



YELLOWSTONE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD

Tuesday, May 18, 2021

SUBJECT: Certificate of Appropriateness
Yegen Block/Granny's Attic – 2800-2822 Minnesota Avenue

REQUEST

A request to demolish the east half of the block, approximately 150' and install a site perimeter interpretive wall/fence element and historic panel security fence. The remainder of the western block will be remodeled to accommodate services and housing for the Montana Rescue Mission campus. The subject property is located in the Billings Old Town Historic District. Tax ID A01294 and A01298. Montana Rescue Mission, owner, Allen Rapacz, agent.

RECOMMENDATION

The Planning Division is recommending conditional approval.

DISCUSSION

This property includes the *Contributing* structure known as the Yegen Block/Granny's Attic and extends southwest along Minnesota Avenue to the *Noncontributing* structure known as the Montana Rescue Mission. The National Register nomination for this district states:

“The Yegen Block is composed of a series of two and one-half story commercial buildings built between 1890 and 1900 that span most of the 2800 block facing Minnesota Avenue to the north. The individual buildings that comprise the Yegen Block were built by Christian and Peter Yegen between 1890 and 1900. The history of Minnesota Avenue is integrally connected with the Yegen Brothers, who dominated the Minnesota Avenue corridor beginning in the mid-1880s into the 1920s. The Yegen Block provided all the goods and services needed for farmers and ranchers and also catered to the American Indian population. In 1926, they sold their business block to two brothers from Kalispell, Montana, T.W and W.G. Elliott who retained the name Yegen Brothers until it was formally changed to Elliott's in 1938. At the same time, the Elliott's also remodeled the storefront with a design by Chandler Cohagen, one of the most prominent and successful architects in Billings and Montana. Elliott's became well-known as a high-end furniture store in Billings.

The buildings of the Yegen Block are built of stone and brick and were covered with stucco in the late 1930s to create a cohesive building façade. The Cohagen design brought the building into the twentieth century with its Art Deco influences. The lower façade exhibits a series of large unevenly sized storefront display windows that are asymmetrically spaced across the north wall. Each storefront opening is surrounded by black ceramic glazed tile which in turn are

periodically accented by a vertical band of white ceramic tile and a white tile in a diamond shape at the top of the tile surround. There are three recessed entries evenly spaced across the facade wall. The storefronts are capped by a horizontal band of stucco that projects slightly from the face of the wall.

A white band of stucco divides the first and second floor levels. Installed in the 1940s, twenty-two horizontally oriented windows openings set in pairs and filled with glass blocks are evenly spaced across the façade. The east side of the building along South 28th Street is similar in design to the north façade wall. In the south (rear) of the building, the separation of the multiple buildings remains visible, with several original doors and openings intact.”

The Montana Rescue Mission building is described in the nomination as:

“The Montana Rescue Mission is a two-story brick modern building located on the southeast corner of South 29th Street and Minnesota Avenue. For most of the first half of the twentieth century, a two-story brick building (constructed between 1896 and 1903) stood at this location and for most of that time, housed drug stores. The Eagles demolished the original building and constructed their new Eagles Hall around 1950. Due to lack of funding, they only built the first floor originally and later added the second floor around 1957 which held a bowling alley.

The building is austere in its design and has little ornamentation or fenestration. It was renovated in the 1970s to serve as the Salvation Army store. The façade faces north onto Minnesota Avenue and is clad with buff colored common bond brick. The building has lost integrity and is a noncontributing building to the Billings Old Town Historic District.”

The applicant is proposing the following work (structure):

1. Demolition – The applicant is proposing to demolish the east 150’ of the existing building and construct a parking lot. The parking lot is proposed to have a perimeter fence that includes the potential for interpretive wall/fence elements. The applicant is also proposing sidewalk art pieces and a metal awning over the northern parking lot entrance.
2. Rehabilitation – The remaining building will be rehabilitated and include new storefront windows, second floor window openings and a color change to transition into the existing MRM building.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER REVIEW

The Billings Old Town Historic District was listed to the National Register of Historic Places in 2010. The district was added to the Billings Local Register by Ordinance in 2012. As part of the Ordinance, there is a process for local review by the Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board for any exterior modification, rehabilitation or demolition. The Historic Preservation Officer refers to the Ordinance and the Secretary of Interior

Standards (SOI) when preparing staff reports for the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA).

The Yegen Block, aka Granny's Attic, is centrally located within the Old Town Historic District and lies within the 2800 Block of Minnesota Avenue. Granny's Attic is comprised of approximately 8 interior sites and is approximately 250 feet long, the remaining 50 feet of the block is the Montana Rescue Mission (men's facility). The portion of the structure proposed for demolition is approximately 19,500 square feet at a building height of 32 feet.

The Old Town Historic District emerged in the 1880s as the primary downtown Billings commercial district developed by Peter and Christian Yegen. Comprised of 48 properties of which 39 are contributing, the district reflects Western Commercial architecture of the late 19th and early 20th century. The Yegen brothers have contributed much of the historic and economic history of downtown Billings commercial development as anyone during that time period.

When reviewing projects located within a historic district, the setting must be considered. Elements of the district setting include relationships of building to each other, setbacks, fences and patterns, views, sidewalks, vehicle access and landscaping.

It is the goal of the Ordinance to identify, preserve and retain building and landscape features in the historic district and setting. The SOI Standards for historic districts/settings recommend:

- Treatment of historic elements and resources - protect, maintain and repair contributing features.

The SOI Standards do not recommend:

- Striping or removing elements or features;
- Removing historic buildings that are important in defining the historic character of the district or setting;
- Placing parking facilities directly adjacent to historic buildings.

In addition to the SOI Standards, the Billings City Council adopted the Minnesota Avenue Master Plan in July of 2009. This plan was initiated by the property owners, City of Billings and Downtown Billings Alliance. The plan focused on the areas building scale and mass, building importance to the context of the neighborhood, streetscape, landscaping, parking, entryway identification, land use and other land use elements. The plan identifies issues and recommendations for Minnesota Avenue and the surrounding neighborhood. Recommendation included:

- Preservation, stabilization and restoration of buildings;
- Adaptive reuse of buildings;
- Enhance the district with sensitive façade restoration;
- Public greenspace and open-space;
- Parking accommodated through existing public lots, on-street (encourage change of parking to diagonal), integrate parking into buildings and behind storefronts,

In March of 2020, an informal pre-development meeting was held with the applicant. The discussion included the condition of building 5 and the difficulty of retrofitting this building for housing units. In addition, the applicant is a non-profit organization and the expense of retrofitting the building was not cost effective to meet the goals of the project. The Historic Preservation Officer and a member of the board was in attendance and understand the difficulty of trying to rehabilitate this building due to the deteriorated condition and the cost associated, however, there is concern about the vacancy in the historic district that the demolition of this building causes.

To this end, it was unofficially agreed upon that the applicant would research the ability of retaining the northeast corner of the existing building facade to use as an interpretive location with National Register signage, public art and information regarding the Yegen Block and Old Town Historic District. Information contained in the COA application states that it would be structurally impractical but also cost prohibitive to undertake this request.

After review of the COA application, the Historic Preservation Officer has the following concerns with the proposed project:

- Loss of an important historic resource – Yegen Block/Granny’s Attic is a contributing building to the Old Town Historic District;
- Loss of mass located in the central area of the historic district. The proposed site to be demolished is approximately 19,000 square feet of building with a height of 32 feet. This is a significant loss of building mass within the central historic district.
- The parking facilities are not required by the Zoning Code and although it is understood that additional on-site parking is desired, there are public lots and on-street parking available nearby. Parking lots next to historic structures are detrimental to the context of the structure and setting.

CONCLUSION

This building is a visual and context rich addition to the Old Town Historic District. The mass of the structure is visible from almost every area of the district and that loss will be felt by the entire district. However, after review of all the information, including the condition of the building foundation, the cost of a complete renovation of the structure to meet the needs of the Montana Rescue Mission and the offer to provide alternate structure for interpretation, staff will recommend conditional approval. Staff recognizes that the applicant is attempting to mitigate the loss of this building by providing an option to use this space to tell the story of the Yegen brothers and the historic district through interpretive signage, photographs and public art. Staff is recommending the following conditions to the Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board. They may accept, edit or reject as they work through the process of the Certificate of Appropriateness.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff is recommending the following conditions:

1. This request is for the demolition of the 150 feet of the east side of the Yegen Block/Granny' Attic and the rehabilitation of the remaining 50' of the same building as part of the Montana Rescue Missions housing tax credit project. Any addition exterior renovations will require an additional COA as determined by the Historic Preservation Officer.
2. All exterior work shall be constructed as presented in the COA per drawings submitted. Any changes shall be presented to the Historic Preservation Officer for review.
3. The applicant shall work with the Historic Preservation Officer, Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board and the Western Heritage Center in the development of the interpretive signage, photographs and public art for the perimeter fence area.
4. The applicant shall include the 8-foot fence construction as part of an overall building permit. Fences over 6 feet require a building permit.

ATTACHMENT A
Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board Determinations
COA – 2800-2822 Minnesota Avenue

Prior to any action, the Yellowstone Historic Preservation Board shall consider the following:

1. Every reasonable effort shall be made to provide a compatible use for a property that requires minimal alteration of the building, structure or site and its environment.
2. The distinguishing original qualities or character of a building, structure, or site and its environment shall not be destroyed. The removal or alteration of any historic material or distinctive architectural feature should be avoided when possible.
3. All buildings, structures, and sites shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and that seek to create an earlier appearance shall be discouraged.
4. Changes that may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a building, structure, or site and its environment. These changes may have acquired significance in their own right, and this significance shall be recognized and respected.
5. Distinctive stylistic features or examples of skilled craftsmanship that characterize a building, structure, or site shall be treated with sensitivity.
6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced, wherever possible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplication of features substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence, rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other buildings or structures.
7. The surface cleaning of structures shall be undertaken with the gentlest means possible. Sandblasting and other cleaning methods that will damage the historic building materials shall not be undertaken.
8. Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archaeological resources affected by, or adjacent to, any project.
9. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood, or environment.

HISTORIC PHOTO



P. Yegen & Company Building at 2802 Minnesota, 1890



Yegen Block, c 1900, looking east from South 29th Street

CURRENT PHOTOS



View southwest from South Broadway



View southeast from South 29th

CURRENT PHOTOS – CONTINUED



Streetscape view looking southwest from South 27th Street



Streetscape view looking southeast from South 29th Street

CURRENT PHOTOS – CONTINUED



View from Western Heritage Center looking South



View west along storefront

City of Billings

Old Town Historic District



The parcel data mapped herein does not constitute a legal survey. Inaccuracies exist with both the mapped data and the Montana Department of Revenue CAMA data; when seeking the definitive description of real property, consult the deed recorded at the Yellowstone County court house.

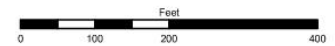
Date of Imagery = May 2020

Legend

- US or State Route
- Arterial Street
- Residential Street
- Old Town Historic District



Scale = 1:2,000



PROPOSED PROJECT SITE PLAN AND DESCRIPTION

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

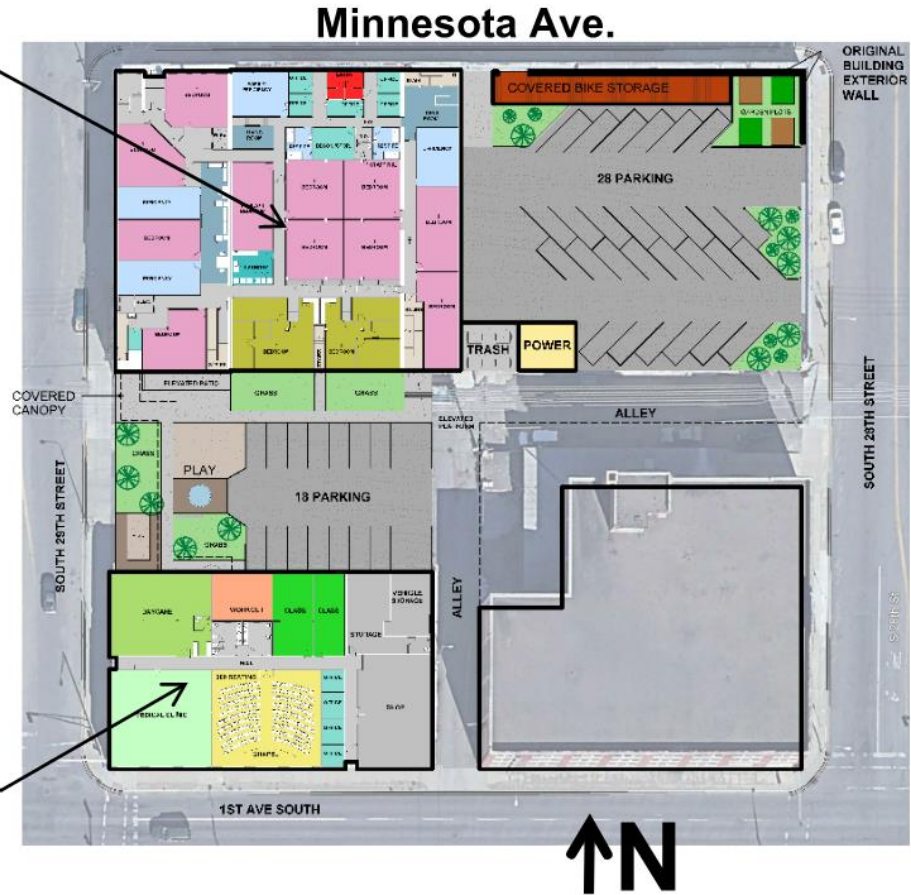
Location:

The project site is the $\frac{3}{4}$ city block bounded by Minnesota Avenue on the north, 1st Avenue South on the south, South 28th Street on the east and South 29th Street on the west.

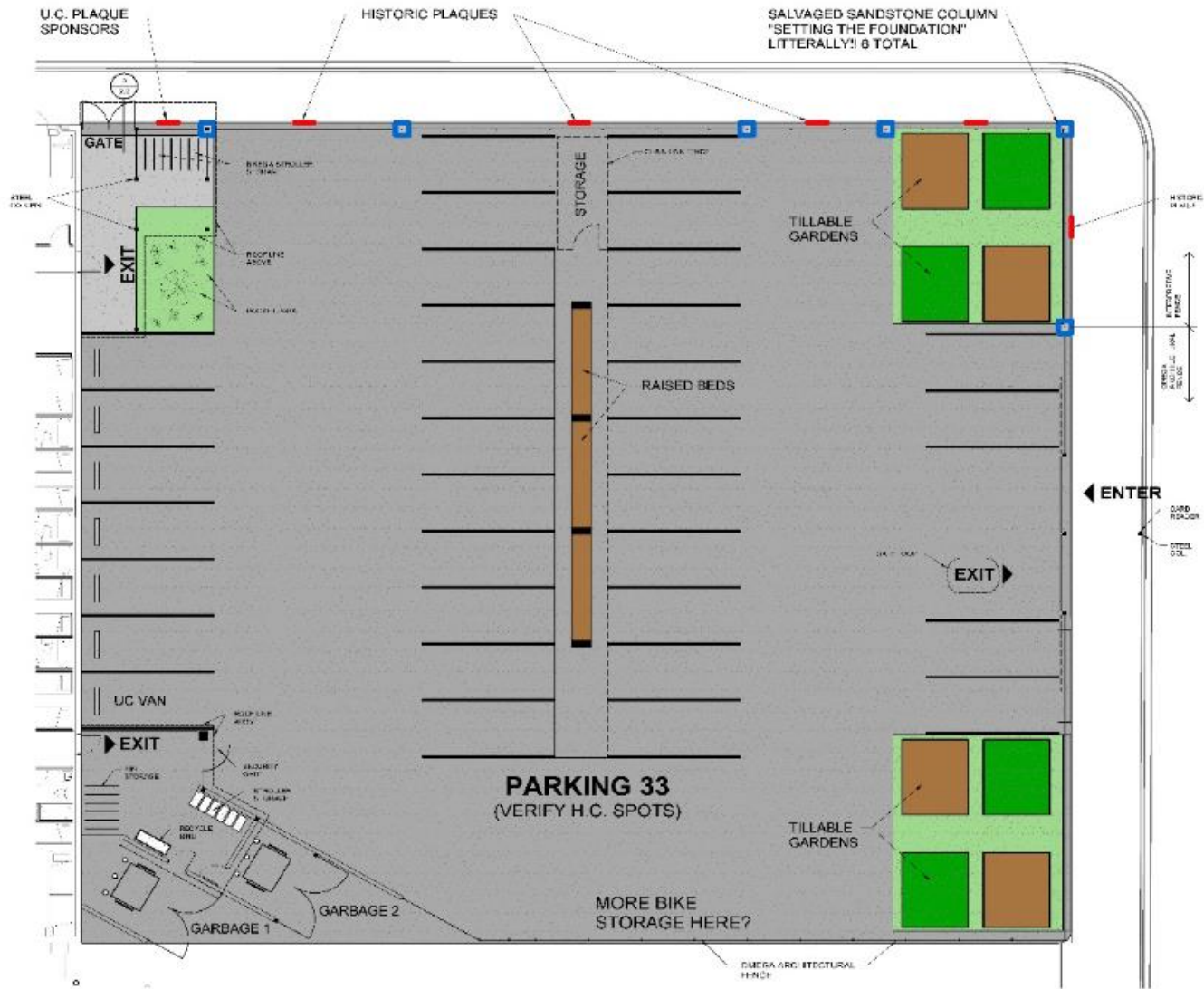
The project area includes a full half block building on the north $\frac{1}{2}$ of the block which includes the long standing Montana Rescue Mission building and that area formally known as the former "Granny's Attic", on the east side of the block. Our project also includes a one-story building on the S.W. corner of the MRM property.

**Housing/
Shelter**

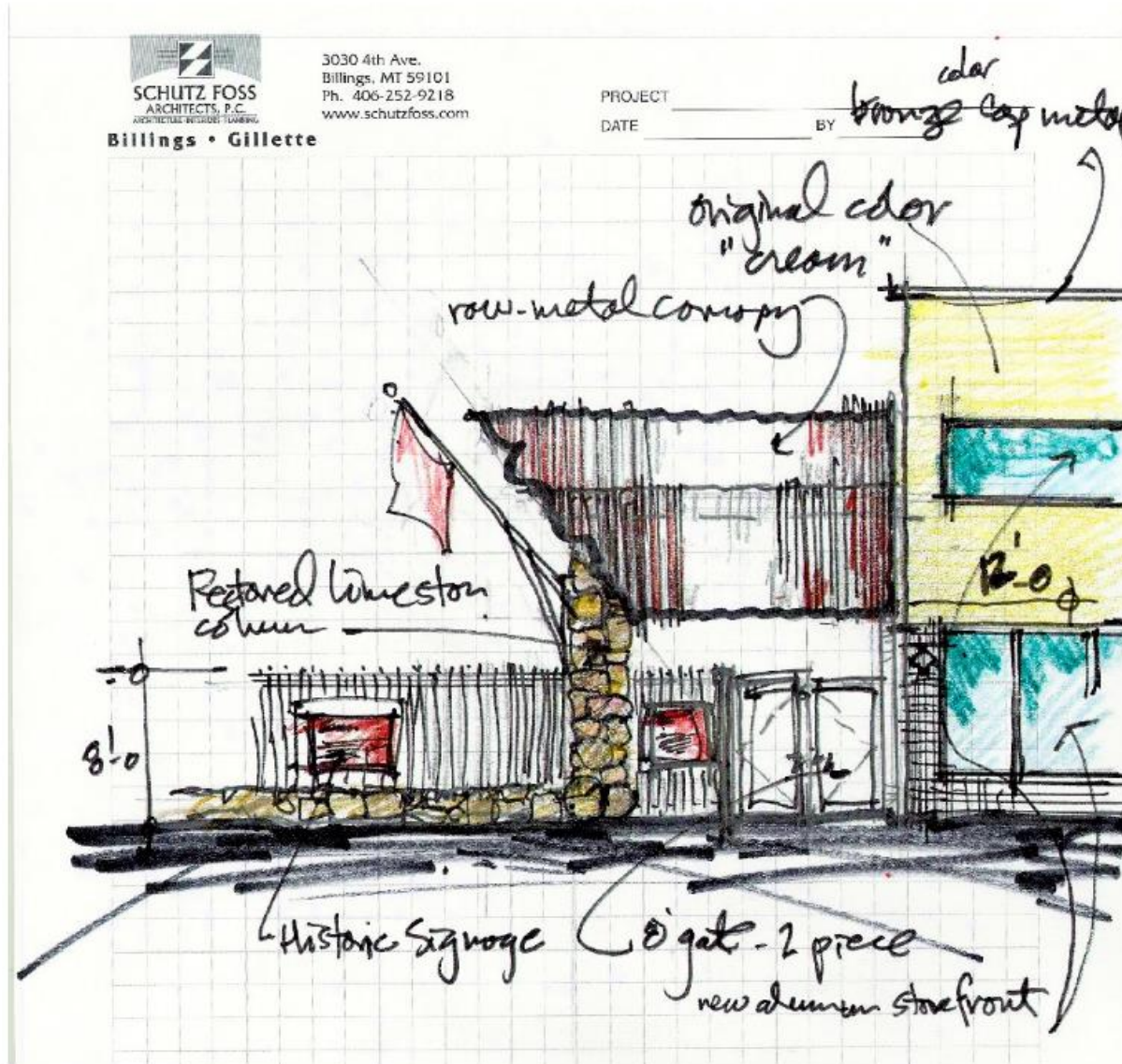
Building 21



ENLARGED PARKING LOT PLAN



PROPOSED VISUAL AT REMAINING BUILDING/PARKING LOT



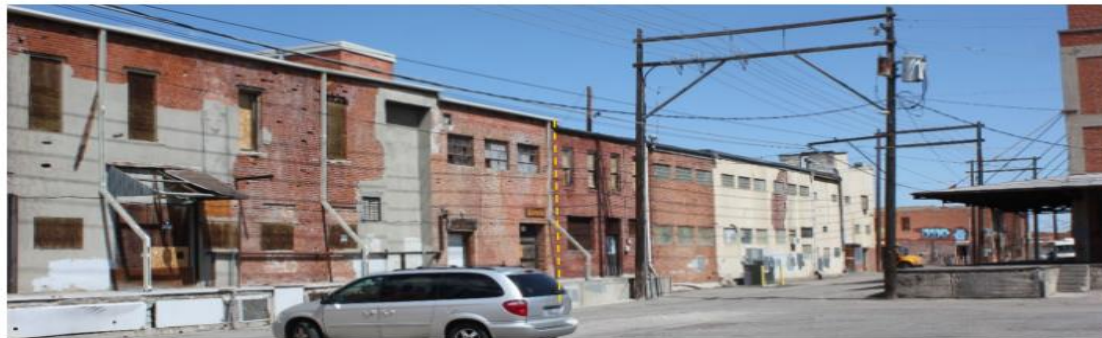
DEMOLITION LINE – EAST SIDE



DEMOLITION LINE – NORTH AND WEST SIDE



REAR ELEVATION VIEW



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Sandstone Wall/ Column Material



Metal Fencing Material

SINGLE WIRE



OMEGA ARCHITECTURAL

BRING YOUR STYLE RIGHT THROUGH THE FENCE

Developed to fit the lay of the land, the Omega Architectural™ adds beauty and ambience with a uniquely modern fence design that enhances the appearance and security of every property it surrounds. It allows you to illuminate your high-caliber image right through the fence.

- Blends with traditional and modern architecture
- Reinforcing V-bends
- See-through panels
- Simple cost effective installation
- Versatile post and flange system
- Brackets and hardware for all installation



QUICK VIEW	
HEIGHT	4', 5', 6' (interstitial) 1219, 1524, 1829 mm
LENGTH	12' 0" (3658 mm)
FINISH	Powdercoated or polyester powder coated









RENDERINGS



RENDERINGS



RENDERINGS

