

HERITAGE PRESERVATION COMMISSION REPORT
Certificate of Appropriateness- Downtown Commercial Historic District.
Section 115-320(d)(2)

TO: Heritage Preservation Commission
FROM: Planning Staff
MEETING DATE: July 27, 2023

PROPOSAL: The applicant is proposing install seven exhaust fans on the exterior façade of the property located at 508 Jay Street.

PROPERTY OWNER:
Exchange Building LLC
508 Jay St STE 101
La Crosse, WI 54601

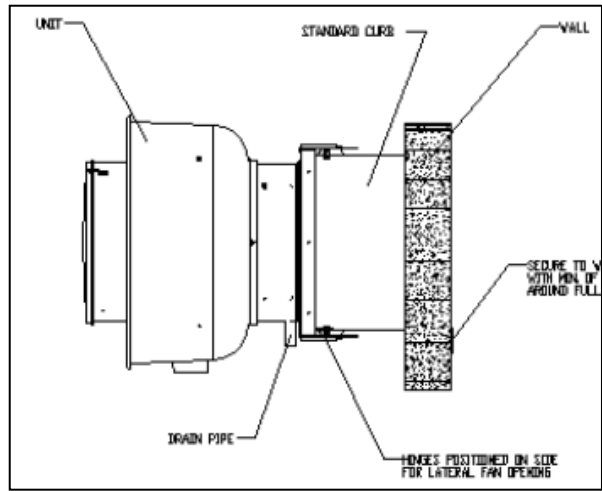
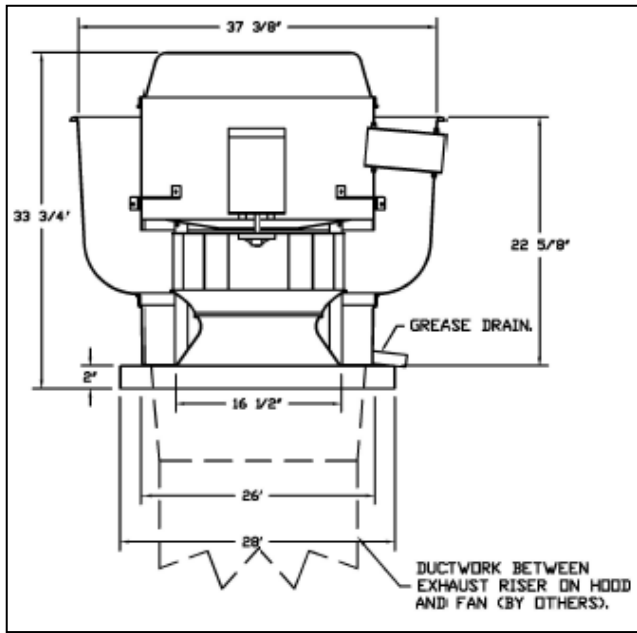
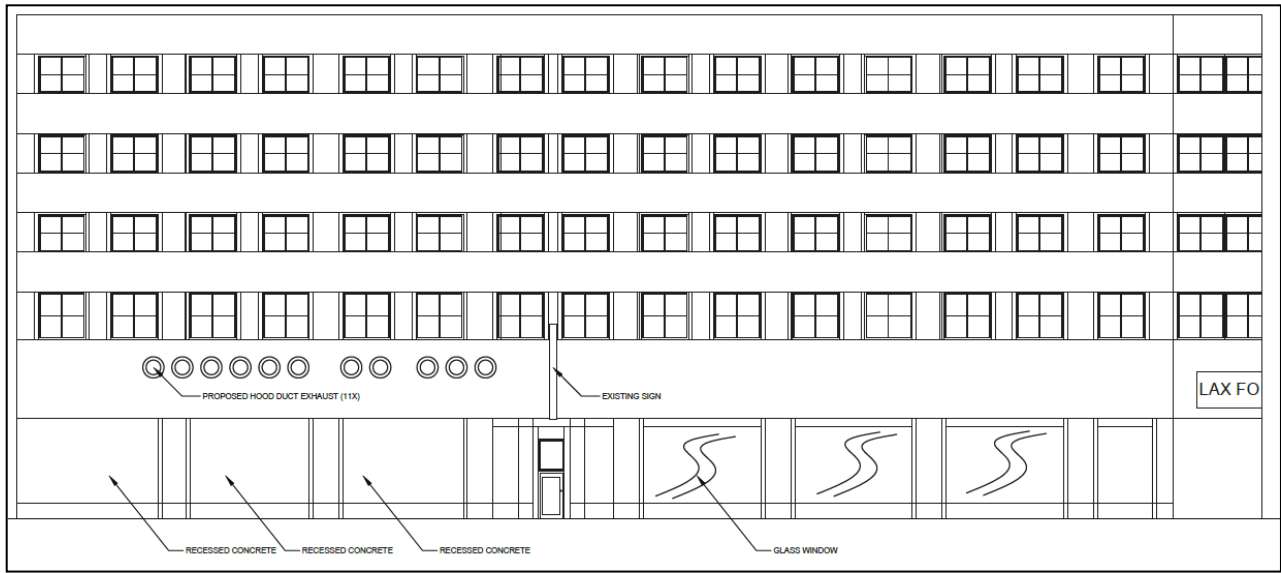
APPLICANT:
La Crosse Sign Group
Jeff Brezinka

BACKGROUND: The Downtown Commercial Historic District was established by Ordinance in April 2016 along with design standards that are specific to the styles of architecture found within. The local district designation of the Downtown Commercial Historic District was created to encourage preservation of the historic resources of the district, which was named to the National Register of Historic Places in 1994. The design standards and review procedures are used to guide preservation, rehabilitation, new construction, relocation and demolitions. Plans or requests must be approved by the Heritage Preservation Commission prior to any building/demolition permit being issued. In determining whether to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for Demolition, the HPC shall:

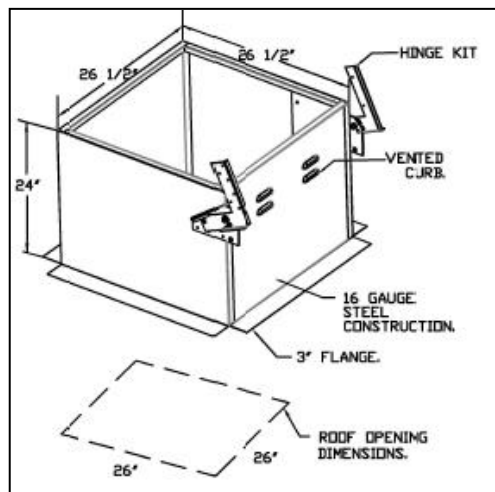
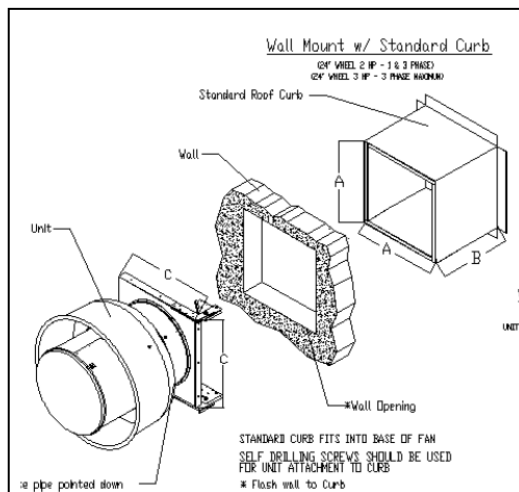
1. Consider factors such as whether the structure is of historical significance, the state of repair of the building, and whether denial of a permit would create a significant economic hardship for the owner.
2. Issue the certificate only if the owner can demonstrate that the building is structurally unsound and/or that denial of a demolition permit would create a significant economic hardship for the owner.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: The applicant is proposing to install eleven exhaust fans and replace two windows with air intake vents on the exterior of 508 Jay Street. (Exchange Building)

Eleven (11) exhaust fans are proposed to be installed on the north façade of the building which faces Jay Street. They will be located toward the eastern side of the facade close to the alley and on the portion of the façade between the second story windows and what would have been the ground floor storefront windows. The exhaust fans are approximately 3ft 2inches x 3ft 2 inches and would extend approximately 2ft x 10inches from the façade over the public sidewalk.



Installation of each fan will require a 2ft-2 1/2 inch x 2ft- 2 1/2 inch opening through the building for the fan to be attached to a wall mount for the duct work.



The applicant is also requesting to replace two existing windows on the east façade (facing the alley) with air intake vents.



THESE TWO WINDOWS
WILL BE USED AS AIR INTAKE



SEE ATTACHED PLANS FOR MORE INFORMATION

ANALYSIS:

There are no specific design standards in Section 115-320 related to projects of this scope. When this occurs staff typically refers to best practices and the Secretary of Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Rehabilitation as a Treatment and Standards for Rehabilitation. These standards include:

- The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
- Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
- New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

The replacement of the windows on the rear of the building for air intake vents can be easily reversed should that need occur.

The exhaust fans are suitably screened from 5th Avenue by the large sign (yet to be installed) and by the proposed location on the building. They do, however, have a substantial impact on the building due to eleven 2ft x 2ft openings being created into original façade. Should these fans ever be removed, substantial restoration will need to occur.

FINDING: The proposed air intake vents do not negatively impact the building. The proposed exhaust fans, while appropriately screened, do have a substantial impact to the original façade.

RECOMMENDED ACTION BY STAFF:

Staff has several concerns with this project. The proposed exhaust fans are tremendous intrusive to the façade of the building and there is likely no plan for restoration should these fans not be needed in the future. Additionally, these types of fans typically drip grease, water, and/or possibly other liquids onto the ground beneath them, in this case the public sidewalk. One or two may be tolerable but eleven is a lot. Staff is also aware that the applicant needs a Revocable Street Privilege Permit from the Board of Public Works and a variance from the State for the fans to hang over the property line and public right-of-way.

Before any approval is recommended by staff the following conditions should occur:

- 1) Approval from the Board of Public Works for a Street Privilege Permit.
 - a. A condition should be attached to this approval that requires that the fans are removed and the building openings are appropriately restored by the applicant or building owner when they are no longer in use.
- 2) Approval by the State for any required plan review or variances/waivers
- 3) Approval of all permits by the Community Risk Management Department.