



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240



June 9, 2020

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

PROPERTY: Lynn Armory & Motor Vehicle Storage Garage
38 South Common Street, Lynn, MA
PROJECT NUMBER: 40314

Dear [REDACTED]

I have concluded my review of your appeal of the August 14, 2019 Decision of Technical Preservation Services (TPS), National Park Service, denying certification of the Part 2 – Description of Rehabilitation application for the property cited above (the Decision). The appeal was initiated and conducted in accordance with Department of the Interior regulations [36 C.F.R. part 67] governing certifications for federal income tax incentives for historic preservation as specified in the Internal Revenue Code. I thank your representatives, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] for meeting with me on November 12, 2019, and for providing a detailed account of the project.

After careful review of the complete record for this project, including the materials presented as part of your appeal, I have determined that the proposed rehabilitation of the Lynn Armory & Motor Vehicle Storage Garage could be consistent with the historic character of the property, and hereby resubmit the matter to TPS for further consideration.

The Lynn Armory & Motor Vehicle Storage Garage was designed by the Lynn architectural firm of Wheeler and Northen and was completed in 1893. It is one of the best examples of Romanesque Revival architecture in the city. The armory's three-story head house has the mass of a fortified castle, with circular corner towers and a crenellated parapet with a copper coping. It is constructed of finely-detailed red brick on a granite foundation and features pairs of tall, thin, deeply-set arch-topped windows with brownstone sills. The drill hall has a steeply-sloped slate roof supported by steel trusses bearing on one-story brick side walls. The gable-end wall is brick with a stepped parapet. The interior of the head house retains its historic floor plan and wood floors, open wood staircase with turned balusters, wainscoting, doors and windows and their respective surrounds. The drill hall retains its wood floor; the exposed brick walls and steel roof structure are both painted. The Motor Vehicle Storage Garage dates from 1949 and is a contributing feature on the property. It is a red brick, one-story, rectilinear box with a flat roof, with punched vehicular openings and windows, originally used to store National Guard military trucks.

The proposed rehabilitation will convert the property into veteran's housing, with the head house rooms converted into residential units and additional residential units constructed in the volume of the drill hall and former garage. TPS determined that inserting dwelling units into the volume of the former drill hall and inserting twenty-eight skylights into its slate roof were, by themselves, sufficient to cause the overall impact of the proposed work on the historic character of the property to fail to meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (the Standards).

TPS stated in the Decision that, "*Subdividing the space both vertically and horizontally results in the loss of its ability to convey its historic function, greatly alters the volume and views of the space, obscures or damages historic materials and features such as the masonry walls and roof structural features, and negatively impacts its historic appearance, contrary to Standards 2 and 9. The proposed program is much too intense for this building and fails to meet Standard 1 in and of itself.*" TPS further stated that, "*our decision is based solely on the impacts on the overall project of subdividing the drill hall as proposed, and we have not evaluated any other aspects of the project.*"

Standard 1 states, "*A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*" Standard 2 states, "*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.*" Standard 9 states, "*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.”

In my review, I first attempted to quantify how much the proposed new residential units will impact the drill hall. The drill hall volume is enclosed by two one-story side walls, twelve feet tall, with the roof trusses rising above that to forty feet above the floor at the ridge. There will be two stacked rows of units along the side walls, with approximately one third of the floor area open in the middle. The second level of units will be constructed on top of the first, partially against the side walls and partially against the underside of the roof slope. Because of the balconies to provide access to the upper units, the open space in the middle at that level is reduced to approximately one fourth of the floor area. The first level of units will be lit by the historic windows in the side wall of the drill hall and windows facing into the open space in the middle of the drill hall. The upper level units will have skylights in the lower slope of the drill hall roof and windows facing into the open space in the middle of the drill hall. Since the first level units will block the historic windows in the side walls, natural light will be brought into the drill hall volume by inserting skylights in the upper slope of the drill hall roof.

Regarding Standard 1, I initially note that the Lynn Armory has longstanding association with the military, and that association will continue in the proposed new use as military veterans' housing. I also note that, in regard to the prominence of the drill hall roof itself, views of the front of the property from South Common Street are dominated by the crenellated castle mass of the armory head house. By contrast, views of the drill hall roof from Common Street are limited to a short stretch to the east of Pleasant Street and down the parking lot exit of the Commons Apartments on the west. Neither view is prominent. The drill hall roof is visible from a short stretch of Pleasant Street, above the parking lot. Although that view is direct, it is the sole location with a direct view of the side of the Armory, and the taller crenelated mass of the head house remains the most prominent feature in the view. The view of the drill hall from Blossom Street is distant, oblique, and partially obscured by trees.

The new use, as revised in the appeal, will require minimal change to the exterior of the armory building aside from the newly-reduced number of skylights in the drill hall roof. In response to TPS's Decision, as part of this appeal, you proposed to reduce the number of skylights from 28 to 20 and to install low-profile skylights with frames the color of the surrounding roof and with tinted glass so that they are not prominent features on the planar expanse of the roof surface. And, you proposed to pair the upper skylights around the roof trusses to further reduce their visual impact when seen from both the exterior and from inside the drill hall. Although I concur with TPS that the drill hall roof is a character-defining feature, it is at the rear of the property and is a secondary feature to the crenellated brick head house fronting on South Common Street, which is the property's primary character-defining feature. Consequently, should the project be modified as noted above, I disagree with the TPS conclusion that, "*Adding*

the new skylights greatly changes both the exterior and interior historic character and appearance of the building, contrary to the Standards.”

In its Decision, TPS did not consider the impact of the apartments within the context of the entire project. TPS determined that inserting apartment units in the open volume of the drill hall was itself so egregious an intervention that the entire project would fail to meet the Standards. TPS stated, *“our decision is based solely on the impacts on the overall project of subdividing the drill hall as proposed, and we have not evaluated any other aspects of the project.”*

I acknowledge that constructing apartments inside the drill hall will compromise the spatial characteristics of the hall, but I disagree that the proposed use as apartment units will unilaterally cause the entire project to fail to meet the Standards when taken in context of the overall program for the reuse of the property and its impact on the site and environment. Accordingly, I find that the proposed apartments in the drill hall do not by themselves cause the project to fail to meet Standard 1.

Regarding Standard 2, the *“alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided”* is the principal issue in TPS’s Decision. I acknowledge that the proposed apartments are a major intervention within the volume of the drill hall. However, TPS guidance on applying the Standards in a similar situation (a school gymnasium) suggests that such interventions can be acceptable:

“When another, early-twentieth century school building was rehabilitated for use as senior housing, primary character-defining features were preserved in the classrooms. Part of its gymnasium was also adapted for apartments. Two rows of apartments were created on two sides of the gymnasium leaving the center section with its full height and exposed truss system clearly visible as an atrium-like open space. Like the previous example, by converting only a portion of the gymnasium to apartments, enough of the gymnasium was retained intact so that its essential character and spatial volume were still apparent.” (TPS ITS Number 20: Converting Historic Buildings for Residential Use).

Although each project is reviewed individually for conformance to the Standards, in this case I have determined that there are enough similarities between the TPS guidance and the Lynn Armory project, that a plan that creates two rows of apartments within the drill hall volume and leaves the center section with its full height and exposed truss system clearly visible as an atrium-like open space so that its essential character and spatial volume will still be apparent is reasonable and could be compliant with Standard 2.

Regarding Standard 9, the new materials of the apartments to be constructed within the drill hall are primarily wood and drywall, which are differentiated from the drill hall's historic brick walls and steel roof structure. The new construction touches, but does not significantly alter, the brick side walls and lower roof slope. It will not destroy historic materials that characterize the property and thus may potentially be reversed in the future, consistent with Standard 10. Standard 10 states, "*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.*" Consequently, I have determined that the proposed insertion of apartments into the drill hall is compliant with Standards 9 and 10.

Although I am reversing TPS's August 14, 2019 Decision regarding the insertion of apartments into the drill hall, I note that the TPS review of the project was narrow, limited to just the impact of the proposed work on the drill hall. As TPS stated in its Decision, "*our decision is based solely on the impacts on the overall project of subdividing the drill hall as proposed, and we have not evaluated any other aspects of the project.*" Consequently, I am resubmitting the project to TPS to complete its review of the entire Part 2 application for the rehabilitation. Should that review result in a denial of certification of the overall rehabilitation, that decision can be appealed.

As the Department of the Interior regulations state, my decision is the final administrative decision with respect to TPS's August 14, 2019 Decision regarding rehabilitation certification. A copy of this decision will be provided to the Internal Revenue Service. Questions concerning specific tax consequences of this decision or interpretations of the Internal Revenue Code should be addressed to the appropriate office of the Internal Revenue Service.

Sincerely,



John A. Burns, FAIA, FAPT
Chief Appeals Officer
Cultural Resources

cc: MA SHPO
IRS

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[REDACTED]