

NEW ORLEANS HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION
CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT HISTORIC DISTRICT LANDMARKS COMMISSION

LaToya Cantrell
MAYOR

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

Bryan Block
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Thursday, September 16, 2021

Honorable City Council
1300 Perdido Street
New Orleans, LA 70112

Re: 3500 St. Claude Avenue

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Attached, please find a report regarding an appeal of the HDLC's decision to allow the retention of a cooling tower installed in deviation of the HDLC approved drawings.

Should you have any questions or require any additional information, please feel free to contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,



Eleanor Burke
Deputy Director



This is an appeal by a community member of the New Orleans Historic Landmarks Commission's approval of the retention of a cooling tower installed in deviation of the approved drawings. 3500 St. Claude Avenue, Holy Angels Convent, is a Significant-rated property located in the Bywater Full Control Historic District. In April 2021, the HDLC issued a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a four-story hotel structure on the site. The approved plans called for a cooling tower, the layout of which was reviewed and approved by both the ARC and Commission.

During construction, an inspection found that the cooling tower had been constructed in deviation of the approved plans. The cooling tower was rotated 90 degrees in plan and is far taller than was allowed. The Owner applied to the Commission to retain the cooling tower as constructed.



The matter came before the Commission at their meeting of August 4, 2021. At that time, the Commission reviewed the *HDLC Design Guidelines*, the approved plans for the cooling tower, and the Applicant’s reasoning for constructing it in deviation of the approved plans.

HDLC Guidelines:

Building Equipment Review	
Install unobtrusive building equipment	
S	Commission review.
C N	HDLC Staff review.
Modify a storefront and install building equipment – Such as energy vaults	
S C	Commission review.
N	HDLC Staff review.
Install visually prominent building equipment	
S C	Commission appeal.
N	HDLC Staff review.

BUILDING EQUIPMENT

Modern mechanical equipment includes HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) equipment, restaurant exhaust fans, electrical supply, generators and energy vaults. Although they represent necessities of modern life, the design and location of this equipment can have a significant negative impact on historic integrity of a building or area.

In many cases in the City of New Orleans, buildings are constructed to their property lines and the opportunity to locate equipment in rear or side yards is not viable. In these situations it might be necessary to locate items such as HVAC equipment and restaurant exhausts on roofs or energy vaults at ground level. In either instance, the equipment should be made as unobtrusive as possible. (Refer to *Guidelines for Site Elements* for additional equipment guidelines.)



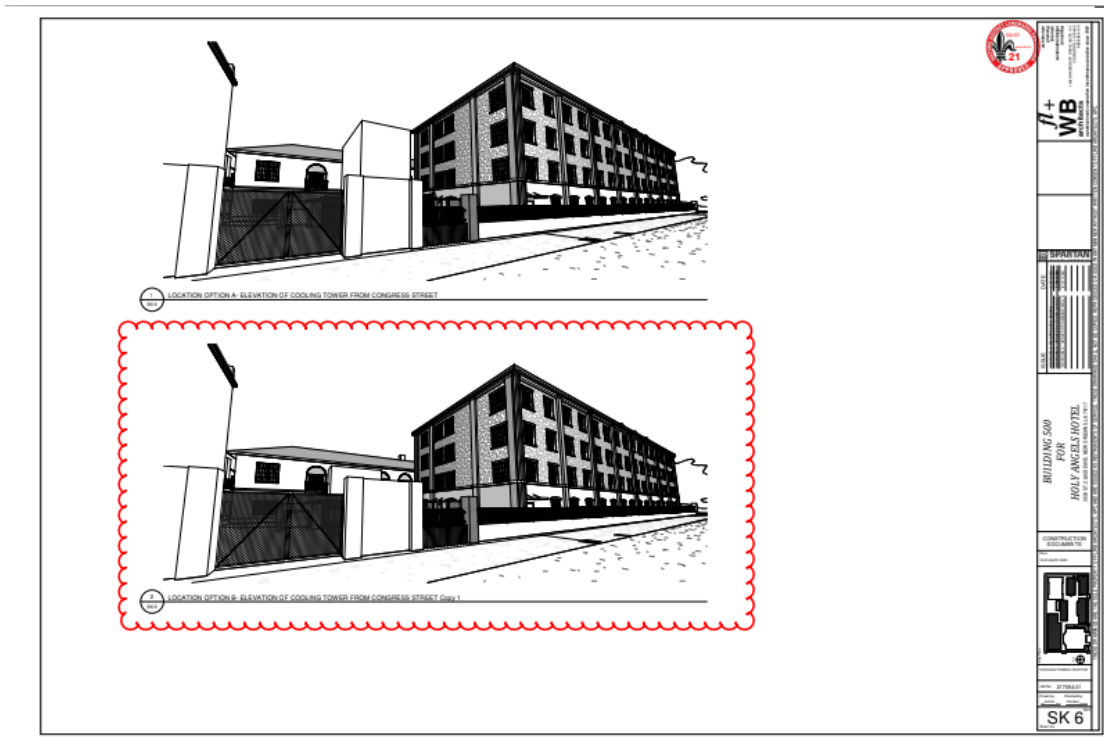
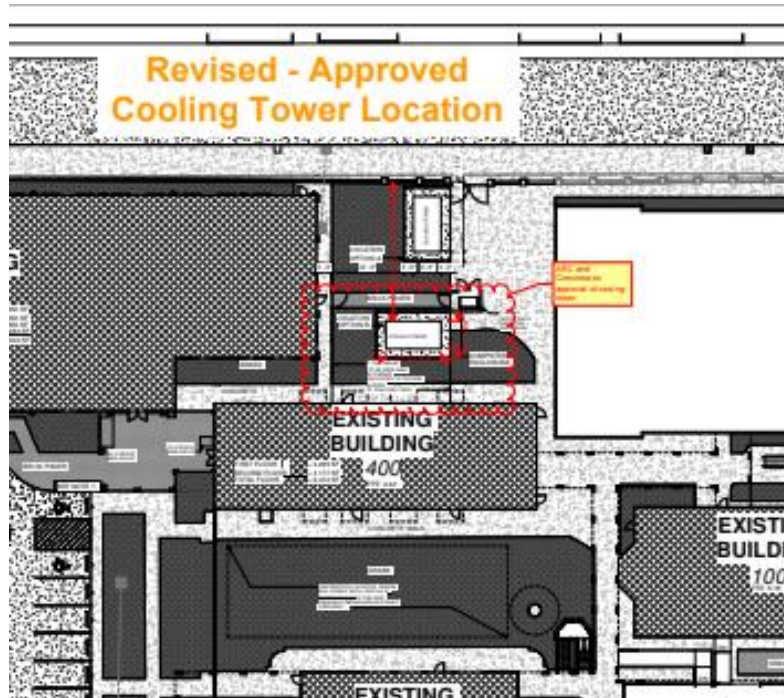
This HVAC equipment is located within this building's courtyard, partially concealed by a fence at a secondary street elevation. It would be preferable if the height of the equipment was lowered to the fence height to minimize visibility.

HDLC Staff Recommendations:

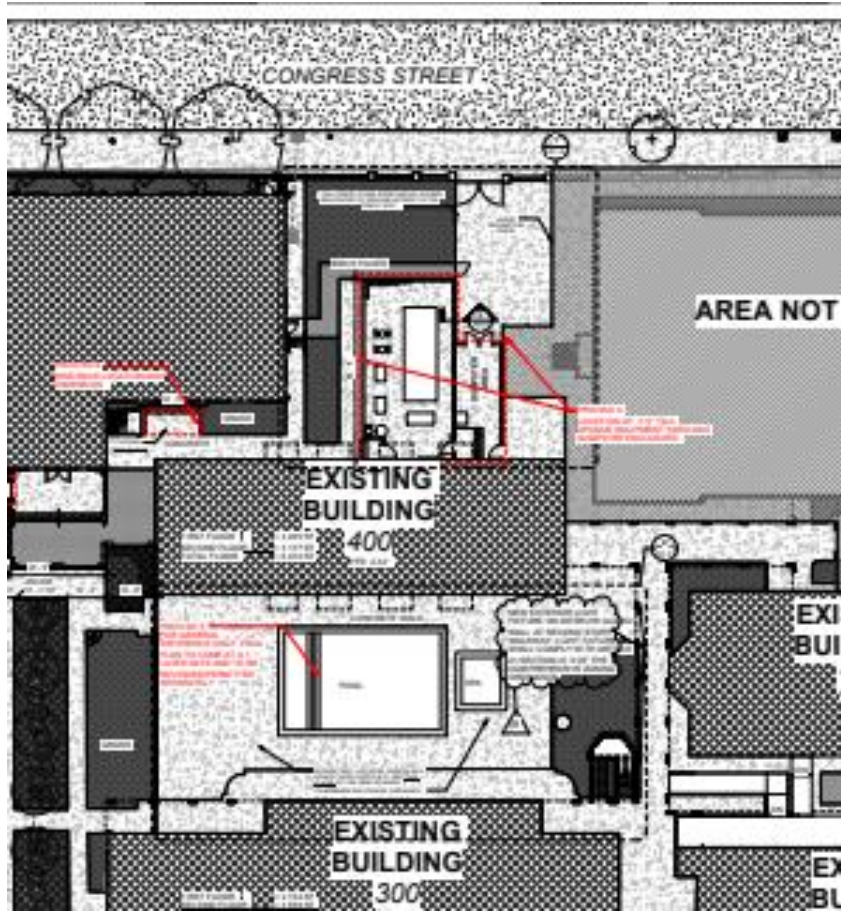
A large cooling tower was previously approved in this location, with the ARC's recommendation that landscaping be added to provide additional screening. Although the cooling tower as approved would have been highly visible, it was determined that this was the most suitable site on the property. The cooling tower as installed is in a different orientation to the street and is taller than what was approved, due to the 3'-0" elevation required for code and the addition of a sound attenuator at the top for noise reduction. These modifications make the tower more obtrusive than originally presented; however, while removal of the attenuator would help mitigate the appearance, it would also significantly increase the noise. As such, HDLC Staff recommended approval of the retention, but added that landscaping should be introduced per the original ARC recommendation. This landscaping should include multiple fast-growing trees along the fence line as well as street trees to minimize visibility from multiple angles, and the final landscaping plan should be submitted to staff for approval.

The Commission reviewed the Applicant’s testimony, Staff recommendation, and public comment. The Commission then voted to allow the retention of the modifications to the cooling tower height and orientation, with the proviso that fast-growing trees must be planted both on the property and along the street to minimize visibility of the tower. The Applicant was instructed to work with staff and a landscape architect to determine the type of tree and placement that will provide the best coverage in the least amount of time and present a proposed landscape plan for final review and approval. Permanent irrigation systems must also be provided to the trees.

HDLC Approved Plans



As-Built Drawings





Rooftop mechanical equipment should not be installed in a visually intrusive manner.

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The rhythm of the storefront was maintained in the installation of the building equipment behind the louvered window and door.



Restaurant ventilation equipment should not be mounted to the face of publicly visible elevations, nor should features like windows be removed for installation. Electric meters should not be located on the front elevation.

If modification of a storefront is necessary for the installation of equipment, care should be taken to maintain the major structural components and rhythm and patterns of the openings. If equipment ventilation is required, louvered screens should be installed and painted to be as unobtrusive as possible. It is also recommended that original doors, windows or other architectural features if required to be removed, be stored on-site for use by a future owner.

Restaurant ventilation systems typically provide exhaust for cooking equipment. Restaurant vents and exhausts should be installed in a location where they are minimally visible from the public right of way and within the building envelope. All exterior building equipment that is visible from a public way, including plumbing, irrigation systems and electrical connections, must receive a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) and comply with mechanical and building codes.

Building Equipment Review	
<p>Install unobtrusive building equipment</p> <p>S Commission review.</p> <p>C N HDLC Staff review.</p>	
<p>Modify a storefront and install building equipment – Such as energy vaults</p> <p>S C Commission review.</p> <p>N HDLC Staff review.</p>	
<p>Install visually prominent building equipment</p> <p>S C Commission appeal.</p> <p>N HDLC Staff review.</p>	