DATE: August 2, 2017
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Justin Greving, Preservation Planner, 415-575-9169
REVIEWED BY: Timothy Frye, Historic Preservation Officer, 415-575-6822
RE: Façade Retention Policy Discussion Part 3

On December 8, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission discussed the issue of façade retention and explored a range of projects that featured some form of façade retention. At the end of the discussion, commissioners requested a follow-up presentation focusing on San Francisco-based façade retention projects with additional information about the process of design review and approval for these projects. On April 6, 2016, planning staff followed up with a brief presentation on various examples of façade retention projects in San Francisco with some additional context about the process of approvals for these projects. Commissioners requested that planning staff follow up with the presentation of a draft policy memo on the topic of façade retention.

The purpose of this discussion is to review and comment on the draft language of the policy memo on façade retention presented by planning staff. A draft of the memo will be presented to the HPC during the hearing. Packets for the previous HPC hearings on façade retention have been provided to the commissioners to give some background for this discussion.

Attachment A: December 2, 2015 Façade Retention Policy Discussion memo
Attachment B: April 6, 2016 Façade Retention Policy Discussion memo
DATE: December 2, 2015  
TO: Historic Preservation Commission  
FROM: Justin Greving, Preservation Planner, 415-575-9169  
REVIEWED BY: Timothy Frye, Preservation Coordinator, 415-575-6822  
RE: Façade Retention Policy Discussion

On March 18, 2015 The Historic Preservation Commission adopted Resolution No. 0746 to clarify expectations regarding the preparation of preservation alternatives in Environmental Impact Reports. This resolution specifically omitted language about façade retention to allow for a discussion of the topic from a historic preservation and urban design perspective at a later date. Planning Staff will provide a brief presentation on various examples of façade retention projects within the United States.

As background material on the subject of façade retention, Planning Staff have provided an excerpt from, Architecture of Compromise: A History and Analysis of Facadism in Washington, D.C., a thesis prepared by Kerensa Sanford Wood in 2012 in partial fulfilment of a M.S. in Historic Preservation at Columbia University. This excerpt provides a brief history of façade retention in the United States, explores recent scholarship on the subject, and explains some definitions of the practice. The purpose of this background reading material is to examine the definition of façade retention and understand some of the more recent scholarship and architectural criticism on the subject. The following questions regarding façade retention as a preservation practice may be useful starting points for discussion among commissioners: When is it acceptable to preserve part of a building in one instance and the “whole” building in another? Are there instances when façade retention may be an acceptable practice from an urban design perspective? Can the issue of façade retention be addressed in the form of guidelines or written policy, or must it be dealt with on a case by case basis?

Planning Staff have also provided a photo attachment of buildings that feature varying forms of façade retention. Commissioners are invited to look at the projects and decide which ones, if any, are appropriate urban design or preservation alternatives.
ARCHITECTURE OF COMPROMISE:
A HISTORY AND ANALYSIS
OF FACADISM IN WASHINGTON, D.C.

Kerensa Sanford Wood

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree
Master of Science in Historic Preservation
Master of Science in Urban Planning

Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation

Columbia University

May 2012
LITERATURE REVIEW

There are few texts dedicated to the history and analysis of facadism. A thorough literature review was conducted on the theory, typology, and history of facadism. The three major texts on facadism were written by European conservators, architects, preservationists, and theorists. They include: Facadism by Jonathan Richard (1994), The Construction of New Buildings Behind Historic Facades by David Highfield (1991), and conference proceedings from the ICOMOS conference on Facadisme et Identite Urbaine (1999). British conservator John Earl’s text Building Conservation Philosophy (2003) was also consulted. The European notion of preservation and heritage differs from that in the United States, as do histories and policies. Nonetheless, the following literature review provides a platform from which the parameters of what constitutes facadism can be defined; a list of motivations can be compiled; and series of themes and issues can be extracted.

The following texts by US preservationists were also reviewed: The Future of the Past by Steven W. Semes (2009), “Report on the State of Preservation in Washington, D.C.” by Donovan Rypkema (2003). The discussion on facadism in American texts is predominantly relegated to a paragraph in texts on preservation theory and history. Lastly, in order to develop a snapshot into the history of the phenomenon, a number of articles from publications nationwide were reviewed.


Facadism, terminology

In opening a conference on the subject of facadism and urban identity, Jean-Louis Luxen (ICOMOS Secretary General in 1999) said that facadism is a difficult subject to broach as, “there seems to be no consensus between us on the subject, [thus] how can we reach a clear viewpoint when we have to confront the most varied situations and consider each particular case within its context.”

Facadism is defined in myriad ways by architects, architectural historians, preservationists, public historians, and the public. The analysis of its evolution, desirability, necessity, and impacts are largely opinion, with few to no objective studies.

British scholar Jonathan Richard literally “wrote the book” on facadism. His Facadism tracks the history of the phenomenon in a number of small to mid-size cities in England. In the introduction, Richard states that there is no universal definition of facadism, and further, there is not even a universal term for the typology that it encompasses. He says that some architects argue that facadism occurs when an emphasis is placed on the design of the façade, whereas façade retention is the preserved façade with new constructed behind. He concludes that both are facadism.

Richard includes the following activities in his study of facadism: preservation of facades of historic buildings; construction of new buildings behind historic buildings; the reconstruction of demolished/destroyed historic buildings; and the imitation of generic historic facades.

David Highfield, who has conducted and written at length about the phenomenon in England from a technical perspective, calls this type of project, “façade retention” not “facadism.” In his book, he lists a “scale of [seven] redevelopment options,” which begins at full retention of the existing structure and ends with demolition and replacement. He considers three of the seven options a façade retention. His “facadism” typologies are as follows: retention of all facades and demolition of an interior; retention of two facades and demolition of the interior; and the retention of one façade.

John Earl dedicates five pages in his text on conservation theory to what he calls “skin-deep preservation.” He does not define this term, but instead describes a number of types: in one instance of skin-deep preservation, one-tenth of a building is preserved in front of a modern addition and becomes a “souvenir”; in other instance, the front room of a historic building is preserved; and in yet another, the entire building is preserved and incorporated into a larger structure, “its fate being inextricably tied to that of a larger alien...structure.” He is the only author to discuss the retention of more than just the façade.

The text Facadisme et Identite Urbaine (2001) is a collection of essays on facadism in Europe written by scholars who presented at colloquium in Paris held by ICOMOS. The thirty-six essays provide a glimpse into the various types of interventions defined almost uniquely by each author. In the introduction, however, the editor (Francois Barre, Director of the French Department of Architecture and Heritage) defines facadism as, essentially, the preservation of only the façade, and the destruction of the interior in order to provide modern space. Barre, in a similar fashion to Richard, includes the following types of intervention as facadism: the preservation of the original façade, two, a faithful reconstruction, and three, the dismantling and reconstruction of a façade elsewhere from its original location. Barre adds the specification of moving a façade as facadism.

Causes

Barre asks, what are the causes of facadism and is it unavoidable? He states that there were and are a number of general motivations: cultural (the value of the time), economic (development pressures), legislative (preservation laws and zoning), and technical (functionality). Richard identifies a number of more nuanced reasons for facadism: retention of streetscape; functional obsolescence; and downtown revitalization. Highfield identifies a number of reasons why facadism is chosen as a preservation approach. While he lists policies in England that do not pertain to the US, the following motivations do apply: demand for prestigious buildings with modern amenities; need for additional space by increasing additional floors; to preserve the historic value of the façade and/or streetscape; when the interior is dilapidated; when interior has been unrecognizably altered; in order to comply with building and fire codes; nonfunctional configuration of current internal layout; and in general, the economic viability.

Compromise

Highfield writes about what he calls the ‘realist’s view’ and the ‘purist’s view’ on facadism. Purists believe, he says, that, “if a building is worth retaining, it should be retained in its entirety, and that using parts of a shell to conceal new accommodation is an extremely false solution,” while realists argue that it is a, “compromise [that] is necessary...some destruction and loss is inevitable if the needs of both the developer and the conservationist are to be satisfied.” Highfield says that in

11 Facadisme et Identite Urbaine, pg 18.
12 Ibid., p.16-22.
14 Ibid., Chapter 3.
most cases, while conservationists will most often advocate for the preservation of the whole building, that they understand that façade retention may be a more “practicable and realistic solution.”

Earl asks in his text if façade preservation is ever acceptable, and answers that, “we should never say never” and cites examples of where the meticulous preservation of the elevation of a building was better than losing it altogether.\(^{15}\) He echoes similar sentiments that façade preservation is not preservation, but instead the “continuity in the townscape.”\(^{16}\)

Jean-Louis Luxen raises a poignant paradox: preserving the interior of a building is important in telling the history of a building; however, emphasis has been continually placed on the exterior, and the context of a building in a greater urban space.\(^{17}\) Barre echoes his concerns: “we condemn facadism but only have laws that protect exterior.” He quickly asks, should we protect all interiors? No, is the answer, in general. He says, though “in either case, construction or conservation, the worst solution would be a reduction of architecture to the facades alone; to an existent that would consist of mere appearance, public space that becomes public image.”\(^{18}\)

**US Texts**

Although there has not been a text produced on facadism in the United States, the issue has been discussed through a variety of means. Roberta Gratz wrote in her book Cities Back from the Edge, “…preservation has to be about more than bricks and mortar. Otherwise old buildings become only a façade, a costume, a cover-up for the erosion of citiness and historical continuity and a cover-up for the sameness engulfing the city and countryside alike.”\(^{19}\) While Gratz does not explicitly use the term “facadism” or “facedomy” or “façade preservation” she is observing a trend that compromises the historic integrity of cities.

Preservation economist Donovan Rypkema has written extensively about facadism, predominantly in the DC area. He writes in his “2003 Report on Preservation in DC” that “false history” is one of the major preservation issues in DC. He says façade projects (he uses the term “facedomy”) are projects in which the historic façade of a building (in some cases just four inches of brick) is preserved in front of new construction, or, “Halloween preservation…keeping the mask and throwing away the building.”\(^{20}\) He says that motivations for preserving the façade are to achieve a “sense of

16 Ibid., pg. 89.
18 Ibid., pg. 266.
place” that “can rarely be created over night.” He admits that if “properly done” that a façade project can reinforce the urban form, the historic streetscape, and that even, it could be utilized “under the most limited of circumstances should be used as an urban design tool.” However, he makes blatantly clear that this is not a form of preservation, but a “Disneyesque imitation of historic preservation – historic preservation as movie set.”

In the book The Future of the Past (2009), which focuses on how historic resources are manipulated, Steven Semes discusses facadism on one page of his 200+ page book. He says that there was a wave of “demolition of the interiors of protected buildings, leaving only their facades and incorporating them into new, larger, and more economically profitable buildings.” He calls these instances “travesties” that reduce the façade of historic buildings to “ornamental frontispieces, masks, or bases to massive new structures completely different in composition, materials, style, and scale.” While he understands that facadism might be a necessary compromise in some situations, it is ultimately, “a betrayal of the fundamental aims of the preservation movement.” He makes an interesting and worthy point that needs to be considered, and dealt with, within the fundamental theory of preservation: he says that facadism is a symbol of the “narrow focus” that preservationists take in regards to the historic structure…that a premium is placed on the material fabric, with a “disregard of a building’s formal design, structural integrity, use, interior space, or urban context.” He, unlike the European academics, concludes his brief discussion by saying that in some cases, “preservationists must recognize that the meaningful life of a designated building has passed and open up the site for reasonable new development. But by insisting on the routine retention of historic facades in visually lobotimized form, preservationists have served the interest of neither historic buildings nor quality new ones. This is not preservation, but a crude form of architectural taxidermy.”

While there are varying definitions of the term, and varying names for the concept, the salient idea is in a façade project, the facade of the building no longer has an architectural, functional, and historical relationship with the rest of the building. This begs the question: what is a building, and what gives it is significance? Why is it deemed acceptable to preserve part of a building in one case, and the whole building in another? This type of inconsistency weakens the legitimacy of the historic preservation ordinance, and the historic preservation efforts of a city.

21 Ibid.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Ibid., pg. 239.
History of Facadism

Numerous articles and books cite the earliest examples of facadism in ancient Rome recorded by Plutarch through Alberti’s Sant’Andrea (1400s) in Rome.27 These are not examples of the tension between developers, preservationists, and government. Instead, the following is a brief timeline of modern facadism in Europe and the United States.

Modern facadism in Europe emerged out of a series of conditions: destruction of the built environment during World War II, development pressures in built-up areas protected by heritage legislation, and tourism development. Early proliferation of this project typology is seen in Germany, France, Belgium, and Great Britain. In Facadisme et Identite Urbaine, Barre breaks down the waves of facadism in Europe. In the 17th and 18th centuries, facadism was employed to beautify cities; postwar, it was used to preserve what little historic material remained during rebuilding efforts; and in response to speculative development pressures later in the 20th century.28

British author John Pendlebury attributes facadism to the promotion of mid-century downtown redevelopment that resulted in the demolition of swaths of the existing built environment. He writes that this had stopped in the 1980s with the emergence of an urgent need to preserve what remained after these government-driven efforts. The preservation movement was riddled with conflict: government embraced market principles that would lead to the demolition of buildings so that the sites could be reconfigured for their highest and best use. However, the government also established preservation policies that were in direct conflict with the market. Facadism was a result of this contradiction. Neither the developers, preservationists, nor government officials were content with this compromise.29

While there are several facadism projects in the country that predate the 1980s, this is when facadism picks up pace in the United States. The US was not at the whims of Haussmann's urbanism, nor did it have to rebuild its cities after World War II. What it does have in common with the waves of facadism in Europe, though, is the hot real estate market in the 1980s.

In a 1985 The Washington Post article, architectural critic Benjamin Forgey described preservation and development in Washington, D.C. He called facadism the “city’s second-favorite architectural game, Save a Façade,” and stated that architects, developers, and preservationists disliked this type of compromise. Forgey used terms such as “theatrical” and “billboard” to the past. More importantly, he highlighted the crux of the issue: although this particular historic property

28 Facadisme et Identite Urbaine, pg 18.
was indeed historic, it did not receive landmark status until after the site was acquired for redevelop-
ment. There was no funding to preserve the property, so, the only alternatives were demolition or
preserving the façade. The architect working on the project said that preservation was “impossible”
because of the high density zoning envelope.30

Forgey’s article highlighted the different approaches that architects take to this type of
project. Some architects have preserved parts of the building and have built additions and/or
reconstructions in the exact style of the original, while others use a more contrasting approach so
as to highlight the differences between the old and the new. Already, in the mid-1980s, journalists
were asking: “How many building-billboards do we want?”31 A few years later, Forgery reflected on
facadism in another article in The Washington Post. He said that it was “born of necessity” in the
1970s as the zoning in downtown allowed for much larger buildings than existed there at the time.
He changed his opinion on the typology, saying that there a number of examples in DC that benefit
the architecture of the city, calling them “wonderful deception[s]” as architects, developers, and
preservationists have “become better at it.”32

New York architectural critic Paul Goldberger discussed the emerging phenomenon in the
1980s as it began to appear, briefly, in New York City in his article ““Facadism’ on the Rise: Pres-
ervation or Illusion” in The New York Times.33 Goldberger described facadism in Washington, DC
as serving, “as a frequent means of detente between preservationists and developers.” He agrees
that facadism may be a quick and easy solution to the problem of preserving a historic property in
a neighborhood zoned for a higher and best use, for example. However, “to save only the facade
of a building is not to save its essence; it is to turn the building into a stage set, into a cute toy
intended to make a skyscraper more palatable. And the street becomes a kind of Disneyland of
false fronts.” Goldberger described a situation in which developers who had purchased a historic
building had planned to demolish it to build a skyscraper. The city objected to this and designated
the building a landmark. The architect working with the developer created a solution: maintain the
façade and build a skyscraper at the rear. The Landmarks Preservation Commission approved the
design in order to “appear flexible.” However, preservation groups declared that this was a breach
of the spirit of the landmarks law. Goldberger said that, ultimately, these historic structures are
buildings, not “sentimental objects” and, “to turn an older building of distinction into a fancy front
door for a new tower is to respect neither the integrity of the new or that of the old, but to render

31 Forgery, Benjamin. “Our Town, Revisited; For the Architects’ Convention, a Look Back to 1974” The Washington
Post. 18 May 1991: G.01.
32 Forgery, Benjamin. “History’s Fabulous Face Lift; Cast-Iron Facade Welcomes Visitors To Bygone Baltimore” The
both buildings, in a sense, ridiculous.”

Christopher Swope, editor of Governing, discussed the emergence of facadism in Philadelphia in the 1970s. These projects were controversial and he has found that, “usual politics of development and historic preservation [were] turned on their head.” In these cases, developers have argued for preserving the façade, while preservationists disapproved of the compromise, “afraid of setting many precedents with these hybrids.” In some cases, preservationists argued for demolition in the face of the facadism alternative. There has been a resurgence of facadism in Philadelphia as demand for housing increases in Center City. Swope has witnessed the controversial nature of these projects even within the preservation community: some see it as a “suitable compromise between growth and preservation” while others disagree. Mary Oehrlein, a preservation architect in DC, states that this type of project is “sometimes the only way to balance the developer’s right to build a large amount of usable space with the desire to keep old appearance at street level.” It is clear that even after over three decades of this type of project, even professionals within the field do not have a clear answer as embrace or advocate against facadism.

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34 Swope, Christopher. “Nightmare on Pine St.? Melding historic facades with modern buildings can yield odd results,” Governing, 2005 Vol. 17 (8).


36 Swope, Christopher. “Nightmare on Pine St.?”

37 Goldstein, Marilyn. “Some Call it Facadism” Newsday, 16 Nov 1985: 03.


7. 1634-1690 Pine Street, San Francisco, CA. Constructed in the early-twentieth century, currently under construction. (Image Credit: Mike Buhler, San Francisco Heritage)


DATE: April 6, 2016
TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: Justin Greving, Preservation Planner, 415-575-9169
REVIEWED BY: Timothy Frye, Historic Preservation Officer, 415-575-6822
RE: Façade Retention Policy Discussion Part 2

On December 8, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission discussed the issue of façade retention and explored a range of projects that featured some form of façade retention. At the end of the discussion, commissioners requested a follow-up presentation focusing on San Francisco-based façade retention projects with additional information about the process of design review and approval for these projects. Planning Staff will provide a brief presentation on various examples of façade retention projects in San Francisco before opening the conversation up to commissioners to discuss the specific projects in more detail.

To aid in the discussion, Planning Staff have provided drawings and photos of several of the projects scheduled for discussion.

Attachment A: Project photos (11 pages)

Attachment B: Project drawings (with corresponding page numbers)

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<td>12. 15 Baker Street</td>
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1. 1 Sansome, photo taken pre-alteration (Image credit: SF Planning Department files)

3. 1634 Pine Street, under construction (Image credit: Google street view)

4. 1634 Pine Street, under construction (Image credit: SF Planning Department)
5. 1314 Polk Street, photo taken ca. 1980s (Image credit: SF Planning Department files)

6. 1314 Polk Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning Department)
7. 690 Market Street, before removal of 1960s cladding (Image credit: SF City Guides)

8. 690 Market Street, current photo (Image Credit: SF Planning Department)
9. 736 Mission Street, before alterations (Image credit: SF Planning Department files)

10. 736 Mission Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning Department)
11. 1800 Market Street, before renovation (Image credit: http://www.friendsof1800.org/HISTORY/grand/fallon99_600.jpg)

13. 178 Townsend Street, before alterations (Image credit: Google street view)

14. 178 Townsend Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning department)
Façade Retention Policy Discussion Part 2
Historic Preservation Commission
April 6, 2015
Attachment A: Project photos

15. 421 Arguello Street, under construction (Image credit: Google street view)

16. 421 Arguello Street, current photo (Image credit: Google street view)
17. 1335 Larkin Street, current photo (Image credit: SF Planning Department)

18. 469 Eddy Street, current photo (Image credit: google street view)
19. 39 Chattanooga Street, current photo (Image credit: Bing maps)
20. 15 Baker Street, before alterations (Image credit: Google street view)

21. 15 Baker Street, current photo (Image credit: Google street view)
Attachment B: Project drawings (with corresponding page numbers)

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Figure 33: Proposed One Sansome Project

Source: William L. Pereira Associates
Planners - Architects - Engineers

Facade Preservation

1908

1923

1981
Proposed

Proposed Facade

Present Facade

Removal and Relocation

Proposed Preservation
figure 7  PROPOSED ONE SANSOME PROJECT

SANSOME STREET ELEVATION

Sansome Street Elevation

Source: WILLIAM L. PEREIRA ASSOCIATES
PLANNERS/ARCHITECTS/ENGINEERS

237
Keynotes (See A3.7 for Materials Pallete)

A1 Precast - color 01
A2 Precast - color 02
A3 Precast - color 03
A4 Porcelain at return/oblique face
A5 Sealed structural concrete with climbing plants
B1 Vision glazing
B2 Spandrel glazing
B3 Laminated glass guardrail
C1 Metal panel - color 03
C2 Metal panel - white
C3 Louver
C4 Overhead coiling door
D1 Fiber cement panel cladding
E1 (E) facade to remain
SOURCE: The Office of Charles F. Bisazza, Turmstone Consulting

FIGURE 3: MARKET STREET ELEVATION
Note: The Queen Anne structure is represented by black filled areas shown here in plan.
178 TOWNSEND STREET PROJECT

FIGURE 8: PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO EXISTING STRUCTURE
KEY NOTES

C1  INC SINGLE-HUNG WOOD WINDOW TO APPROXIMATE HISTORIC, MULT-PANE SASH AND MULLION PATTERN OBSERVED IN CIRCA 1894 PHOTO OF TOWNSEND STREET ELEVATION

C2  (IN) WOOD BARN DOOR

C3  (IN) WOOD HEADER

C4  (IN) FIXED WINDOW FRAME AND SASH OVER (IN) WOOD HEADER

C5  (IN) DOOR OPENING REDUCED AND (IN) BRICKWORK EXTENDED FROM EXISTING ROMAN ARCHA TO APPROXIMATE HISTORIC DOOR OPENING AND BRICKWORK OBSERVED IN CIRCA 1894 PHOTO OF TOWNSEND STREET ELEVATION

C6  (IN) DOOR WINDOW

C7  (IN) NON-HISTORIC STEEL TIE-BACKS TO REMAIN

C8  (IN) LANDMARK PLAQUE TO REMAIN

C9  BRICKWORK AT PARAPET REPAIRED AND RESTORED TO MATCH EXISTING

178 Townsend Elevation - Proposed
ALIGNMENT STRATEGY

1. Align new curtain wall balconies with major elements in existing brick building.
2. Locate new windows in brick wall so alignment occurs with new construction above or existing below. This enhances the perception of alignment between existing brick building and new addition.
3. Avoid alignments that would make the new addition appear out of balance to the extent that it is apparent and ill-proportioned. I.e. - this balcony bank is not aligned below to preserve balance of new addition.
4. Potential alignments between minor features

SMOOTH CONC. FINISH AND COLOR TO MATCH ADJACENT CEMENTITIOUS PANEL SYSTEM
CEMENTITIOUS PANEL SYSTEM
FIGURE 6: PROPOSED BUILDING SECTIONS
PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION

SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

EAST

DEEP RECESSED ALUM. CLAD WOOD WINDOWS. MARVIN OR EQUAL, TYP.

10" PAINTED SIDING, TYP.

PLANTERS, TYP.

1ST FLOOR

2ND FLOOR

ROOF

3RD FLOOR

4TH FLOOR

5TH FLOOR

6TH FLOOR

CENTER OF LOT TO TOP OF ROOF

PERFORATED GARAGE DOOR

EXISTING PAINTED BRICK FRONT TO REMAIN

REMOVE (E) CANVAS CANOPY & ROLLUP DOOR, HOUSING (DASHED) (E) BRICK TO BE CLEANED & PAINTED, TYP.

(E) TERRACOTTA TILES TO BE REPLACED WITH NEW TILES TO MATCH (E) WINDOWS TO BE REFURBISHED. REPLACE WITH WOOD IF NECESSARY, TYP.

(E) FACADE TO BE CLEANED & REPAIRED AS NEEDED, TYP.

NEW WOOD ENTRY DOORS

NEW TREE 24" BOX 26" H. PORCELAIN TILES RAISED ALUM. PANELS 4X6 PAINTED WOOD TRIM

Kotas/ Pantaleoni Architects

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