



## D/DRC Case

612 Devine Street  
Pending Individual Landmark  
TMS: 08914-02-01

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**DESIGN/DEVELOPMENT REVIEW COMMISSION**  
**BAILEY BILL APPLICATION**  
**HISTORIC AGENDA**  
**EVALUATION SHEET**  
Case # 4

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**ADDRESS:** 612 Devine Street (Palmetto Compress Warehouse)

**APPLICANTS:** Scott Garvin, owner/architect, Garvin Design Group

**TAX MAP REFERENCE:** TMS# 08914-02-01

**USE OF PROPERTY:** Commercial

**NATURE OF REQUEST:** Request Certificate of Design Approval for exterior changes and preliminary certification for Bailey Bill

**FINDINGS/COMMENTS:**

Although this property falls within the Innovista Design District, it is also individually listed in the National Register. As a National Register property, it is eligible for the Bailey Bill; changes to the exterior will therefore be reviewed with those criteria. The owners are also pursuing tax credits and are working with the State Historic Preservation Office in conjunction with City offices.

A full history is attached at the end of the evaluation but to summarize briefly, this is a rare local example of a cotton compress warehouse, built in 1918 and doubled in size in 1923. The building is a massive, rectangular structure with thick brick walls, an even rhythm of windows on its prominent west elevation, and a porch/loading system on its east elevation. Large bay door openings still exist on both the east and west elevations. Windows in the earlier section of the building are wood and in the later addition, they are metal.

The building will contain apartments, a hotel, and a restaurant. This is an important building in the City but its original construction and use as a warehouse makes for innumerable challenges for contemporary use. To name a few, the interior floors are sloped, the windows are small and comparatively few (suitable for a warehouse but difficult for residential or even retail uses), and circulation avenues are limited. The applicants have tackled these issues in a creative and respectful manner, arranging the interior space to leave the visible exterior of the building as intact as possible. Generally, the plans for the building include establishing light wells at the roof to bring light into the core of the building, leaving the north and south elevations (Devine and Blossom Streets, respectively) as is, re-establishing a stable porch system on the east elevation as well as punching new openings on this less prominent side, and extending existing window openings slightly on the west elevation. Some grading will occur as part of the project since many windows and doors at the lowest level fall below grade. Site plan review will come separately to the Commission in February.

The Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation provide the foundation for the Bailey Bill. The Criteria is listed immediately below:

**Bailey Bill Criteria based upon the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation:**  
Section 17-695, City of Columbia Zoning Ordinance

- (1) *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved; the removal of historic materials or alterations of features and spaces that characterize each property shall be avoided.*

When considering potential changes to east and west elevations, staff recommended early on that the bulk of any proposed changes should occur on the east elevation; this faces the interior of the lot, is not as prominent visually as the west or north elevations which are directly street-side, and is shielded somewhat by the loading/porch structure in front of it. There are only loading doors on this side of the building and many of them still retain the original doors and hardware, and operate by sliding to one side to open. Some doors are placed so that they slide open from the interior wall and others have hardware installed so they slide open on the exterior wall. The sliding doors on the exterior wall apparently cover an arched opening which matches the arches on the other doors. The plan is to retain all openings and these simple, functional doors where possible (some are in poor shape), affix them in an open position, and install glass into the original opening. For additional light and/or access to the porch, new openings are proposed at every bay. Proportions and size of openings will be similar to the originals but the new openings will be simple and streamlined to distinguish them from the original doors on this elevation.

The west elevation is the most prominent elevation. It is characterized by a consistent rhythm of small paired windows and bay doors. The existing windows have a bottom interior sill height of perhaps around 6' or slightly more from the floor, even with a correction to the sloping floor on the interior. The proposal is to lower the sill height by about a third of the overall height of the window, giving more light and making views out of the windows more accessible (note that floor heights vary according to location throughout the building). While this slightly lengthens the openings and removes original window sills, it maintains the very strong rhythm of openings on this side of the building and avoids punching in new, separate, and visually disruptive openings. Windows in these openings would reflect the original windows (same dimensions, profiles, etc.) but would have a bottom panel attached to accommodate the new length. The intent is that the original dimensions of the windows can be read and the new panel would be clearly contemporary but compatible. City staff, SHPO staff, and the applicant are continuing to discuss how best to detail this.

The earliest part of the building is the southern part, closest to Blossom Street. The windows here are arched and slightly differently sized from the metal windows (on the later addition, closer to Devine Street) on the same elevation, although they continue to hold the rhythm and pattern of openings down the length of the building. The early windows themselves have long been removed and replaced with sheets of plexiglass, held loosely in place with 2x4 lumber. Some of the wood trim may be original (this requires closer examination) but certainly any muntin pattern is long since gone and documentary evidence has not been found. As a possibility, some other mill buildings from this period feature a wood 6/6 configuration, but this is an issue that staff will continue to research and work with the owners and SHPO on. The plan is to manufacture a window that would fit into the original opening (with an appropriate pane configuration) with the attached panel mentioned above.

On the west elevation closer to Devine Street, there are 3/3 rectangular metal windows in place. If these windows are in reasonable shape, it would be typical that they would remain. However, given the need to lower the sill height of these windows and the inherent difficulty in trying to patch seamlessly together a new panel onto the old windows, the applicant would like to remove the original windows and manufacture new ones, matching the profiles and materials of the originals while adding the new bottom panel. Given the unusual sill heights, the need to lower them, the difficulty in cleanly manufacturing new pieces onto old windows, as well as the assurance that the new windows would duplicate the details of the old, staff would be supportive of this avenue.



(2) *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use; changes that create a false sense of historical development shall not be undertaken.*

Any changes planned should be easily discernible as a contemporary alteration.

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

Generally speaking, the building has seen few alterations since its 1923 addition and no changes have acquired significance.

(4) *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property should be preserved.*

Where extant, existing historic features, materials, and so on, are being retained.

(5) *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced; where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new should match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials; replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

On the north elevation, existing 4/4 metal windows on the north elevation appear to be in reasonable shape (aside from some rust and broken and discolored glass) and will be rehabilitated. Most windows on the south side of the building have been removed, but these shall be replaced with compatible wood windows, once window configuration has been determined.

Changes to the window heights on the west elevation have already been discussed under the first criteria as well as the configuration of new windows.

The loading doors on the west elevation are metal and are likely not original. Many of them are in poor condition. New wood and glass doors are proposed there; a fixed all-glass unit was considered but a glass and wood unit which looks like a door and which references the original function was deemed most appropriate.

The loading/porch structure on the east elevation is in poor condition and will be rebuilt with thick wood timbers, etc., to largely reflect the original. The stairs on either end, however, will not be rebuilt in the new design; the porch structure, while visually similar to the original, now provides each unit its own balcony and is not open the length of the building; egress will be handled internally. It will be important to separate porch areas with fairly transparent railings, such as cables, to maintain the look of the original. Staff plans to work with the applicants on details.

(6) *Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used; the surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.*

The applicant has successfully removed paint from old brick on previous projects, using very gentle methods which did not damage the brick. Staff does not anticipate any problems here with cleaning the brick, etc.

(7) *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 historic property and its environment.*

The rooftop addition (or clerestory) is planned as the most reasonable and efficient method of getting light



into the interior of a very dark building. If one looks at the axonometric renderings, it appears that the clerestory is removed from the east and west edges of the building and the Pulaski Street elevation shows that most of it seems to have a low roof height and is unobtrusive. However, a brick structure (rooftop dining or entertainment) bisects the clerestory about a third of the way down the building and is about 12' from the tallest point of the roof, which seems high. This appears to loom in the Devine Street elevation, although not in others, and it is unclear how much of it will be visible; more certainty about this issue is required before rendering a decision. Staff has suggested that an accurate review might be obtained by marking corner and height points at the roof where the structure will be placed. The applicant is agreeable to pursuing this. If the structure is not highly visible, details could be handled at staff level. If it is very visible, then staff would suggest it come back to the DDRC for review.

On the interior of the lot, structures which are adjacent but not attached to the building are proposed as a drop off/entry point at one end of the building and as part of a recreation area on the south end. The design and height of these structures reference the cotton sheds which were once an integral part of the site (please see the rendering on page 7 of the attached history for a visual reference). These are a more appropriate gesture than an elaborate entry which one might anticipate for a hotel or restaurant.

*(8) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*

The removal of the roof addition or other structures adjacent to the building on the site would be possible without damaging the form and integrity of the building.

## **Signage**

Amount and location of signage is as regulated in the city's zoning ordinance. Signage should not obscure historic elements of decoration or windows. Signage has not yet been discussed but may be reviewed at staff level if the Commission approves.

### **Staff recommendations:**

*Staff finds that the project at 612 Devine Street as proposed meets the requirements in Section 17-695 and recommends approval for preliminary certification and exterior changes with the following conditions:*

- New metal windows may be manufactured for the west elevation, given the unusual sill heights, the need to lower them, the difficulty in cleanly manufacturing new pieces onto old windows, as well as the assurance that the new windows would duplicate the details of the original metal windows;*
- Staff to continue to work with the applicants on the configuration and details of the wooden windows on the west elevation;*
- All details of doors, porch configuration, and accessory structures to be reviewed by staff for approval;*
- Staff to review details and materials for roof structure, as well as its visibility, with the understanding that a highly visible structure will return to the D/DRC for review;*
- Details of any paint removal and cleaning of masonry to be reviewed by staff;*
- All other items to be deferred to staff.*

CITY OF COLUMBIA  
 PRESERVATION PLANNING OFFICE  
 REHABILITATED HISTORIC PROPERTY APPLICATION  
 PART A - CONTINUED

**5. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED WORK**

Use the spaces below to describe the proposed work. Architectural features would include items such as: roof; exterior brick or siding; windows; doors; site/landscape features; entrance hall; main stair; parlors; fireplaces/mantles; floors/walls/ceilings; mechanical/ electrical/plumbing; etc. If an application has been submitted for the federal Investment Tax Credits, you may use a copy of the description of the proposed work from the federal form for this section, but your submittal must still include the information in sections 1 through 4.

<p>Architectural feature <u>Exterior Porch</u>          Approximate date of feature <u>1917</u>          Describe feature and its condition          Existing wood timber framed porch on the east side of the building is in disrepair and needs to be rebuilt using the structural system.</p> <p>Photograph No. <u>1,2,3</u> Drawing No. _____</p>	<p>Describe work and impact on feature</p> <p>The porch will be reconstructed using wood timbers and framing members to have the appearance of the original porch. The railings will be brought up to current codes using a lighter, less visible material.</p>
<p>Architectural feature <u>Windows</u>          Approximate date of feature <u>1917, 1923</u>          Describe feature and its condition          Existing windows need to be replaced with energy efficient units. Half of the buildings windows are wood and half are metal.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4, 5, 6, 7, 8</p> <p>Photograph No. _____ Drawing No. _____</p>	<p>Describe work and impact on feature</p> <p>Windows will be replaced with units that match the appearance and profile of the existing units.</p>
<p>Architectural feature <u>Doors</u>          Approximate date of feature <u>1917, 1923</u>          Describe feature and its condition          Existing bay doors are damaged or have been replaced with infill panels.</p> <p>Photograph No. <u>4, 6, 8</u> Drawing No. _____</p>	<p>Describe work and impact on feature</p> <p>New doors and window systems will be installed in the openings and the metal bay doors will remain in place in the open position, where possible.</p>
<p>Architectural feature <u>Floors</u>          Approximate date of feature <u>1917, 1923</u>          Describe feature and its condition          The existing wood floors slope from the center of the warehouse to the perimeter walls. The concrete slab on the ground floor slopes as well. These floors are not functional for intended uses.</p> <p>Photograph No. <u>9, 10</u> Drawing No. _____</p>	<p>Describe work and impact on feature</p> <p>Existing structure and floors will remain in place. New platforms will be constructed on top of the floors to provide flat floors in the occupied spaces. The platforms will step in elevation from the high point in the center to the low points along the perimeter. Steps and ramps will be used to transition the levels.</p>





Photo 1: East elevation of PCW.



Photo 2: Ground level of East elevation, looking South. Photo 3: Third level of East elevation, looking South.





Photo 4: North end (newer building) of west elevation, typical windows and doors.

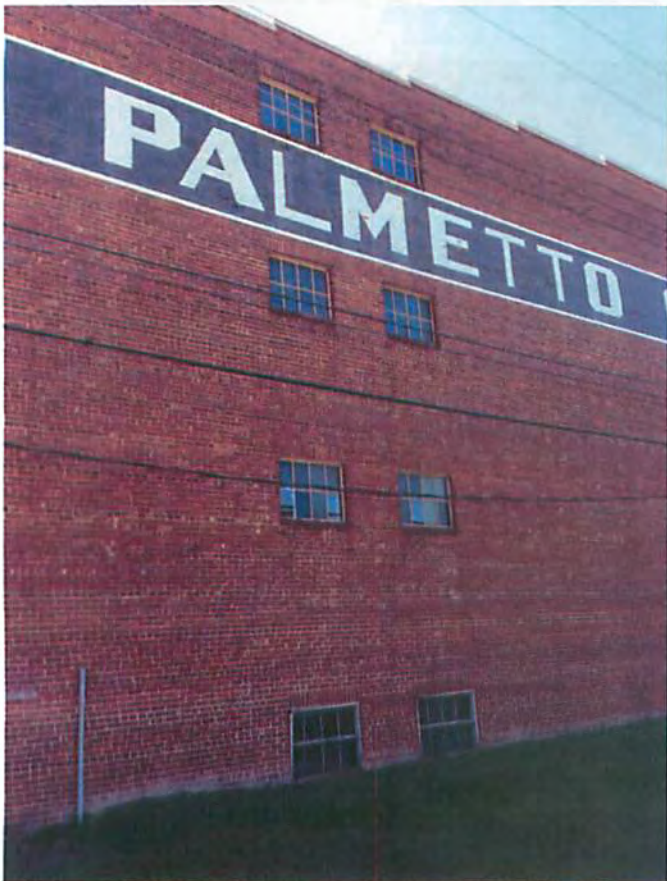


Photo 5: North elevation (newer building), typical windows.





Photo 6: South end (older building) of West elevation, typical windows and doors.

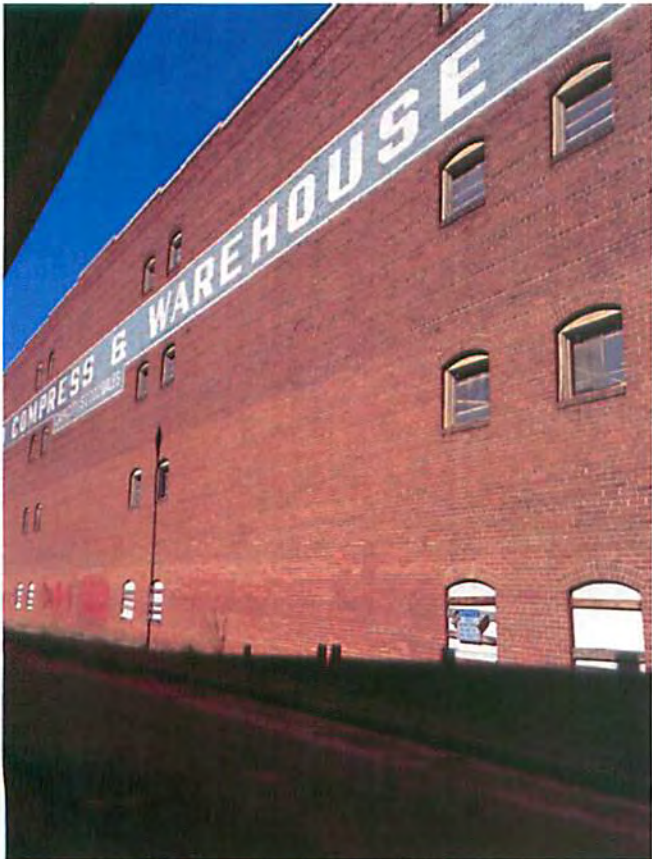


Photo 7: South elevation (older building), typical windows. Photo 8: East elevation, freight elevator and doors.





Photo 9: Interior view, typical bay looking West.



Photo 10: Interior view, previous demolition.



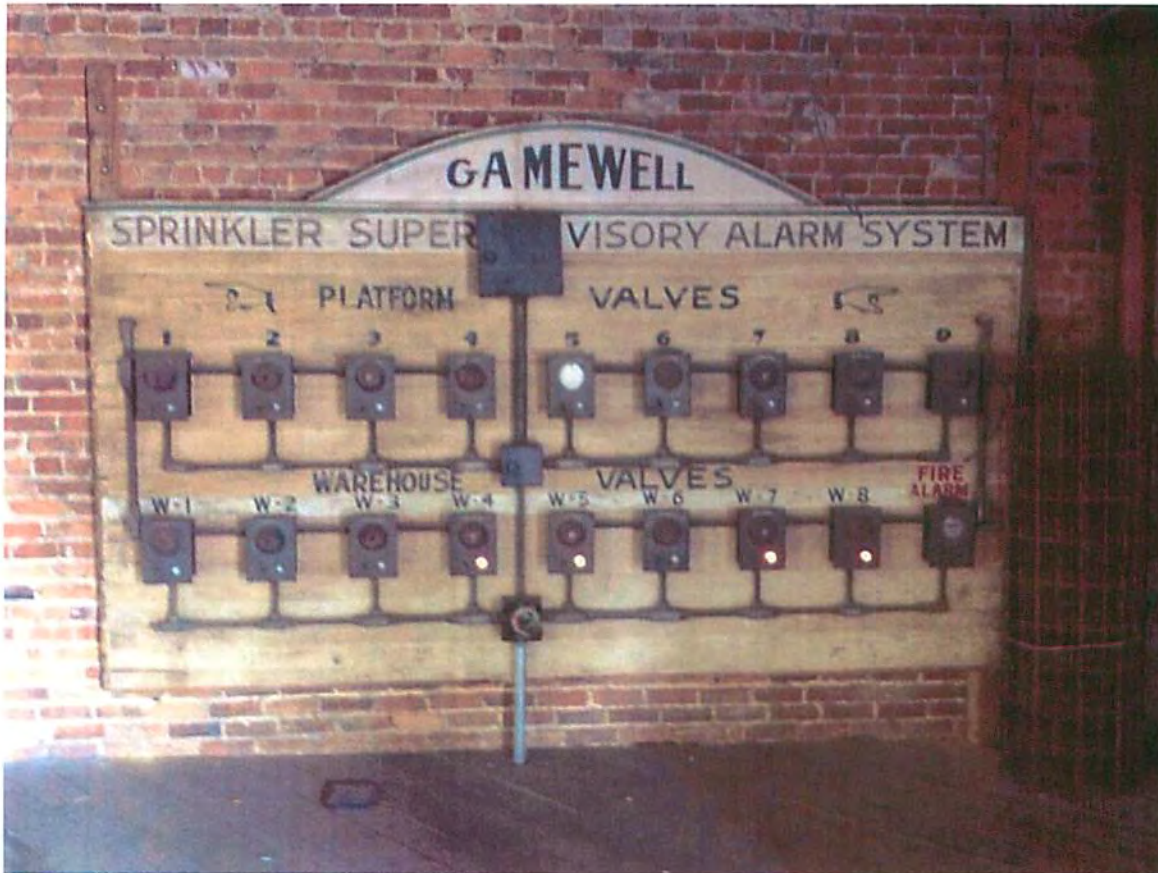
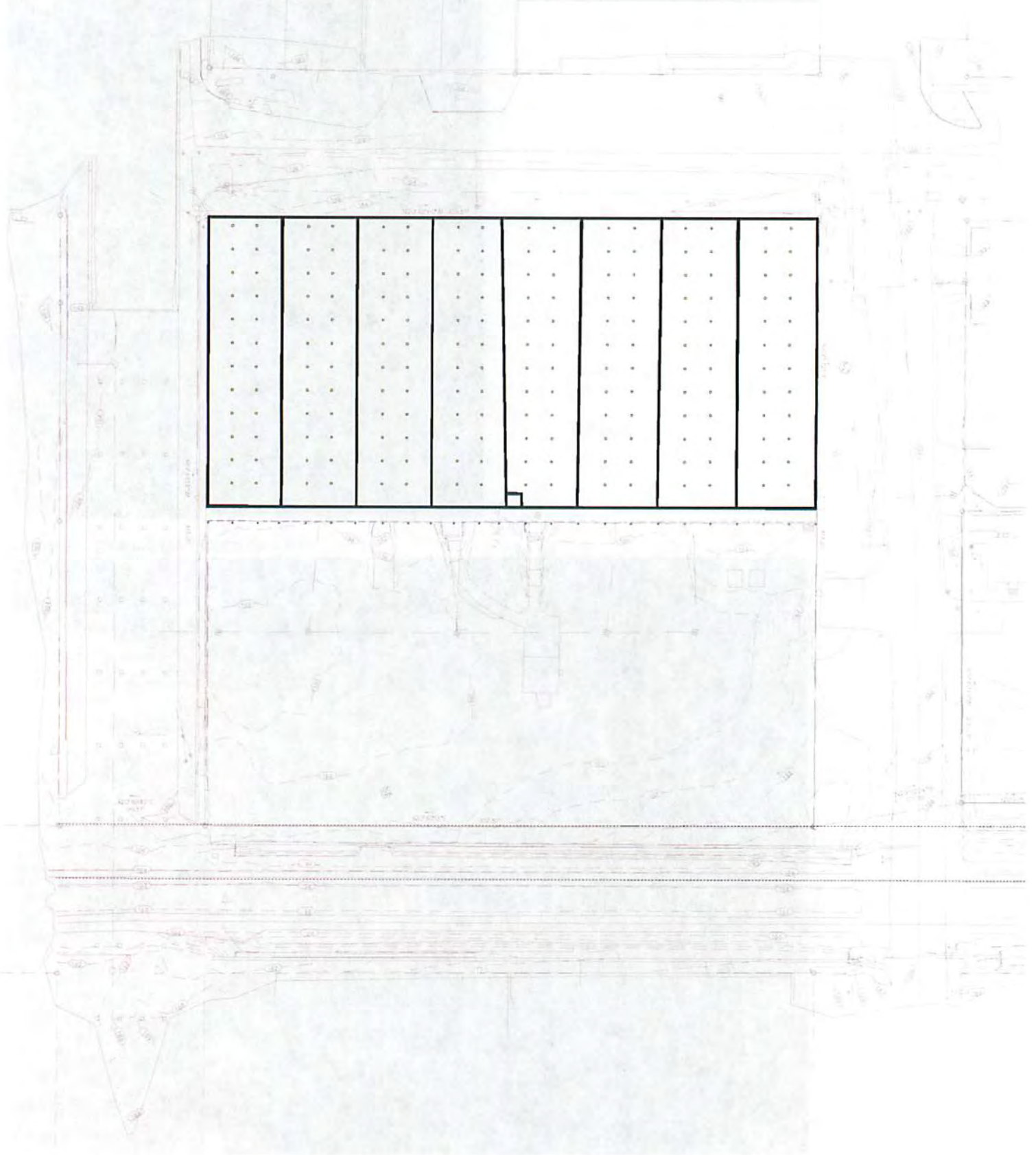


Photo 11: Existing fire protection panel.



Photo 12: Existing fire protection riser.

Drawing 1: Existing site plan.



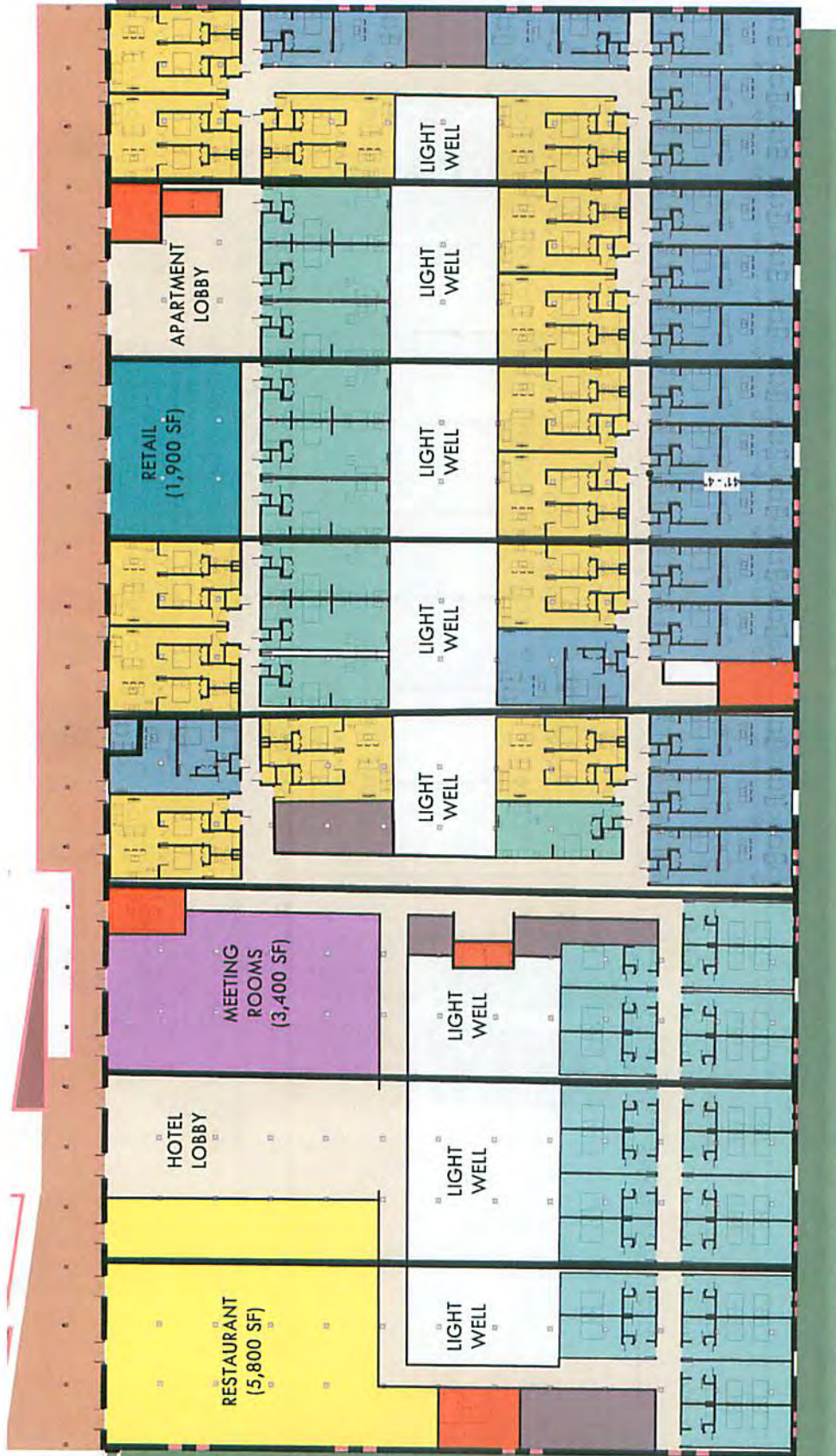




**PALMETTO COMPRESS & WAREHOUSE**  
SCALE: 1" = 60'-0"

Drawing 2: Proposed site plan.





### FLOOR PLAN - GROUND FLOOR

GROUND FLOOR  
 14 - (2) BR UNITS = 28 beds  
 2 - STUDIO UNITS = 10 beds  
 18 - (1) BR UNITS = 18 beds

TOTAL BEDS = 56 beds/floor

ENTIRE BUILDING  
 65 - (2) BR UNITS = 130 beds  
 40 - STUDIO UNITS = 40 beds  
 72 - (1) BR UNITS = 72 beds

TOTAL BEDS = 242 beds

2 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 915 sf  
 1 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 680 sf  
 STUDIO UNIT - TYP SIZE: 610 sf

Drawing 3: Proposed floor plan.





## FLOOR PLAN - TYPICAL UPPER FLOOR

TYPICAL FLOOR (2-4)  
 17 - (2) BR UNITS = 34 beds  
 10 - STUDIO UNITS = 2 beds  
 18 - (1) BR UNITS = 26 beds

TOTAL BEDS = 62 beds/floor x 3 floors = 186

ENTIRE BUILDING  
 65 - (2) BR UNITS = 130 beds  
 40 - STUDIO UNITS = 40 beds  
 72 - (1) BR UNITS = 72 beds

TOTAL BEDS = 242 beds

2 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 915 sf

1 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 680 sf

STUDIO UNIT - TYP SIZE: 610 sf

Drawing 4: Proposed floor plan.



**Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company**  
**612 Devine Street**  
**Built 1918,1923**

Taking up half of a city block, the massive Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company's cotton storage building has been a part of the Columbia landscape for nearly a century. Though it stands solitary today, it was once part of a thriving cotton industry that dominated the surrounding city blocks with massive buildings, a maze of railroad tracks, and towering machinery. The city's urban environment seems far removed from the cotton fields that can be found even today in South Carolina countrysides, but there was a time that the vast acres produced thousands of bales of cotton, which made their way here to the capital city, boosting its economy and launching it into the industrial age.

Conducive to the growth of cotton, the soil of South Carolina easily produced the "white gold" crop throughout the 1800s, when cotton merchants dutifully shipped the product to the North and to Europe for manufacturing and refinement. The South, whose economy was heavily reliant on agriculture, then purchased cloth from those same markets, while the northern states and Europe embraced the loud machines and massive buildings of the Industrial Revolution. Despite its late entrance into the machine era, Columbia made quite the debut in 1894 with the construction of the Columbia Mill, the first all-electric powered textile mill in the world. Taking advantage of the nearby canal for the generation of the electricity, the mill made history, and proved that the capital city was open for big business. Five more textile mills opened in Columbia in the next decade. Constructed with solid brick walls, thick wood floors, towering windows and multiple stories, these long, slender mills turned the South's cotton into a variety of cloths and other products. Finally, cotton could remain in the South, following the railroad lines to new manufacturing centers such as Charleston, Greenville and Columbia.

### **The Cotton Industry**

While the typical cotton story of textile mills is well known, partially due to the numerous mill buildings dotting the city, there were other aspects of the cotton industry that helped support the mills and expanded the use of cotton into new areas. Surprisingly, the cotton seed oil industry's origins were in Columbia. Early settler Benjamin Waring was the first in America to extract oil from cotton seed, in the first decade of the 1800s. However, it was not until the final decades of the 1800s that the oil production reached its peak, and Columbia's own Southern Cotton Oil Company was one of two largest cotton oil companies in the nation, both of which were located in town.<sup>1</sup>

The Southern Cotton Oil Company began in 1887 and located in the block bound by Green and Devine, Wayne and Gadsden Streets, almost simultaneous to the development of the Columbia Compress Company, which also began in 1887 and located in the adjacent blocks to the east, setting the stage for what became a cotton district in the south central portion of the city. Major

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Christman, "Southern Cotton Oil Company," National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 1994, available from the S.C. Department of Archives and History.



railroad lines traveled north to south through the area, consuming much of Wayne Street, and soon another warehouse joined the district. Well-known Columbia banker and industrialist Edwin W. Robertson, who donated the northeast corner of what became Finlay Park to the City, started the Standard Warehouse Company in 1894, with the purpose of “storing cotton and other articles of merchandise, lending money in the security of such articles store, and the doing in every respect a general warehouse business.” Some of the Standard Warehouse Company’s cotton storage buildings were located in the Cotton District.<sup>2</sup>



Columbia Compress, Green Street at Gadsden.  
(1979 photo by Russell Maxey)

Southern Cotton Oil Company stored and processed cotton seed for oil and meal using these three sets of conveyors in the 1913 plant at 730 Green Street.  
(1979 photo by Russell Maxey)

Above: Images of the now demolished Columbia Compress and the Southern Cotton Oil Company buildings from Russell Maxey’s 1980 book, South Carolina’s Historic Columbia, Yesterday and Today in Photographs, page 236.

### Cotton Warehouses

The cotton warehouses being built in this area generally shared the same characteristics: solid brick walls that were 12 to 16 inches thick, two to three stories, low pitched roofs, thick dividing walls between “compartments” to prevent the spread of fire, sprinkler systems, and multi-storied wood platforms along the lengths of the buildings. Built for strength, these large warehouses could support thousands of bales of cotton, with each of them capable of weighing 500 pounds. Near the buildings were one-story wood frame sheds for processing the cotton to and from the compressors. Columbia Compress had a capacity of compressing 100 bales per hour, and the ability to store 35,000 bales. Standard Warehouse was able to handle 40,000 bales of cotton.<sup>3</sup>

The staggering numbers of cotton bales that could potentially be stored in the capital city were actually relatively small when compared to the massive output in the state. As South Carolina raced toward a million bales per year output, the Seaboard Air Line Railway boasted in 1908 that “the central location of Columbia and its excellent transportation facilities, in addition to

<sup>2</sup> Helen Kohn Hennig, ed., Columbia, Capital City of South Carolina, 1786-1936, (Columbia, S.C.: The Columbia Sesqui-Centennial Commission, 1936), 329; John A. Montgomery, Columbia, South Carolina, History of a City, (Woodland Hills, CA: Windsor Publications, 1979), 184; John H. Moore, Columbia & Richland County, A South Carolina Community, 1740-1990 (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), 315.

<sup>3</sup> Hennig, 329.



the large number of cotton consuming mills located there, have conspired to make this city one of the greatest cotton centers in the South.” They went on to tout the rail line spurs leading to the cotton compresses and warehouses, in particular the Columbia Compress Company, which gave employment to 45 men. The warehouses and compresses served an important function in the cotton industry. Farmers usually had cotton ginned locally, but would ship the cotton to a compress if there was not one nearby. Bales were compressed to uniform weights and sizes and the cotton graded according to its type and quality, so that when cotton merchants were purchasing them they could determine quickly the quantity and type their clients desired. The cotton merchants were in the professional class of workers in Columbia, by 1919 there were more than a dozen, many of them with offices in the prominent skyscraper buildings on Main Street. They purchased the cotton and sold it to local textile mills and other cotton industries, or sold it to foreign markets.<sup>4</sup>

In 1911, King Cotton proved its reign with a peak year of 1.6 million bales produced on more than 40% of the state’s improved farmland. Cotton was the basis of the state’s economy, and remained so for years. Conveniently, the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company began the following year in 1912. Their 5,000-bale cotton shed was a heavy timber building on brick pier foundation with vertical plank exterior, clad at some point in corrugated metal. The roof had a series of clerestories to allow light inside. A coal-fired boiler supplied the hydraulic Webb Patent Compress, housed in a four-story wood tower that was surrounded by the one-story cotton shed.<sup>5</sup>

### **State Warehouse System**

Shortly after the creation of the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, World War I dramatically impacted the cotton industry. Lack of ocean transportation and the “demoralization of the foreign market,” where two-thirds of the state’s cotton crop was consumed, led to a glut of cotton. Overproduction threatened the entire state, with a sharp drop in price and demand. With an estimation of 1.4 million bales produced for 1914, at around 10 cents per pound (with bales ranging up to 500 pounds), the state government staggered at the potential catastrophe. Therefore, “in order to protect the people of the state from irreparable loss,” the state’s division of the Southern Cotton Congress, during an Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly in October 1914, created a Cotton Warehouse System throughout the

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<sup>4</sup> Seaboard Air Line Railway, Mercantile and Industrial Review, Issued by the Industrial Department of the Seaboard Air Line Railway, c. 1908, p27. Copy of page located in research files for the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, National Register of Historic Places, located at the S.C. Department of Archives and History; Interview with Henry Thomas, August 8, 1978, transcript located in research files for the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, National Register of Historic Places, located at the S.C. Department of Archives and History; Walsh’s Columbia, South Carolina City Directory, 1919 (Columbia, S.C.: Walsh Directory Company, 1919).

<sup>5</sup> Charles S. Kovacic, “Cotton” South Carolina Encyclopedia, ed. Walter Edgar (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 2006, 229-230); Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, Historic Resources of Columbia Multiple Property Submission, National Register of Historic Places nomination form, 1985.



state, where farmers could store cotton cheaper than private warehouses, and use the certificates from the warehouses as security for lines of credit.<sup>6</sup>



*A Modern Cotton Warehouse*  
Columbia, Capital City of South Carolina, 1786-1936, ed. Helen Kohn Hennig, R.L. Bryan, Pub., 1936, p. 328.

The driving force behind the State Warehouse System was fiery John McLaurin. He served in both the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate, and was a Senator in South Carolina during the push for the warehouse system, of which he became a commissioner. Infamous for a scuffle with Benjamin “Pitchfork” Tillman in 1902, when Tillman charged across the Senate floor and struck McLaurin in the face during an argument, he was the warehouse system’s strongest advocate. Dozens and dozens of articles appeared in *The State* newspaper during the advent of the system, with questions raised both for and against it, and usually with strong rebuttals from McLaurin himself. In his first report for the system, McLaurin laid out a grand plan for not only storing the cotton but skipping the “six to eight middlemen” and selling directly to foreign markets. He bemoaned that fact that his paltry \$15,000 appropriation only allowed him to lease existing warehouses, which he could not equip with fire protection and mechanical appliances for handling cotton. In his estimation, a farmer in one part of the state may lose \$20.00 on a bale of cotton while another, with access to a foreign market, could make \$70.00 on a bale. He saw the state’s role as not just providing inexpensive cotton storage until the market improved, but providing compressing and direct sales, putting the farmer in contact with the spinner. In his own words from January 1915, “What excuse has a government for existence which can not correct such gross inequalities in the distribution of wealth?”<sup>7</sup>

The powerful businessmen who traded, stored and processed cotton did not take well to the state’s interference in the cotton industry. By the time of McLaurin’s next annual report in 1916, he was blatantly arguing against these adversaries, much as he’d done in the newspaper. His detractors had some reason for concern, the state warehouses were providing the same

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<sup>6</sup> Bill, “State Warehouse System to Provide for the Grading, Storing and Marketing of Cotton,” Prepared by Director of the S.C. Division of the Southern Cotton Congress, for the Consideration of the Extraordinary Session of the General Assembly, October 6, 1914, L.M. (Yorkville, S.C.: Grist’s Sons Printers, 1914).

<sup>7</sup> John L. McLaurin, “Report of John L. McLaurin, State Warehouse Commissioner to the General Assembly of South Carolina, January 1915,” Gonzales and Bryan, State Printers, 1915;



service but at cheaper prices, though it appears that they were serving two different markets. The state warehouses generally wound up being rather small and located in rural locations. Most of them stored less than 1,000 bales, with only a handful holding more, and the most holding 5,000 bales in 1916. The system lived far past the initial concerns with the overproduction, especially considering the decline in cotton in later years.<sup>8</sup>



“In a Cotton Warehouse, Ware Shoals, South Carolina” 1932 image from the Library of Congress. The wood walls provided little protection against the spread of fire.

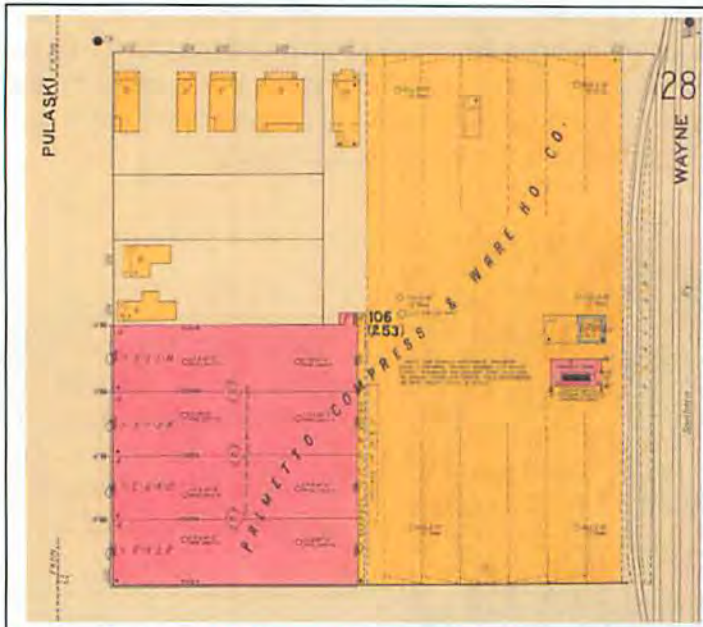
### **Palmetto Compress & Warehouse Company**

Toward the end of World War I, Charlestonian W.Gordan McCabe, Jr. purchased the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company. He also hosted the W.Gordon McCabe and Company, cotton exporters and buyers, at the compress location at 612 Devine Street. This area was already well established as an industrial enclave in the Ward 1 area of the city, an area dominated by neighborhoods of African Americans, some of whom worked in the warehouses and cotton seed oil refineries. McCabe soon hired Columbia architect James Burwell Urquhart to design a massive, four-story cotton warehouse in the cotton district, adjacent to the company’s compress and shed. Well known for dozens of school buildings throughout the state, including Columbia’s own Wardlaw School on Elmwood Avenue, Urquhart’s creation of a warehouse seems to be a departure from his normal portfolio. Nonetheless, the resulting building, completed in 1918, had a simple, repeated pattern that lent itself well to the expansion in 1923, resulting in the building’s doubling in size. The seam between the two buildings is not visible; the brick was carefully joined. This attention to detail is an indication of Urquhart’s influence, and may have been part of the original design.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> John L. McLaurin, “Annual Report of John McLaurin, State Warehouse Commissioner to the General Assembly of South Carolina, Session of 1916,” Gonzales and Bryan, State Printers, 1916.

<sup>9</sup> Manufacturer’s Record, October 11, 1917, p77. Copy of page is located in research files for the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, National Register of Historic Places, located at the S.C. Department of Archives and History; Manufacturer’s Record, October 18, 1917, p.76. Copy of page is located in research files for the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, National Register of Historic Places, located at the S.C. Department of Archives and History; Manufacturer’s Record, March 29, 1923, p. 101. Copy of page is located in research files for the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, National Register of Historic Places, located at the S.C. Department of Archives and History; Columbia, S.C. City Directory, 1930.





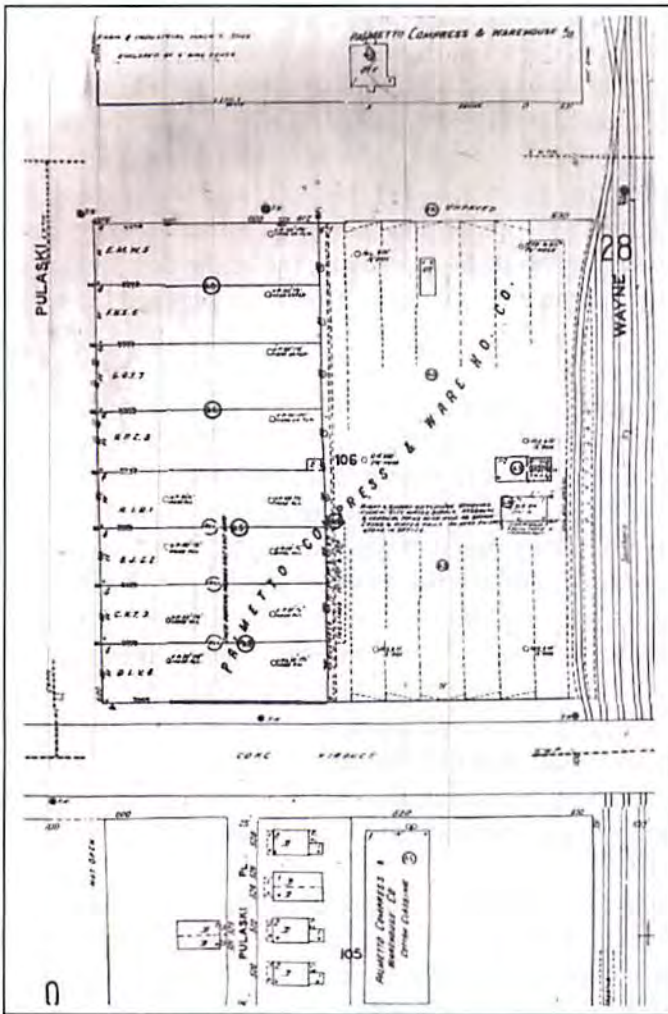
This 1919 drawing shows the original warehouse in pink, indicating its brick construction, and the large cotton shed and compress facility in the east half of the block, colored yellow to denote its wood frame construction. Railroad lines to the east fill up Wayne Street and provide valuable access to the cotton compress and warehouse.  
1919 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



Rising a full story above other cotton warehouses in the city, the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company's new building covered the entire southwest quarter of the city block in 1918. Built with similar features as other warehouses, it had 16 inch thick walls throughout, except for the top story of the interior dividing walls, which were 12 inches thick. The interior walls, designed to prevent the spread of fire, were punctuated by centered, doubled, tin-covered doors on all four floors. Its interior dividing walls did not project beyond the planes of the exterior as they often did on other warehouses, but did project above the roof. The building's west and south walls had a wood or metal cornice, and the windows were protected with iron shutters. Large "doors" along the west side did not lead to the multi-storied wood platforms that were built on the east side, accessed by heavy sliding doors. On the northeast corner of the building an elevator shaft projected slightly from the façade. When the building was double in size in 1923, the building's fenestration carried on exactly in the same pattern, generating a building that consumed half of a 4-acre city block yet appeared thoughtfully and evenly divided. Windows had wireglass, another fireproof feature. The metal or wood cornice was not carried on, and was likely removed from the original building. The thick walls were continued,



and the final building emerged as the largest cotton warehouse in the capital city, boasting a capacity between 50,000 to 60,000 bales. The Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company expanded both north and south by the 1960s, with a small house used as an office to the north and a one-story warehouse to the south for “classing” or grading the cotton.<sup>10</sup>



1969 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

Ca. 1945 rendering from the South Carolina Magazine



<sup>10</sup> Sanborn Map Company, *Columbia, South Carolina* (New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1919, 1969), microfilm available from the Richland County Public Library, Columbia, S.C.



The biggest threats to the cotton warehouses were fire and moisture. Companies, and even the state system, that stored cotton, offered insurance on the bales that they stored. Therefore, the latest techniques for fireproofing and for protecting the precious cargo were of utmost importance to warehouse owners. In a small ca. 1920s pamphlet of rules and regulations for managers in the State Warehouse System, protective measures including keeping bales neatly stacked with nothing loose laying around, the addition of “No Smoking” signs on the building, making sure there were no leaky roofs, water overflows or excessive moisture. The Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company’s building combated both problems with sprinklers, with large doors on both sides of the building for ventilation and access, and with sloped floors so that water would run and not sit under the cotton bales should the sprinklers activate. In February 1921, the city’s electrician installed fire alarm boxes at the Bull Street entrance to the State Hospital and on the platform of the Palmetto Compress as part of an initiative to get more locations to house alarms, and though few seemed to be taking advantage of the deal, which left the maintenance costs to the city, it is significant that the Palmetto Company pursued the extra precaution.<sup>11</sup>

Cotton continued to be an important component of Columbia’s economy for decades, and survived the boll weevil march east across the South during the late 1910s. The 1920s saw a steady decline in cotton prices, with a precipitous drop after the market crash of 1929. The Great Depression dealt a serious blow to the price of cotton, yet production matched that of the years before World War I. Columbia’s textile mills seemed to weather the storm relatively well, and produced over \$7 million worth of products in 1934, employed nearly 3,000 workers, and housed 5,800 people in the mill villages, pumping almost \$2 million in salaries into the workers and therefore into the local economy. The cotton warehouses continued to compete with the state system, and as late as 1933, T.B. Stackhouse, president of the Standard Warehouse Company, declared that he was opposed to being taxed to “support a system which was operating in direct competition to his business,” and that instead, the system should “stay within the spirit of the act” that created it. Shortly thereafter, the system was incorporated into the new Department of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry, and it still exists today.<sup>12</sup>

In 1937, the state produced 996,175 bales of cotton, with the output declining to 852,081 bales in 1939. By 1940, textile production was second only to agriculture in the state, and employed a large amount of the state’s workforce. A number of African Americans worked in the cotton industry in Columbia, including several at the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company, at least through the mid-1900s. World War II brought yet another challenge to the cotton industry, however, and production dropped significantly in the succeeding years, leading to a low of only 53,000 bales in 1983. Some resurgence has occurred, with 379,000 bales produced in 2000, though working textile mills, cotton warehouses and other historic cotton industries are no longer typical parts of the South Carolina landscape.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> J. Clifton Rivers, “Rules and Regulations Governing Managers of Warehouses in State Warehouse System, Cary Printing Company, Columbia, SC, 192?; “Fire Alarm Boxes Added to System” *The State*, 18 Feb. 1921, p.5.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin F. Taylor, “Commerce and Manufacturing, 1786-1935,” typescript for the book *Columbia: Capital City of South Carolina, 1786-1936*, located in vertical file “Columbia Industry” at the Richland County Public Library; “State Warehouse System Shown as Help to Farmers,” *Carolina Free Press*, 20 January 1933, clipping in scrapbook of James Royal Jones, South Caroliniana Library.

<sup>13</sup> Kovacic, 230; Taylor “Commerce and Manufacturing”; Agnes Perez, Interview with author, Aug. 16, 2012.



## Conclusion

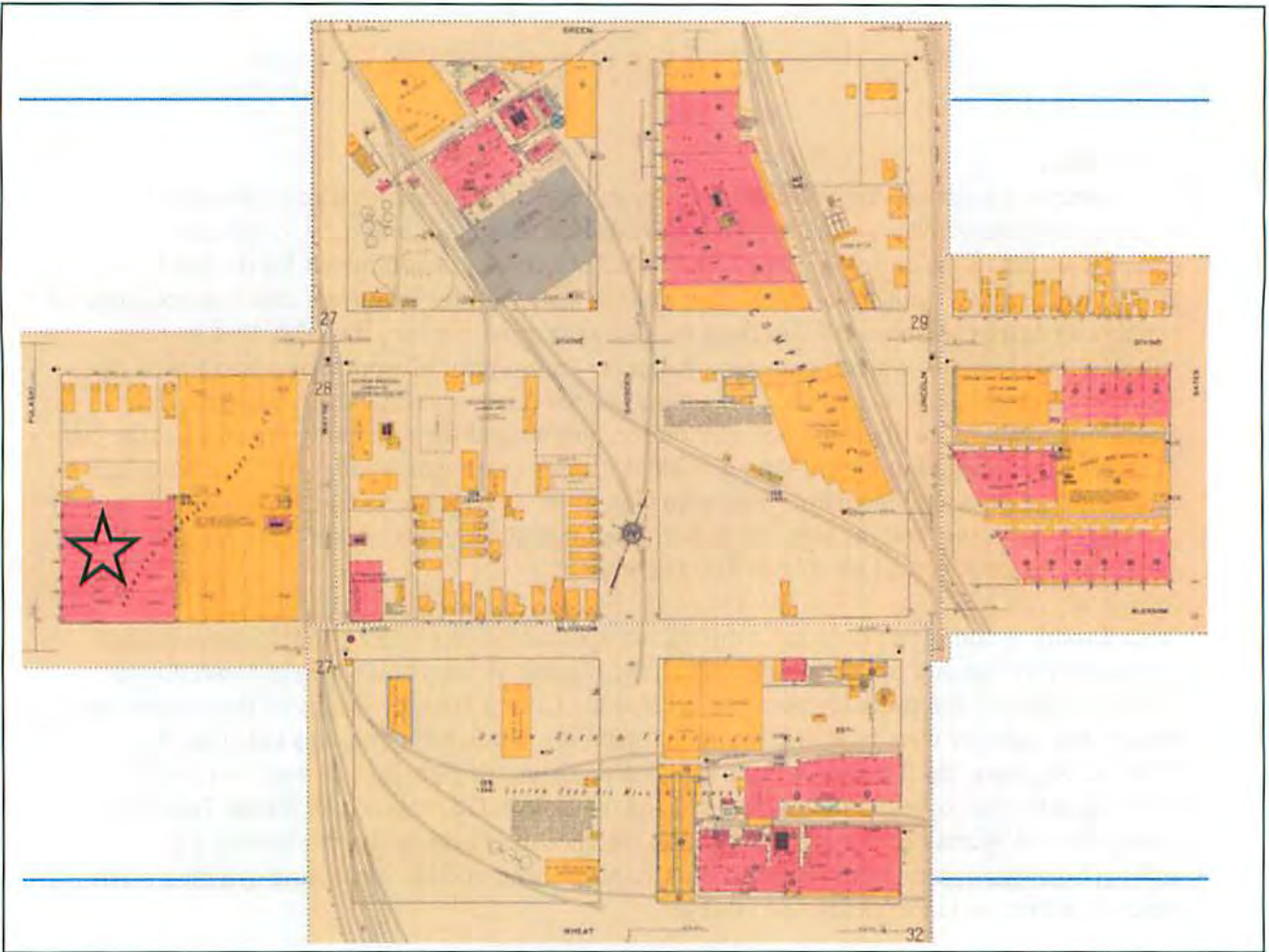
The Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company buildings were listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1985, when they were reportedly one of only four cotton compresses left in the entire Southeastern United States. It was nominated for its role in the growth of the textile industry in Columbia and the state, and for being “an excellent example of warehouse design and construction from the early twentieth century.” It continued to store cotton as late as 1990, when the owners, Palmetto Preservation Corporation, demolished the compress and its nearly 2-acre shed for a “landscaped green area and a new shipping and receiving area.” Those plans did not materialize, and instead the remaining warehouse, the last of its kind, was turned into mini-storage. The lot was never landscaped. At some point, the owners proudly painted the name “Palmetto Compress & Warehouse Co. 50,000 Bales” on two sides of the building, and the signs have been maintained for years. As of this year, the compress company would have been 100 years old.<sup>14</sup>

In Columbia, a number of the textile mills have been adaptively reused and are now vibrant components of the city once again, however, the biggest victims have been the warehouses, sheds, machinery and railroad spurs that created the Cotton District. Many of them were odd shapes and sizes, or were built with minimal openings. Even though it was listed on the National Register, the Southern Cotton Oil Company was demolished, as was every other building in the nearby eight blocks that created the Cotton District, except for the Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company’s cotton warehouse. Fortunately, this building is architect-designed, created to withstand enormous weight, and has a pleasing symmetry that makes it a fine, and rare, example of its type.



<sup>14</sup> Palmetto Compress and Warehouse Company; *The State*, 5 May 1990, p.1B





Above is a 1919 map of the area near the Palmetto Compress & Warehouse Co. building (starred). Other brick and wood industrial buildings and warehouses, all dealing with cotton, are nearby, served by a maze of railroads. To the right is a modern aerial photo showing that the area has been completely demolished for parking lots, "Greek" student housing, and for late twentieth-century small warehouses. The cotton warehouse is all that remain.





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# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**PULASKI STREET ELEVATION (EXISTING)**



**DEVINE STREET ELEVATION (EXISTING)**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**PARKING LOT PHOTO (EXISTING)**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**SITE PLAN**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



## FLOOR PLAN - GROUND FLOOR

GROUND FLOOR  
 9- KING ROOMS  
 12 - DOUBLE QUEEN ROOMS  
 0 - SUITES

21 TOTAL ROOMS ON GROUND FLOOR

ENTIRE BUILDING  
 69 - KING ROOMS  
 48 - DOUBLE QUEEN ROOMS  
 30 - SUITES

147 TOTAL ROOMS

- HOTEL ROOM
- 2 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 915 sf
- 1 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 680 sf
- STUDIO UNIT - TYP SIZE: 610 sf



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



## FLOOR PLAN - TYPICAL FLOOR (2-4)

GROUND FLOOR  
20- KING ROOMS  
12 - DOUBLE QUEEN ROOMS  
10 - SUITES

42 TOTAL ROOMS ON TYPICAL FLOOR

ENTIRE BUILDING  
69 - KING ROOMS  
48 - DOUBLE QUEEN ROOMS  
30 - SUITES

147 TOTAL ROOMS

-  HOTEL ROOM
-  2 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 915 sf
-  1 BR UNIT - TYP SIZE: 680 sf
-  STUDIO UNIT - TYP SIZE: 610 sf



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**NORTHWEST RENDERING**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**NORTHEAST RENDERING**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



AXONOMETRIC RENDERING



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



AXONOMETRIC RENDERING



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**BLOSSOM STREET ELEVATION (SOUTH)**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



DEVINE STREET ELEVATION (NORTH)



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**PARKING LOT ELEVATION (EAST)**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



PARKING LOT ENLARGED ELEVATION (EAST)



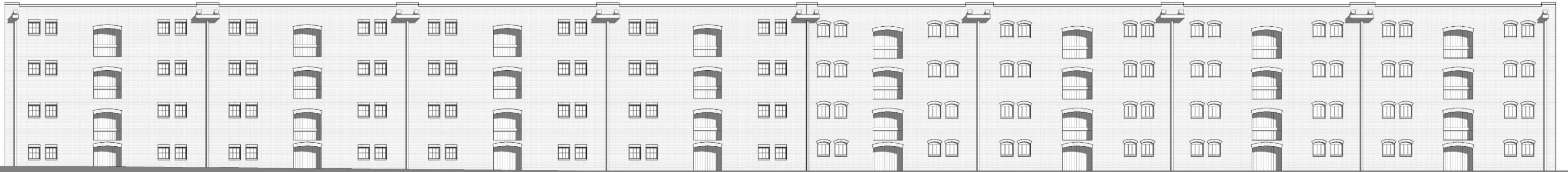
# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



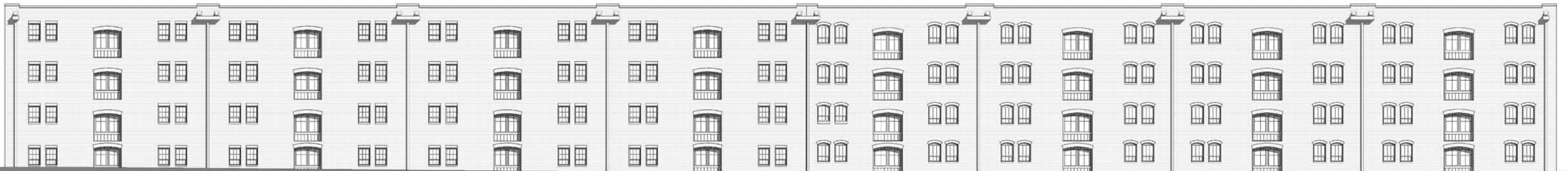
**PULASKI STREET ELEVATION (WEST)**



# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**PULASKI STREET ELEVATION (BEFORE)**



**PULASKI STREET ELEVATION (AFTER)**





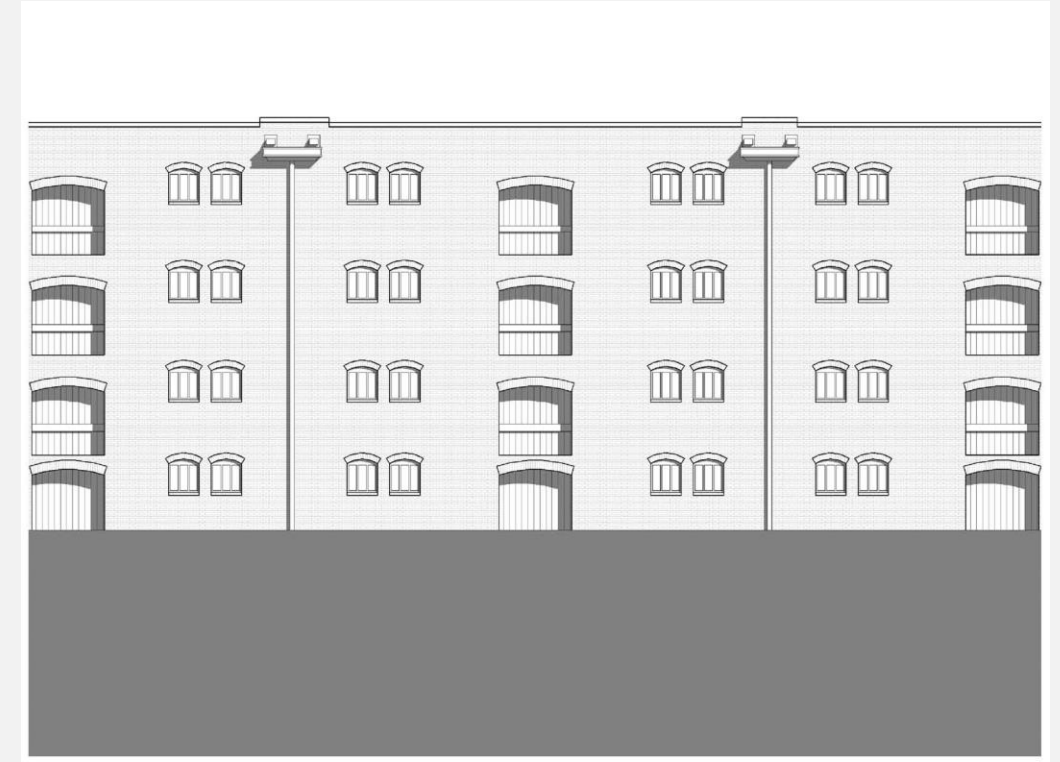
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**NORTH BUILDING**

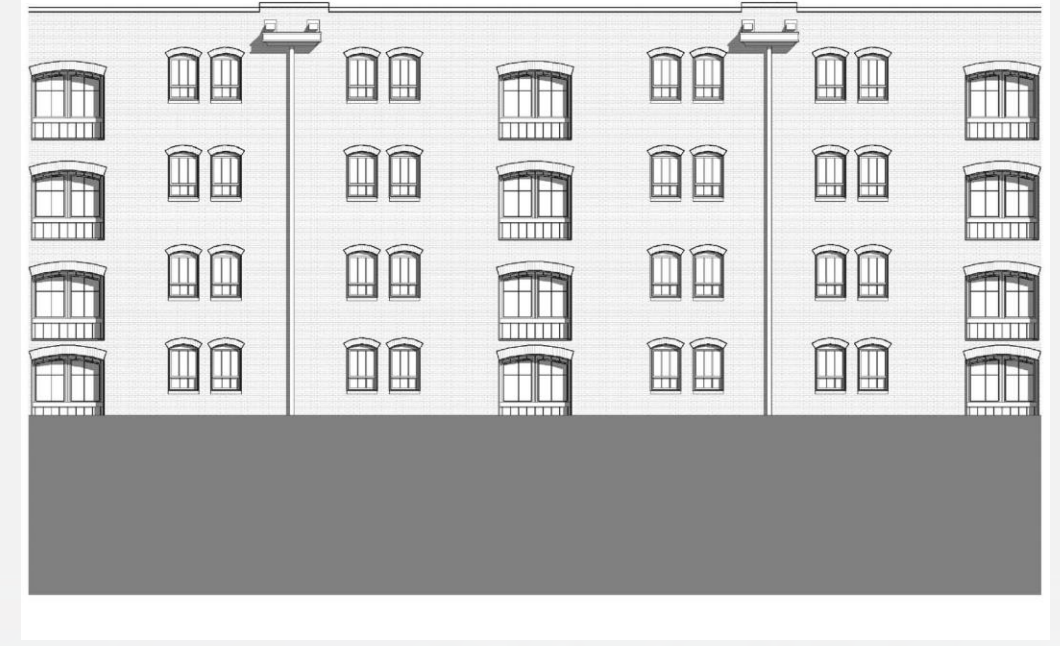


**PULASKI STREET ELEVATION (BEFORE)**

**SOUTH BUILDING**

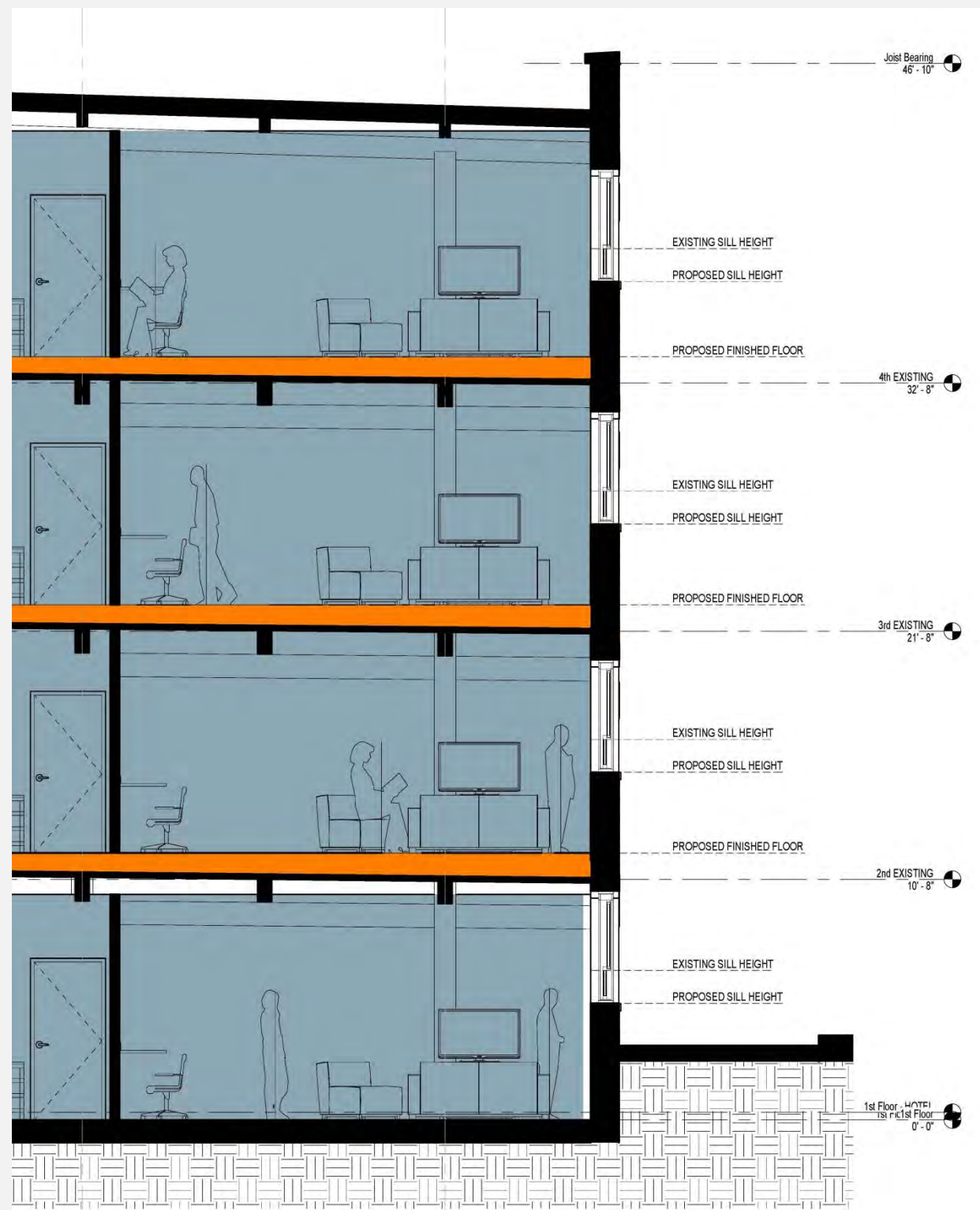


**PULASKI STREET ELEVATION (AFTER)**





# Palmetto Compress Warehouse



**PULASKI STREET WALL SECTION (NORTH BLDG)**

**PULASKI STREET WALL SECTION (SOUTH BLDG)**