

**ADDRESS: 644 SELDEN**

**APPLICATION NO: HDC2025-00012**

**HISTORIC DISTRICT: WILLIS-SELDEN LOCAL**

**APPLICANT: RYAN SMITH (PATRICK THOMPSON DESIGN)**

**OWNER: SELDEN PARTNERS LLC**

**DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 1/28/2025**

**DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 1/21/2025**

**SCOPE:ADD NEW PRIMARY ENTRY DOOR, INSTALL AWNINGS, AND REPLACE SIGN**

**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The building located at 644 Selden was erected in 1927 and was originally known as the Owasso Casket building. The Georgian Revival style building was designed by Weston & Ellington, architect. The original portion of the building is two-stories in height and is topped with a modern two-story rooftop addition. The front façade features brick cladding with limestone quoins and a centrally located primary entrance with a limestone door surround (recently painted black without HDC approval). A synthetic cornice/parapet, installed ca. 2019, tops the front wall. A ca. 1950 metal blade sign which reads “Smith Welding Supply Co.” has been affixed to the front façade’s second story. The west façade walls are painted brick. Windows are recently installed, 6/6 double-hung aluminum windows at the front façade and aluminum fixed and awning units at the side wall. The primary/front entrance is a single metal door with a sidelite while those located at the west façade are paired aluminum doors.



**644 Selden, current appearance. Photo by staff.**

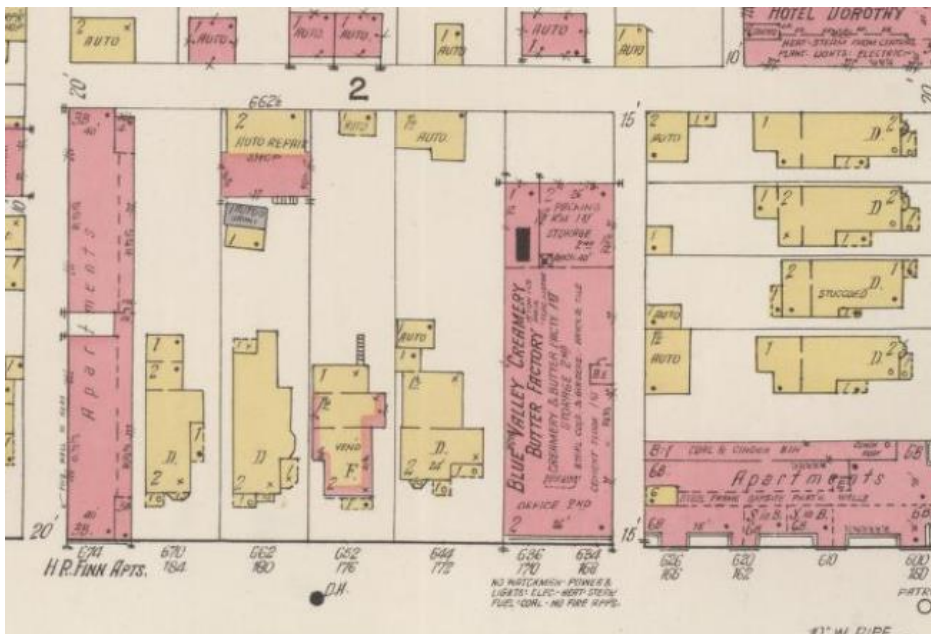
## PROPOSAL

Per the current submission, the applicant is seeking to undertake the following exterior work:

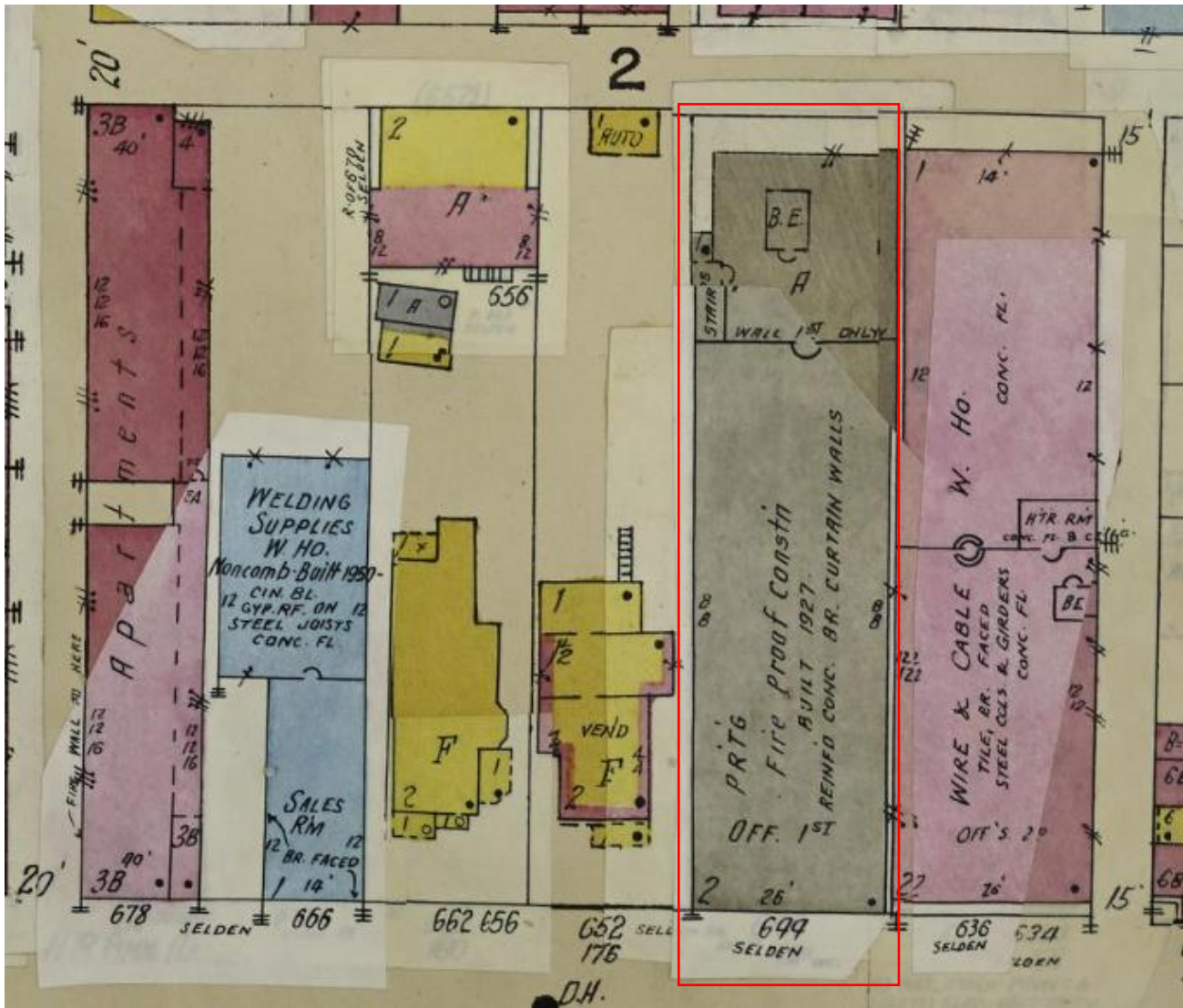
- South Façade (primary façade)
  - Remove entry canopy along the south facade (Selden Street)
  - Remove and replace front entry door and sidelight with a new wood door and sidelite
  - Add two fixed separate standing seam metal awnings, with one continuing around to the west façade above the proposed new entry doors
  - Remove 'Smith Welding' blade sign and replace with a new blade sign at building's SW corner (design not specified)
  - Strip paint from limestone entry entablature and pilasters down to original stone
  - Paint first and second floor double-hung window frames with a neutral tone
- West Façade
  - Remove faux brick frit from all first-floor doors/windows along west façade
  - Paint existing doors and frames a neutral tone
  - Repaint first floor brick (Decora White) and exposed concrete columns (MusliN)
  - Remove the southernmost pair of doors and install a set of arched top, paired wood doors. Install new tile and limestone around door within the bay.
  - Install four retractable canvas awnings
  - Remove painted signage/murals at southernmost bay
  - Paint a new second floor mural (design not specified)
  - Install new light fixtures
- Site
  - Remove fire pit from courtyard for expanded outdoor seating area

## STAFF OBSERVATIONS RESEARCH

- The Willis-Selden Local Historic District was designated as a local historic district in 2011
- 644 Selden was erected in 1927 and originally served as the Oswasso Casket Building
- Prior to the building's construction, the 600 block of Selden was dominated by single and multiple-family uses with a single building dedicated to industrial use (the Blue Butter Creamery Factory at 636/634 Selden). However, by 1955, a number of new commercial/light industrial properties appear within the neighborhood. Please see the below Sanborn Maps.



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1921. 600 Block of Selden, north side of street



Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1951. 600 Block of Selden, north side of street. 644 Selden is outlined in red. Sometime after 1951, the residential buildings at 662/656 and 652 Selden were demolished.

- Photographs of the building dating from the 1980s and 1997, in addition to Google Streetview images from the early 2000s, indicate that the area continued to support a mix of light industrial and multi-family uses until recently. In 2019, the building at 644 Selden was rehabilitated for use as a restaurant with multifamily units above, while 666 Selden was rehabilitated for use as a bar/arcade. The high gate which once enclosed the empty lots at 662/656 and 652 Selden was removed and the space was transformed into an outdoor eating space for the residents and restaurant patrons of 644 Selden and 666 Selden. The rehabilitation of the two buildings and the lots at 662/656 and 652 Selden (now addressed as 656 Selden) was undertaken as a single, \$20 million, mixed-use redevelopment project and all three parcels are owned by a single entity.



644 Selden, ca. 1980. Note painted sign at side/west elevation.



644 Selden, ca. 1997. Note that painted sign now reads "Smith Welding Supply & Equipment"



**644 Selden, appearance in 2007, prior to local designation and 2019 rehabilitation**

- The current “Smith Welding” painted mural which is proposed for replacement at the west façade was added during the 2019 rehabilitation effort (see below to note that the mural was repainted to include text which reads “RESTAURANT AND BREWPUB”). A review of the above photos show that painted murals/signage has been at the location of the proposed new mural since the 1980s. As the existing Smith Welding mural itself is not an historic character-defining feature of the property, staff supports its replacement with a new painted sign as long as the new mural does not expand outside of the boundaries of the current sign/does not encroach onto brick which is currently unpainted



**Staff photo, showing current painted mural which is proposed for replacement. This mural was added in 2019**

- The application proposes to paint the brick that is currently painted at the west wall. Staff supports this item as it will not result in the painting of unpainted brick and the proposed colors are compatible with the building’s historic character.
- The windows at the front and side facades which are proposed for repainting were added during the 2019 building rehabilitation, so they are not of historic age. The colors proposed for this scope item are compatible with the building’s historic appearance. Staff supports this work item
- Please note that the black paint which is currently visible at the front door limestone entry surround was added without HDC approval. It is staff’s opinion that the paint is inappropriate and should be removed. The current application proposes to strip the paint from the limestone. Staff supports this proposal as long as the paint is removed with the gentlest means possible so that this significant character-defining element is not damaged in the process. The applicant does not specify how the paint will be removed.
- The side and front doors proposed for replacement were added during the 2019 rehabilitation effort. The proposed new wood front door and sidelite and the new paired wood doors proposed

for the side are compatible with the building's historic character. Staff therefore supports this work item.

#### Install Tile and Limestone Trim at West Façade Southernmost Doorway

- As noted above, the applicant is seeking to replace the existing southernmost non-historic aluminum entry doors at the west façade with a set of paired arched wood doors. Please see the below. As these doors will serve as the building's new primary entry, the applicant is seeking to install a new tile finish and limestone trim within the bay. While staff supports the installation of the new wood doors to replace the existing non-historic aluminum doors at this location, it is staff's opinion that the proposed tile finish does not relate to the existing exterior materials. Also, the proposed tile application is uncommon with the district. Please see the below relevant Elements of Design which outline the following:
  - (7) *Relationship of materials*. A majority of buildings are faced with brick and feature stone or cast stone trim.
  - (8) *Relationship of textures*. On a majority of buildings within the district, the major textural effect is that of brick with mortar joints juxtaposed with cast stone or limestone trim. Patterned brickwork is used to create subtle detail on commercial and apartment buildings, such as spandrels and rectangular panels, and more pronounced textural interest where it exists on the upper stories of buildings, such as at 461 West Alexandrine Avenue, and in an arcaded cornice on the building at 711 West Alexandrine Avenue. Where they exist, detailed wooden vergeboards, gables, brackets, and dormers create considerable textural interest on all single-family residential buildings in the district. Rough-cut stone with thick mortar joints creates considerable textural interest on buildings where it exists, while other buildings feature smooth stone with thin mortar joints. In general, asphalt-shingle roofs do not contribute to textural interest.

Per the above, most buildings within the district, including 644 Selden, are faced with brick with stone or cast stone trim. Also, per Element # 8, within the district textural interest is typically achieved via the use of patterned brickwork or the juxtaposition of brick cladding with mortar joints or stone trim. It is therefore staff's opinion that the proposed tile cladding is not compatible with the building's historic character. Staff therefore recommends that this scope item be denied.



**Location of proposed new primary entry doors and tile cladding. Photo taken by staff showing current conditions**



Location of proposed new primary entry doors and tile cladding. Google Streetview image dating from 2007. This opening was widened to accommodate the current set of paired aluminum doors during the 2019 rehabilitation



Proposed new wood entry doors. New tile and limestone trim will be installed within this bay

Install new Metal Awnings at Front and Side Facades

- The application proposes to install new awnings at the front and side of the building according to the following:

- Install a fixed, standing seam metal awning to the east of the entrance at the front elevation
- Install a fixed, standing seam metal awning to the west of the entrance at the front elevation which wraps around the west side of the building to extend over the new paired wood doors/primary entrance
- Install canvas awnings on the west façade over the four northernmost entry doors



Proposed new awnings, front façade. Source, applicant



Proposed new awnings, side façade. Source, applicant

- Please note that National Park Service (NPS) guidance regarding the installation of new awnings where none previously existed note the following [Preservation Briefs Number 44: The Use of Awnings on Historic Buildings: Repair, Replacement, and New Design](#)

“...it may still be possible to add an awning to a historic building without altering distinctive features, damaging historic fabric or changing the building’s historic character. **A new awning should be compatible with the features and characteristics of a historic building, as well as with neighboring buildings, or the historic district, if applicable.** Historic photographs of similar neighboring buildings with awnings, can also be helpful in choosing an appropriate installation. When selecting and installing a new awning, a number of other factors should be considered: shape, scale, massing, placement...and color.”

- **Shape.** Traditionally, both residential and commercial awnings were triangular in section, usually with a valance hanging down the outside edge.
- **Scale, massing and placement.** The design of a particular commercial building influenced the placement of its awnings... On both commercial and residential



*buildings, awnings were only wide enough to cover the window openings that they sheltered; a single awning rarely covered two or more bays. On storefronts, they were not higher up on the building facade than was necessary to shade the entrance and display window. Thus, it is important when installing new awnings on historic buildings to ensure that the covering not obscure the building's distinctive architectural features. Also, new awning hardware should not be installed in a way that damages historic materials... Finally, awning placement, size, and shape must be compatible with the historic character of the building*

- **Material.** *Historically, awnings were covered with canvas that was either solid in color or painted with stripes. During the second half of the twentieth century canvas fell out of favor and was superseded by vinyl and other synthetic textiles. For various reasons -particularly its reflectivity and texture-vinyl is generally an unsuitable material for awnings on historic buildings... Weather-resistant acrylic fabrics such as solution-dyed acrylic and acrylic-coated polyester-cotton approximate the historic look of canvas coverings, yet afford a new level of durability, color-fastness, and ease of use. Quality poly-cotton coverings may be more appropriate in some cases ...*
- **Color.** *As in the past, variety in awning color is an appropriate characteristic when reintroducing awnings in historic districts. Since the 19th century, awnings have featured a range of different stripe patterns and an extensive color palette*
- The district's Elements of Design do not speak to the presence of awnings within the district. However, as stated above, they do note that masonry prevails within the district.
- While the canvas awnings proposed for the west elevation appear to conform to the NPS guidance on the installation of new awnings, it is staff's opinion that the metal awnings do not conform to the guidance and therefore do not meet the SOI Standards for the following reasons:
  - **Massing and Placement** – Contrary to the NPS guidance, the metal awning which is proposed to wrap the front and side facades extends past the window openings that they shelter and obscure the distinctive architectural features per the below image



**This awning extends from the front façade around the corner, well past the front façade windows to obscure the front façade's quoins and cover a portion of the side façade which does not include fenestration. The awning at this location *should not* wrap around the corner in staff's opinion. Rather, the front three windows and the side doorway in this rendering should be sheltered by a single awning which does not extend past/cover the quoins**

- **Material.** Contrary to NPS guidance, the proposed metal awnings would present a reflectivity and texture which is not in line with the appearance of historic canvas awnings. Also, it is staff's opinion that the metal awnings' industrial appearance is not compatible with the elegant Georgian Revival style detailing displayed at the building's primary façade. Finally, awnings of this material are not commonly found within the district.

- For the above-listed reasons, it is staff’s opinion that the proposed metal awnings are not compatible with the features and characteristics of the historic building, neighboring buildings, and/ or the historic district and therefore do not meet the SOI Standards.
- The applicant is seeking to replace the existing neon blade sign at the building’s SW corner which reads “Smith and Company” with a new sign (design not specified)
- Staff notes that the sign was originally located at 666 Selden, the former Smith Welding Shop building. The sign likely dates from 1950, when the Smith Welding Shop Building/666 Selden was erected. It was removed from its original location in 2019 when 666 Selden was rehabilitated for use as a bar/arcade. At that time the sign was restored and installed at its current location/644 Selden and served as the business sign for the Smith and Co. restaurant.
- Note that both buildings, as well as the vacant lot in between, were rehabilitated under a single COA/application submitted to the HDC in 2016, under the ownership of a single developer. The properties remain under the ownership of the same single developer (see the below map).



644,656, and 666 Selden. All 3 parcels are owned by the same developer. All parcels were rehabilitated under a single COA/application submitted to the HDC in 2016. Google Streetview, 2023



Appearance of 644-666 Selden in 2016, prior to the redevelopment of the parcels and the sign’s removal from 666 Selden/installation at 644 Selden. Google Streetview, 2016



Current appearance as installed at 644 Selden. Photo by staff, 1/28/2025



Current appearance as installed at 644 Selden. Photo by staff, 1/28/2025

- The proposal to remove the sign from 666 Selden’s front façade was submitted to the HDC in 2019 because of the change of the business name from Smith’s Welding. Per email correspondence dating from January 2019 regarding it’s installation at 644 Selden, the applicant noted that “...our client is planning to change the name of the restaurant...to "Smith & Co.", because of the availability of the sign and its historical value. Both 644 and 666 buildings used to belong to the Smith Welding Supply Company, so in theory the sign will

not leave the site. In addition, our client is willing to professionally paint/change the sign's "666" to "644." See the below image, excerpted from the 2019 application.

Smith & Co.

CHANGES TO BLADE SIGN



FIG. 9: ORIGINAL "SMITH WELDING SUPPLY CO." BLADE SIGN

- Note that HDC staff reviewed the NPS brief on the Preservation of Historic Signs and [Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs](#) and, as a result, supported the 2019 proposal to remove the sign from 644 Selden's front façade for the following reason:
  - The brief notes that the NPS recognizes the temporary nature of signage in that they must be changed as tenants move in and out of buildings.
  - In re: to historic signage, the NPS guidance speaks to the retention of historic signs if they are associated with significant people, events, or businesses; represent a local landmark; remains as an outstanding example of a signmaker's art or are integral to the building's design or physical fabric.

Staff therefore opined that the sign proposal for removal from 666 Selden did not fall into any of the aforementioned categories of significance despite its historic age. It was therefore staff's opinion at the time that it was appropriate for the new tenants at 666 Selden to remove the sign. However, staff did not support the sign's installation at 644 Selden because the building displays a distinctly Classical, symmetrical adorned façade and the installation of the large industrial sign at 644 Selden was not compatible to the building's historic character.

- Despite staff's recommendation, the Commission approved the application at the February 2019 regular meeting.
- Staff has undertaken research for the **current application** and notes that historic age, neon signage has grown rare within the historic district. Six years have passed since the sign's restoration and installation at 644 Selden and the rehabilitation of the adjacent properties as a courtyard/community space and mixed-use commercial venue. Within this period, the sign has emerged as a landmark in its own right, apart from 644 Selden/the building to which it is attached, and is recognized as a focal point in the neighborhood. Staff also acknowledges that such neon signage is characteristic of a specific period within the district's history and does represent what the NPS guidance defines as a "great twentieth-century contribution to the signmaker's art." It is therefore staff's opinion that the sign is a distinctive character defining feature of the neighborhood itself/the immediate environs of 644 Selden. NPS

guidance recommends the significant historic signs associated with former enterprises in the building be reused if possible by one of the following means:

- **Keeping the historic sign-unaltered.** This is often possible even when the new business is of a different nature from the old. Preferably, the old sign can be left in its historic location; sometimes, however, it may be necessary to move the sign elsewhere on the building to accommodate a new one.
- **Relocating the sign to the interior**, such as in the lobby or above the bar in a restaurant. This option is less preferable than keeping the sign outside the building, but it does preserve the sign, and leaves open the possibility of putting it back in its historic location
- **Modifying the sign for use with the new business.** This may not be possible without destroying essential features, but in some cases it can be done by changing details only. In other respects, the sign may be perfectly serviceable
- **If none of these options is possible, the sign could be donated to a local museum, preservation organization or other group.**

Staff therefore recommends against the approval of the current proposal to remove the sign further recommends that it either be retained at this current location or reinstalled at 666 Selden, which is its original location.

## ISSUES

- With respect to the proposed tile and limestone application at the west façade southernmost doorway bay:
  - The proposed tile cladding does not relate to the building's existing exterior materials. Also, the proposed tile application is uncommon with the district. The work is therefore not compatible with the building's and/or the district's historic character
- With respect to the proposed metal awnings:
  - The metal awning which is proposed to wrap the front and side facades extends past the window openings that they shelter and obscure the distinctive architectural features
  - The proposed metal awnings would present a reflectivity and texture which is not in line with the appearance of historic canvas awnings.
  - The metal awnings' industrial appearance is not compatible with the elegant Georgian Revival style detailing displayed at the building's primary façade.
  - Awnings of this material are not commonly found within the district.
- With respect to the replacement of the existing neon blade sign
  - The historic neon sign has achieved the status of a landmark in its own right, apart from 644 Selden/the building to which it is attached, and is recognized as a focal point in the neighborhood.
  - The historic neon sign is characteristic of a specific period within the district's history and remains s a good representative of a "great twentieth-century contribution to the signmaker's art."
  - The historic neon sign is one of the few remaining examples of its type within the historic district
  - The sign therefore is a distinctive character defining feature of the neighborhood itself/the immediate environs of 644 Selden

## RECOMMENDATION(S)

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

### **Recommendation 1 of 2, Denial: Install Tile and Limestone Trim at West Façade Southernmost Doorway Bay; Install new Metal Awnings at Front and Side Facades; and Replace Existing Neon Blade Sign with New Sign**

Staff recommends that the proposed tile and limestone application, metal awnings, and neon blade sign replacement will be inappropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standards #:

*2). The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

*4). Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.*

*5). Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved*

*9). New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.*

And the Willis Selden Historic District's Elements of Design, specifically Elements # 7). *Relationship of materials* and 8). *Relationship of textures*.

For the following reasons;

- With respect to the proposed tile and limestone application at the west façade southernmost doorway bay:
  - The proposed tile cladding does not relate to the building's existing exterior materials. Also, the proposed tile application is uncommon with the district. The work is therefore not compatible with the building's and/or the district's historic character
- With respect to the proposed metal awnings:
  - The metal awning which is proposed to wrap the front and side facades extends past the window openings that they shelter and obscure the distinctive architectural features
  - The proposed metal awnings would present a reflectivity and texture which is not in line with the appearance of historic canvas awnings.
  - The metal awnings' industrial appearance is not compatible with the elegant Georgian Revival style detailing displayed at the building's primary façade.
  - Awnings of this material are not commonly found within the district.
- With respect to the replacement of the existing neon blade sign

- The historic neon sign has achieved the status of a landmark in its own right, apart from 644 Selden/the building to which it is attached, and is recognized as a focal point in the neighborhood.
- The historic neon sign is characteristic of a specific period within the district's history and remains s a good representative of a “great twentieth-century contribution to the signmaker's art.”
- The historic neon sign is one of the few remaining examples of its type within the historic district
- The sign therefore is a distinctive character defining feature of the neighborhood itself/the immediate environs of 644 Selden

**Recommendation 2 of 2, Certificate of Appropriateness: Remaining work items**

Staff recommends that the remaining work will be appropriate according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the Willis Selden Historic District's Elements of Design, with the conditions that:

- The mural proposed for installation at the west side façade shall does not expand outside of the boundaries of the current painted mural/shall not encroach onto brick which is currently unpainted
- The unapproved black paint shall be removed from the limestone door surround at the building's front/south elevation. The applicant shall use the gentlest means possible to avoid damaging the limestone during the removal of the paint.