

The Hardware Store Restaurant

Date: July 27, 2018
TO: King County Historic Preservation Hearing Examiner
FROM: Melinda Powers, owner of the subject property
17601 and 17603 Vashon Hwy SW, Vashon Island, WA
RE: Appeal

Thank you for hearing my appeal.

History:

Since I took over the building in 2003, I have been committed to maintaining and enhancing the historic nature of this property. I originally fought hard for no changes to be made to the building through our 'change of use' building permit process (from hardware store to restaurant) with DDES in 2004. DDES was requiring major physical changes to the front of the building to meet ADA codes. I did ultimately prevail, but there was a substantial cost associated with this concession to not change ADA access on the front of the building. We had to add another ADA entrance on the non-historic side of the building to compensate. This was a cost we were willing to bear to maintain the same historic look on the front of the building. This was very important to me and I have always maintained this building and its historic nature to a greater extent than ever before. In other words, the building is in the best shape now than it has ever been.

The issue that instigated this variance:

The subject property for this appeal is actually a separate, smaller building from the restaurant and shares no common wall, even though they share a common façade on the front. We have always rented this space to a tenant in the past, but have recently taken it over for our own separate business venture (a cooking school).

Every business - 5 different companies - that have gone into this space in the past have failed – primarily because there is no distinction to show that it is a separate space and entrance and not part of The Hardware Store Restaurant. You don't even register that it is a separate space and this has been a common complaint of both tenants and customers over the years.

Historic buildings can only be successfully maintained and kept alive if the businesses in the space are successful. To this end, we endeavored to differentiate the two spaces to the best of our ability in order to keep the historic look and feel of the whole building, and yet show that it is a separate entrance and business in the smaller building.

Complying with Code:

In our effort to comply with the King County Code that states a Type II COA shall be required for alterations in appearance (KCC 20.62.080.C.2 and Landmarks Rules Part VI.G), and that the criteria used by the commission includes "The extent to which the proposed project would adversely affect the features of significance; the reasonableness of the proposed project in light of other alternatives available to achieve the objectives of the owner and the applicant; and the extent to which the proposed project is necessary or appropriate to achieving for the owner or applicant a reasonable return on the landmark property (Landmarks Rules Part VI.G.2.b, c & e),

we endeavored to select the best use of materials and design to give us the distinction we need while having the most minimal impact on the historic façade.

This change does not adversely affect the feature of significance (façade) because it's such a small area and is similar in color to the paint on the building, so it's hardly noticeable. We considered several options and settled on the one that appeared the least obtrusive – adding a natural textural material (cedar siding) to the front facade instead of trying to change the paint color of the exterior space. We felt this was in good taste and used local materials indigenous to Vashon. It truly does not take away from the overall historic look and feel of the building and has met with many compliments from the community.

We are altering less than 50 square feet of the 2112 square feet of the historic façade. And it is at the dead end of the building. The impact is very minimal but is critical in showing that there is a different business in this separate space.

This design solution seemed the most effective in order to achieve our objective of being able to distinguish that there is a separate business and thereby enabling that the business can earn a reasonable return and survive.

All materials were attached to the façade in a way that does not damage the building in any way. The impact of the historic nature is truly not changed from the vantage point of viewing the building as a whole. In fact, the addition of the new material is barely noticeable as one would see the building from the corner of Vashon Highway and Bank Road, where you can view the two historic sides of the building.

Our Request:

We are asking that this physical change be considered and approved.

As old Historic buildings evolve, it is important to maintain the look and history, but also important to usher the building into a successful and meaningful use so that the business can survive and support the building. Empty historic buildings are not good for a community. This is the only change we have ever requested for this 5000 square foot building. We deeply honor this designation that we feel lucky to have. It is an aspect that we feature and advertise along with our business and we want to continue to maintain it with pride.

This is one of the most important buildings on Vashon Island and is located in the heart of town. We worked, with the help of Dow Constantine in 2004, to make the changes we needed to help evolve it into a new business while still maintaining all the historic features. When we took over the building, it was in poor condition. Back then, even though we were repainting the building the same color, we still submitted our paint samples for approval to the Historic Preservation Committee. We are good stewards of this building and always will be.

We respectfully ask that you consider approving this change to the building so we can support the success of a separate free-standing business in this space.

Sincerely,

Melinda Powers, owner
www.thsrestaurant.com