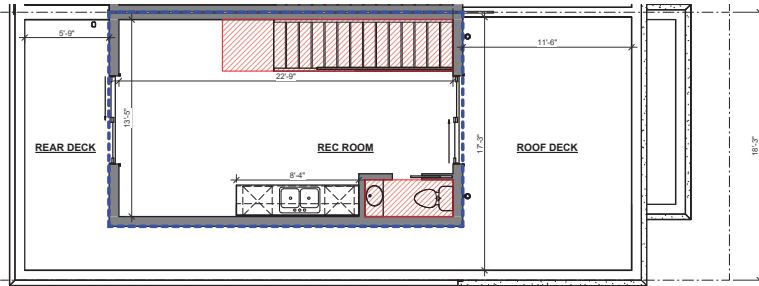
SHEET NAME
FAR DIAGRAMS -
SCHEME A

SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

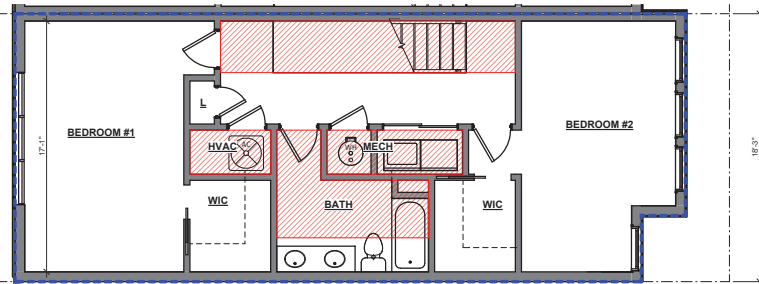
SHEET NO.

BAR 12

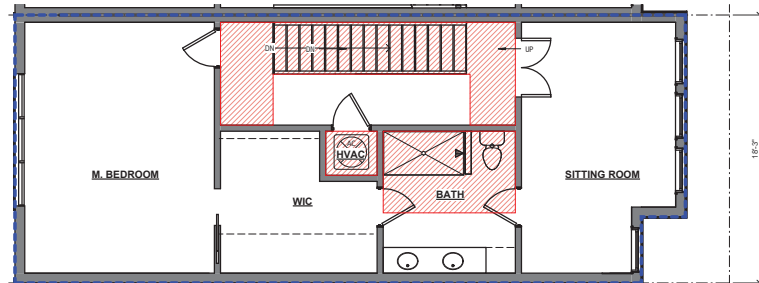
LOT 501 - 16 FT WIDE UNIT - SCHEME A



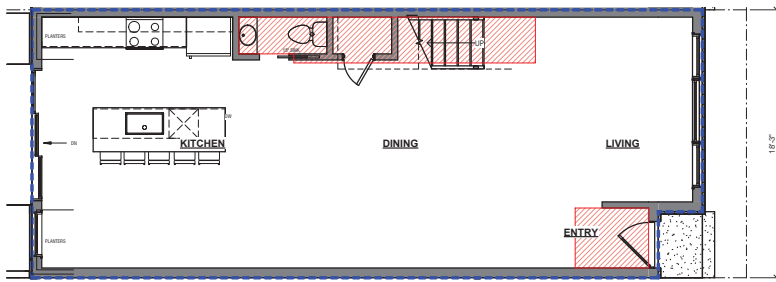
FOURTH FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM



THIRD FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM



SECOND FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM



FIRST FLOOR FAR DIAGRAM

LOT 500 - 18.25 FT WIDE UNIT - SCHEME B



EXCLUDED FAR:
BATHROOMS
MECHANICAL ROOMS
STAIRS + LANDING AREA

FIRST FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 819.92 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 81.11 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 738.81 SF

SECOND FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 819.92 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 154.45 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 665.3 SF

THIRD FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 819.92 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 165.60 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 654.32 SF

FOURTH FLOOR:
GROSS FLOOR AREA: 351.49 SF
EXCLUDED FAR: 70.11 SF
TOTAL SQFT: 281.38 SF

SITE AREA: 1.642 SQ DE
TOTAL GROSS FLOOR AREA: 2,011.23 SQ DE
TOTAL RESIDENTIAL: 811.45 SQ DE
TOTAL FLOOR AREA: 2,329.82 SQ DE
TOTAL FAR: 1.42



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SHEET NAME
**FAR DIAGRAMS-
SCHEME B**

SCALE
1/4" = 1'-0"

SHEET NO.

BAR 13