

City of Sumter

Historic Preservation Design Review

April 28, 2022

HP-22-04, 6 Law Range

I. THE REQUEST

Applicant:	Scott Bell (R.S. Bell Architects, LLC)
Status of the Applicant:	Authorized Agent for Property Owner
Request:	Request for Historic Preservation Design Review approval for replacement of existing wood windows with vinyl windows, replacement of wood front door and awning with new wood door and trim surround, and replacement of existing rear metal balcony and spiral staircase with a larger metal balcony and switchback staircase.
District	Downtown Design District
Location:	6 Law Range
Present Use/Zoning:	Office Building / Central Business District
Tax Map Reference:	249-09-01-018
Adjacent Property Land Use and Zoning:	North – Courthouse / CBD South – Parking Lot / CBD East – Commercial / CBD West – Commercial / CBD

II. BACKGROUND

6 Law Range, shown in the photograph to the right, is a rectangular two-story building constructed around 1909. The building sits on Law Range, directly south of the Old Sumter Courthouse.

The applicant is proposing to replace existing wood windows with vinyl windows, replace the wood front door and awning with new wood door and trim surround, and replace the existing rear metal balcony and spiral staircase with a larger metal balcony and switchback staircase.



ARCHITECTURAL/HISTORIC CONTEXT:

6 Law Range is a rectangular two-story building, constructed circa 1909, according to the 1985 Historic Resources Survey, which notes that the building first appears on the 1912 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps as “C” and “D”, Law Range. The building originally served as a law office.

The property is identified as site #7 in the 1985 Historic Resources Survey that catalogued the structures in the downtown area. The building features a plain front façade with four 6 over 6 double hung wood windows on each side of the central entrance door. Above the front door is a metal awning and a small 6 over 6 light window. All front windows on the building have simple shutters. The roof shape is flat, and the exterior wall material is unpainted brick. The rear of the building features paired 6 over 6 double hung wood windows and a narrow metal balcony and spiral staircase providing direct access to the second floor. The building façade does not appear to have been altered since at least 1985, though the Historic Resources Survey does reference that the building has a new façade, per information from the owner, so the original 1909 façade may have been different, though a 1957 image from the *Sumter Item* does appear to show a similar façade to the current building.

Based on the age of the building and its architectural design and features, 6 Law Range is listed on the Downtown Sumter National Register District Boundary and contributes to the City-designated Downtown Design Review District.

An article written by W. G. Barner for The News and Courier in 1957 as referenced from a “Reflections by Sammy Way” article published in the Sumter Item on August 31, 2019, references the growth and development of Law Range, and provides perspective on the rather unique nature of this street in Downtown Sumter:



“According to most local historians, this former carriage path has occupied an important place in our city's history, and numerous significant events have occurred there. The author of Reflections will reprint this article with additional comments to aid in understanding the importance of this Sumter thoroughfare.

"The famous old Law Range provides a historic link with Sumter's past that goes back over a century and features some of the county's oldest law practices. "Some citizens note that if a song were written about the street no one would be surprised. The street usually had a hustling atmosphere of men and women who might erupt all at once and fill to overflowing this one-way street. Or it may be deserted as the loneliest country road with only the warm afternoon sun bouncing off its red or yellow brick walls and only the birds in the magnolias across the streets chirping.

"There were signs (shingles) posted over every door and hallway, announcing the profession of the person occupying the office. The street's sidewalk was wide for a one-way street and covered the short block between Main on the south end and Harvin on the north. Traffic flowed in only one direction, and parking was in early cindered parking spaces which hugged the courthouse lawn. It's only been a few years that cars couldn't go both ways. That's when the street was a confusion of scraped fenders, high tempers and cars backing into oncoming traffic. But that's how the jokes about the range have come up. 'Bang two fenders,' goes the expression, 'or even pound an iron pole with a hammer, and you'll have this street full of lawyers.' In 1957, the street's name fit well.

More than a third of the city's active lawyers practiced there. The block consisted of 13 law offices, a surveyor, several real estate dealers, civil engineers, the county service officer and a magistrate.

"The offices were located within a few steps of the courthouse. This proximity was convenient for the lawyers and accounts for how the name 'law range' came about. In the beginning - that's when the range was the first doughty old lady to rule here - she was a U-shaped street that surrounded the back of the old courthouse that was on Main Street and just vacated by the S.C. National Bank (Mills Courthouse across from the Opera House). A horse and buggy could drive around the courthouse and stop at any of the frame buildings. However, in December 1905, a Roman candle ignited a barn filled with hay on West Liberty Street, and fire swept Law Range.

"The following year the county purchased the A. A. Solomons property from three sisters - Kate, Augusta and Maude Solomons. Their Main Street residence was procured for the purpose of constructing a new courthouse; the county paid what was considered an exorbitant sum of \$25,000 for the land. Located on the property was a narrow lane that ran down one side with a carriage house at one side. This land would be subdivided into 20 lots for use by Sumter attorneys.

"In 1957, Law Range had only one attorney who had practiced on the original street. His name was George D. Levy; he was president of the Sumter Bar Association and was considered to be the dean of the county bar. Law Range continues to house Sumter's barristers and remains a one-way street. The street continues as one of the most attractive and well-maintained historic pathways in the city of Sumter.¹

SITE PHOTOS:



Above: Current building front exterior, viewed from Law Range.

¹ *Law Range is a little world all of its own*, by Sammy Way, accessed on April 11, 2022 from <https://theitem.com/stories/law-range-is-a-little-world-all-of-its-own.332777>



Above: Current building rear exterior, viewed from parking lot.

SCOPE OF WORK:

The proposed project includes renovations to the front and rear exterior elevations of 6 Law Range, as follows:

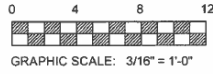
1. Replacement of existing wood windows with vinyl windows on front and rear façades.
2. Replacement of front door and second floor rear door.
3. Removal of overhead door awning and installation of new wood trim door surround and awning for front door.
4. Removal of existing front door accent lighting and installation of new front and rear door accent lighting.
5. Removal of existing circular metal stair and upper landing and installation of new steel-framed upper balcony and staircase.

The renderings, elevations and plans on the following pages show the proposed changes and new construction:

Front Elevation

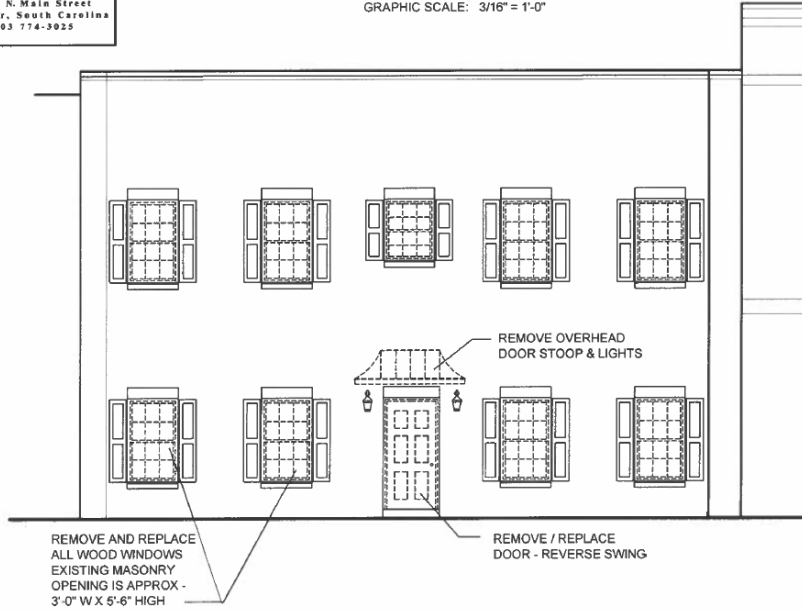


Existing Front Elevation

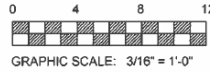


Renovations to:
6 Law Range

March 23, 2022

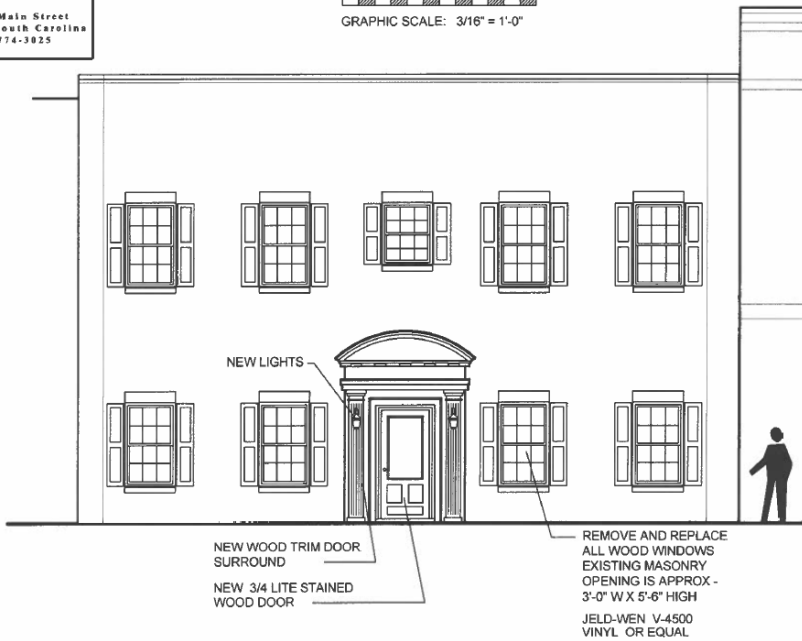


Proposed Front Elevation



Renovations to:
6 Law Range

March 23, 2022



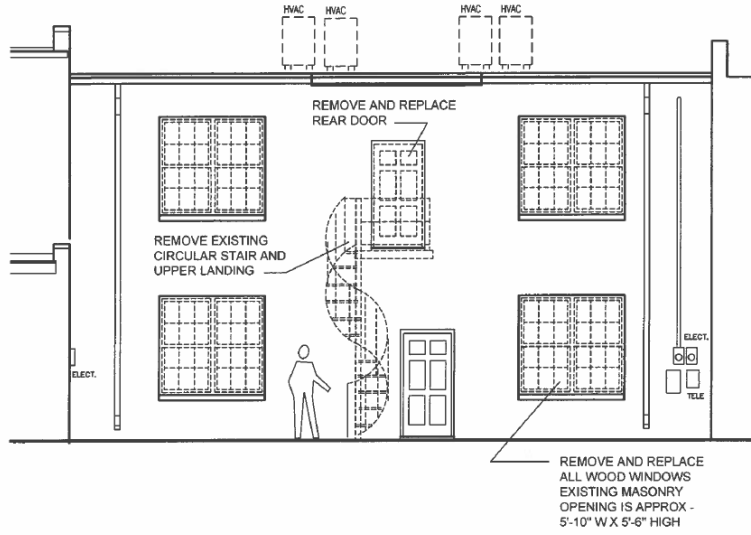


Existing Rear Elevation

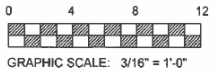


Renovations to:
6 Law Range

March 23, 2022

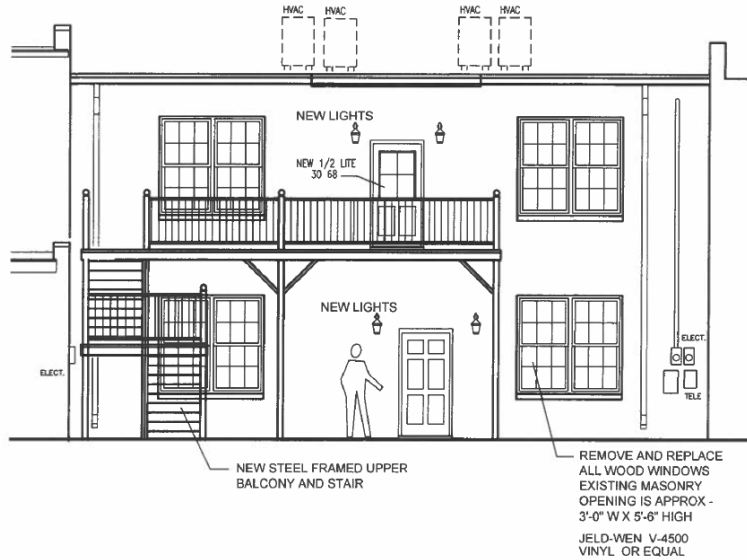


Proposed Rear Elevation



Renovations to:
6 Law Range

March 23, 2022



DESIGN REVIEW:

Design review approval is required prior to the proposed work. The *Design Review Guidelines Manual* states:

4.5 Architectural Detail and Ornamentation

A. Preserve and maintain architectural ornamentation.

- Retain architectural ornamentation, including but not limited to cornices, eave brackets, spindles, vergeboard, frieze boards, knee braces, and exposed rafter tails.
- Do not remove or obscure architectural ornamentation.

B. Replace ornamentation with designs and materials to match the original.

- Replace architectural ornamentation only when damaged or deteriorated beyond reasonable repair.
- Match the profile, dimensions and materials of the original feature as closely as possible.

Staff Analysis:

The proposed alterations to the building's front façade include addition of a door surround and updated lighting fixtures, which add additional detail and ornamentation to an otherwise plain building wall that is consistent with the aesthetic of surrounding buildings on Law Range. The proposed alterations to the rear of the building also include updates to door styles and lighting fixtures that are complimentary to the building.

4.6 Windows

A. Preserve and Repair Historic Windows.

- Retain historic windows that contribute to the historic character of a building, including functional and decorative features, such as frames, sash, muntins, mullions, decorative glass, sills, trim, surrounds, and shutters.
- Repair original windows by patching, splicing, consolidating, weather stripping, caulking, and replacing missing glass.
- Replace only those features that are beyond repair rather than replacing the entire window unit. For example, sash replacement may be a less costly alternative to a full window replacement. Match the original feature in design, dimension, and material.
- Improve thermal efficiency by securely locking windows, adding weather stripping, and installing interior or exterior storm windows.
- Preserve original window locations, sizes, and types and restore altered window openings to their historic configurations.

B. Replace Historic Windows with Compatible New Windows

- Replace historic windows only when damaged or deteriorated beyond reasonable repair or missing.
- Match the original windows in design, dimension, muntin profile, pane configuration, finish and, where possible, material. If all original windows are missing, replacement windows should reflect a design appropriate for the building form and architectural style.
- Avoid the use of false muntins, either internal or applied exterior grilles, which do not resemble the profile and depth of historic muntins.
- Avoid reducing or increasing the size of a historic opening to accommodate a smaller or larger window. Where necessary, limit this treatment to the rear or side elevations not visible from the street.
- Use clear glass on the primary elevation and secondary elevations visible from the street. Tinted glass may only be installed on rear or secondary elevations not visible from the street.
- Avoid elaborate stained glass or other decorative glass on primary or visible secondary elevations unless there is evidence that these features existed historically.



Example of paired 6 over 6 double hung wood window found on rear façade



Example of 6 over 6 double hung wood window on front façade



Example of damage to window sill on front façade.

Staff Analysis:

The applicant proposes to remove all existing wood windows and replace them with vinyl windows in the same style and configuration (6 over 6 double hung). The design guidelines are clear in stating that replacement of historic windows should only be considered when damaged or deteriorated beyond reasonable repair. In the case of 6 Law Range, while there is clear evidence of rot and damage to several window sills visible from the exterior of the building on the front façade, the overall condition of the windows does not appear to warrant total replacement, particularly replacement with a different material (vinyl). The applicant has provided information indicating that the cost to replace the existing windows with wood windows would be ~\$1,200 per window, while the cost to replace the existing windows with vinyl windows would be ~\$800 per window. Cost notwithstanding, the owner of the property is seeking approval to use vinyl windows primarily based on their assessment of the maintenance and longevity benefits of wood vs. vinyl windows, based on the deterioration experienced previously on the existing wood windows.

An analysis of windows on other buildings located to the east and west of the subject site on Law Range concludes that of the 7 buildings which are from an era in which wood windows would have been used, four (4) retain wood windows, while the remaining three (3) buildings have had all or some windows replaced with vinyl windows. It is worth noting that 6 Law Range marks the dividing line between original wood windows and vinyl replacement windows, with the buildings located to the west (towards Main St.) displaying 1 over 1 double hung vinyl windows, while the buildings to the east (toward Harvin St.) display 6 over 6 double hung wood windows). There is one building (2 Law Range) which has a mix of vinyl replacement windows and original wood windows.

4.8 Doors

A. Preserve and repair historic doors that contribute to the character of a building.

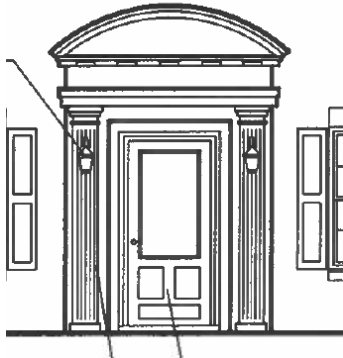
- *Retain and repair historic doors, including decorative features such as trim, sidelights, transoms, fanlights, and surrounds. Where possible, retain original hardware.*
- *Preserve original door locations, sizes, and types and restore altered door openings to their historic configurations.*
- *Avoid painting previously unpainted doors unless extremely weathered.*

B. Replace a historic door with a compatible design if repair is not a feasible option or if missing.

- *Consider first a salvaged door of the appropriate style or a suitable original door from a rear or secondary elevation when an original door on the primary façade requires replacement.*
- *Install a replacement door that resembles the original door in design, dimension, and material. If the original door is missing, the replacement door should reflect a design appropriate for the building form and architectural style.*

- *Avoid altering original door openings by blocking them in, or expanding or reducing their size. Where necessary, limit this treatment to the rear or side elevations that are not visible from the street.*

Comparison of Entry Door Styles on Law Range



6 Law Range (proposed new door and surround)



10 Law Range



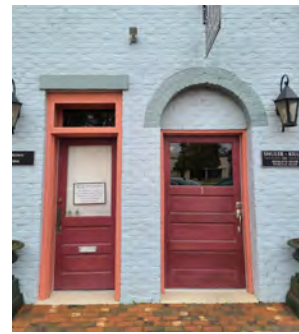
8 Law Range



5 Law Range



2 and 3 Law Range



1 Law Range

Staff Analysis:

The existing front door of 6 Law Range is a plain wood door that appears to be a replacement for the original door used on the building, and is similar to several other doors found on Law Range. The proposed new door and surround is consistent with the style of other doors on the street, particularly 2 and 3 Law Range (*door style*) and 10 Law Range (*surround*). The proposed door treatment will provide additional architectural detail and ornamentation to an otherwise plain building façade, and staff finds the proposed change to be consistent with the Design Review Guidelines and in keeping with the style of the Law Range area.

The rear doors on the building are of a similar style to the front door, and while the rear façade is not the primary public-facing side of the building, the nature of Law Range, in which a large municipal parking lot provides parking for visitors to the area, does make it more visible than a typical rear of a building in the downtown area. The applicant proposes to replace the second floor door with a new ½ lite style door, which is consistent with the design guidelines.

5.6 Lighting

- A. *Retain historic light fixtures and repair them when possible.*
- B. *Choose light fixtures that are compatible with the character of the historic building and the overall district.*

- *Select light fixtures that are appropriate to the style and era of the building.*
- *Choose contemporary fixtures in simple designs when an appropriate traditional fixture cannot be found.*
- *Limit exterior lighting to that necessary for convenience and safety.*
- *Choose fixtures that are of an appropriate scale for the building.*
- *Locate new fixtures and wiring in an unobtrusive manner that does not obscure or damage historic materials or features.*
- *For residential buildings, mount new light fixtures to the porch ceiling or adjacent to the primary entrance. Consider small footlights for walkways and driveways.*
- *For commercial properties, conceal the light source by using recessed ceiling fixtures, angled fixtures, or shaded fixtures to prevent glare.*
- *Use light of an appropriate color quality that preserves the natural colors of objects and features.*
- *Locate higher intensity security lighting on rear or secondary elevations that are not visible from the street.*

Staff Analysis:

The applicant proposes to replace the existing wall-mounted lamp lighting fixtures on the ground floor doors at both the front and rear of the building with new, similar style lights. The applicant also proposes to install new lights in the same style for the second-floor rear door where no lights currently exist. Replacement of the existing fixtures is consistent with the Design Review Guidelines, as the existing fixtures do not appear historic, and the new fixtures would be consistent with other pedestrian-scale doorway lighting on Law Range.

4.12 Signs and Awnings

K. Preserve and Maintain Historic Awnings and Canopies.

L. Preserve and Maintain Historic Awnings and Canopies.

- *Size awnings to adequately fit commercial storefronts and window, door or porch openings of residential buildings.*
- *Locate awnings on the transom bar or below the storefront cornice, above the transom, for commercial buildings.*
- *Proportion the awning to allow for ample sidewalk clearance and projection over the sidewalk in downtown.*
- *Choose an appropriate awning shape. Standard sloped awnings are appropriate in most cases, but circular or accordion designs can also be acceptable.*
- *Choose appropriate awning fabrics, such as canvas, vinyl-coated canvas, and acrylic as awning materials. Metal and vinyl awnings are not appropriate.*
- *Ensure the materials and colors are compatible with the design and color scheme of the building.*
- *Consider using the awning valance as a sign panel for commercial buildings.*
- *Consider retractable canvas awnings.*

Staff Analysis:

The existing awning is proposed for removal and replacement with a wood door surround which takes design cues from doors to the east and west on Law Range. The existing metal awning is a 1950s style, and is not considered part of the historic structure, and appears to have been added after 1957, based on historic photographic records. Removal of the existing awning and replacement with the proposed door surround is consistent with the Design Guidelines.

6.1 New Construction and Additions: Commercial Properties

B. Incorporate the principal elements of traditional commercial facades into the designs of new buildings.

- *Integrate the design features of traditional storefronts on the first floor. Use contemporary construction materials to avoid creating a false historic appearance.*
- *Delineate between the storefront level and upper floors with elements of horizontal expression, such as a canopy, belt course, steel lintel, molding, or cornice.*
- *Use vertically proportioned upper story windows in a regular pattern and an appropriate ratio of solid wall to window area.*
- *Provide visual termination at the top of the building with a cornice, parapet, pediment, or other decorative feature.*

D. *Develop respectful relationships in terms of size, scale, and massing to adjacent historic buildings.*

- *Construct new buildings that are similar in height and width to adjacent buildings. These proportions may vary depending on the character of each block.*
- *Reduce the perceived mass of a large new building by dividing its height or width into smaller masses that relate to the proportions of adjacent buildings.*
- *Step back or cascade portions of new buildings that are taller than adjacent buildings away from the street front to maintain the traditional range of heights at the street edge.*
- *Relate the base of a new building that is significantly taller than its neighbors to the heights of adjacent buildings.*
- *Preserve view sheds for significant local focal points, as well as major streets and pedestrian pathways.*

H. *Reinterpret traditional decorative elements in a contemporary manner.*

- *Incorporate simplified architectural features that reflect, but do not duplicate, similar features found on existing historic buildings in the district.*
- *Concentrate architectural detail in areas that traditionally featured detail, such as floor transitions, window surrounds, and cornices or pediments.*
- *Use detail that is three dimensional to add visual interest and texture to the façade.*

I. *Choose materials that are harmonious with traditional materials found in the historic district.*

- *Select materials that are visually compatible with and complementary to the architectural character of the district and surrounding buildings.*
- *Use high quality materials with proven durability in the local climate.*
- *Choose materials with a similar scale, color, texture, and finish as those used historically in the district.*
- *Contemporary materials that are compatible with historic materials may be acceptable if the material conveys the visual qualities of traditional materials.*
- *Employ a uniform primary wall material on all sides of the building. Use of a limited number of different materials may be appropriate if a building is broken up into separate masses.*

K. *Distinguish a new addition from the historic building with a simple and unobtrusive design.*

- *Design an addition to be subordinate to the existing building in size, design, and detailing.*
- *Locate a new addition on the rear elevation where it will not be highly visible from the public right-of-way.*
- *Design rooftop additions so not to be visible from the street and to be minimally visible from other vantage points in the district by setting them at least one full bay back from the primary elevation and other street walls.*
- *Devise a distinct but compatible appearance if an addition has its own street frontage.*
- *Include simplified architectural features derived from similar features on the historic building.*
- *Base the size, rhythm, and alignment of the window and door openings on those of the historic building.*
- *Ensure that colors and materials are harmonious with the materials of the historic building.*

L. *Avoid obscuring or destroying important features or materials of the existing building when constructing an addition.*

M. *Design and construct an addition so if removed in the future the basic form and character of the original building remain intact.*

Staff Analysis:

The rear of the building currently has a small spiral staircase and landing that provides ingress-egress directly from the second floor of the building. The applicant is proposing to remove that staircase and replace it with a larger (80 sq. ft.) steel-framed balcony that will extend 4 ft. from the existing building wall, along with a turned staircase which will project an additional 11 ft. into the parking area behind the building. There is no known record of the historic status of the spiral staircase. Replacement of the spiral staircase at the rear of the building with a fire code compliant ingress-egress will result in more functional access. This change will also permit the rear access to can serve as a front entrance for office space on the second floor of the building, consistent with the Design Guidelines. Overall this design is compatible with adjacent properties.

III. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends conditional approval of this request.

While the majority of the proposed scope of work is consistent with the Design Guidelines, the applicant's proposal to remove the existing wood windows and replace them with vinyl windows is inconsistent with the Design Guidelines. Staff recommends that the Design Review Board deny the request to replace the existing windows with vinyl windows, and instead permit replacement of any damaged windows or window elements that cannot be restored with a similar wood style product.

IV. DRAFT MOTION

- 1) I move that the City of Sumter Design Review Board approve HP-22-04 in accordance with the materials, photographs, and construction details submitted and referenced in the Staff Report based on compliance with Design Review Guidelines.
- 2) I move that the City of Sumter Design Review Board deny HP-22-04
- 3) I move that the City of Sumter Design Review Board enter an alternative motion.

V. DESIGN REVIEW BOARD – April 28, 2022

Location Map



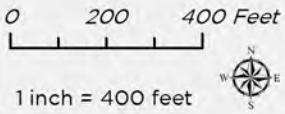
Area Map



Legend

 Case Site Location

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 Document Name: HP-22-04



HP-22-04
 6 Law Range, Sumter, SC 29150
 Tax Map # 249-09-01-018