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September 12, 2014

Deb Andrews
Historic Preservation Program Manager
Portland City Hall
389 Congress Street, Fourth Floor
Portland, ME 04101

Ref: New Exterior Window with Custom Window Applied Lettering at the Blake Building

Dear Deb,

Thank you for meeting with Kevin Mahaney, Mike Zimmerman and myself on-site on July 22nd to discuss our proposed application to add a window wrapped in applied custom lettering on the east elevation of what was formerly known as the W.L. Blake & CO. building. As discussed, the proposed new window will be an aluminum Universal Window, 400 Series, to match the existing aluminum windows on the buildings east elevation. The attached building elevations show our proposed options regarding window placement and the position of the window mullions. The proposed window is to be completely wrapped with Classic Vue, a PVC vinyl wrap used to wrap vehicles and storefront windows. The wrap will be printed with the W.L. Blake Building signage so that the existing sign appears uninterrupted by the new windows. As seen on your site visit, we have completed a window mock-up of the applied lettering on the building. For demonstration purposes we have installed the applied custom lettering on four of the buildings windows to show the product's appearance in conjunction with the historic sign. Board members will notice that we have also printed a letter "s" on one window demonstrating how a printed letter would appear.

We are seeking installation of this new window opening to provide additional natural light for one of the tenant spaces. The space is currently very dark, with little or no natural light partly due to the building's smaller existing window openings. The building owner has worked to keep the existing masonry walls and hand hewed beams exposed to tell the story of the building's interesting past as a warehouse. Tenants often comment on how much they like the preservation of the historic elements of the building on the interior and exterior of the building. Unfortunately, these historic interior elements lack natural reflectivity and therefore natural light is essential for modern office use and for the health of the tenant's employees. Several recent studies, such as "Impact of Workplace Daylight Exposure on Sleep, Physical Activity and Quality of Life" by researchers at Northwestern University have highlighted the importance of natural light on the health and wellbeing of office workers. The lack of natural light in this particular tenant's space makes it very difficult to lease.



Based on the 1924 tax assessment photo (attached), it is apparent that the painted wall sign on the building's east elevation has changed in sizing and wording over the course of the past 90 years. The element of the historic sign that has remained consistent over the years is the name W.L. Blake & CO., to the extent that the building is commonly referred to as the "Blake Building." Because the other signage on the building has changed in sizing, font and even wording over the years, it should not be considered a character defining feature of the historic sign. Therefore, we feel our proposal meets Portland's Historic Preservation Ordinance Standards #1 and #2, as we are not proposing to alter the character defining features of the historic wall sign.

We have spent a great deal of time investigating alternative solutions for achieving natural light in the space and we feel that our proposed designs meet the requirements set forth in Portland's Historic Preservation Ordinance. Specifically Standards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 9 and 10. Below, we have listed options for the board's consideration so that we can work with the board to design a solution that best meets the spirit as well as the letter of the ordinance.

Window Placement Options:

Option #1 is based on aligning the new window opening with all of the other windows on the east elevation of the building. This option complies with Standard #9, which encourages new work to be compatible with the size and scale of other openings on the same façade. However, it is noted that the frame of the new window makes contact with the third row of lettering.

Option #2 specifies a smaller custom window height, which allows for the existing third row of lettering to be undisturbed. This option complies with Standard #1, which asks for every reasonable effort to be taken in causing minimal alteration to features of the structure/object or site. It also complies with Standard #9, which suggests that the window headers and general opening locations will be compatible with the existing scale and materials of the other openings on the east facade.

Window Configuration Options:

Option #1 proposes four double hung windows within a large framed opening, similar to the windows above and below. This option is based on the intent of Standard #9 that new work shall be compatible in size, scale, color and material.

Option #2 proposes a single window opening with no mullions dividing the larger panes of glass. The advantage of this option is that the applied lettering will appear to be continuously uninterrupted by mullions, sash, frames or other window components. This alternate approach complies with Standards #3 and #4. Standard #3 asks that all structures "shall be recognized as products of their own time, place and use." On this basis, we are proposing the alternate appearance to have the windows read as a later addition to the building restoration that took place in 2000, which add the other windows to this façade. Standard #4 states that "changes which may have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history and development of a structure." The treatment of the new window with custom lettering



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indicates the window's addition. The presence of the applied lettering treatment shows the newer signage technology that is now available clearly indicating the evolution of use changes that have occurred over the course of time.

We are interested in coordinating a combination site visit and workshop for the Historic Preservation Board to review our application. We strongly believe that a building tour and viewing of our custom applied lettering mock-up will help board members better visualize and understand our project.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if you need any additional information. I can be reached directly at (207)415-6638 or at kgeyer@theolympiacompanies.com. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Kim Geyer

Project Manager