



## Charlotte-Mecklenburg Historic Landmarks Commission

### Historic Landmarks Department Staff Report – November 10, 2025

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| Landmark Name:    | The Excelsior Club (Washington Heights) |
| Landmark Address: | 921 Beatties Ford Road                  |
| City State Zip:   | Charlotte, NC 28216                     |
| Applicant Name:   | Shawn Kennedy                           |
| Item:             | HLC522                                  |

### Landmark Description

The Excelsior Club, located on Beatties Ford Road about one-half mile north of the main entrance to Johnson C. Smith University, was for many years the leading private black social club in the Southeast, and one of the largest of its kind on the East Coast. In addition to its importance as the only social club for black professionals in the area, it also became a political focal point of the city and county for both black and white candidates for office, and a meeting place for boosters of Johnson C. Smith University. Started in 1944 in a house built in the 1910s, the club took on its present appearance in the early 1950s.

The original owner, "Jimmie" McKee (1913-1985), was a leading black philanthropist, political activist, and businessman in Charlotte. The Excelsior Club has enjoyed the reputation as being among the most influential social institutions in the black community of Charlotte. The Excelsior Club attained architectural appointments in 1952 which make it perhaps the finest example of the Art Moderne style in Mecklenburg County after its conversion from a Four-Square single-family house. *HLC Survey Report, 8/1985.*

### Project Description

The proposed project would have two phases:

1. Demolition of the historic Excelsior Club building.
2. New construction of a 'quasi-replica' Excelsior Club building. The proposed building is not an exact replication; however, it features a replication of some prominent design details from the Club including Art Moderne styling, stucco exterior, glass block windows, and Art Deco style entry.

The applicant is requesting the Commission to: 1) Approve the demolition application, 2) Waive the 365-day stay of demolition and, 3) Approve the new building.

### Exhibits presented to and considered by the Commission

Exhibit A – Context Map

Exhibit B – Existing Conditions

## Exhibit C – Proposed Plans

### Staff Comments

The HLC has acknowledged the need to alter or add to a historic property to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the property's historic character under the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*.

Based upon the information presented in the application, staff offers the following applicable findings of fact with staff comments in bold and italicized:

#### **Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation**

Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.

1. 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. **Given the existing condition of the building the proposed project is full demolition of the historic building and construction of a new building for similar uses (Community events, community activity space, and entertainment).**
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. **The project is full demolition of the historic building with a new building similar in size on the property. Reusing part or parts of the original building is planned.**
3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken. **The proposed building is not an exact replication; however, it replicates some exterior design details from the historic building including Art Moderne roof details and massing, stucco exterior, glass block windows, and Art Deco style entry.**
4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved. **Not applicable.**
5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved. **The applicant proposes to preserve the Art Deco front entry. There are no distinctive interior features remaining.**
6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall 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. **The applicant's Property Condition Assessment shows considerable damage to the exterior and interior.**

7. 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. **Not applicable.**
8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken. **Not applicable.**
9. New additions, 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. **The building and property are designated historic landmarks. The Commission shall consider whether the new construction project (building and site plan) contributes to the historic significance of the site and neighborhood in its size, scale, massing, materials and design.**
10. Alterations, 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 building and property are designated historic landmarks. The Commission shall consider whether the new construction project (building and site plan) contributes to the historic significance of the property and neighborhood.**

#### **Staff Recommendation**

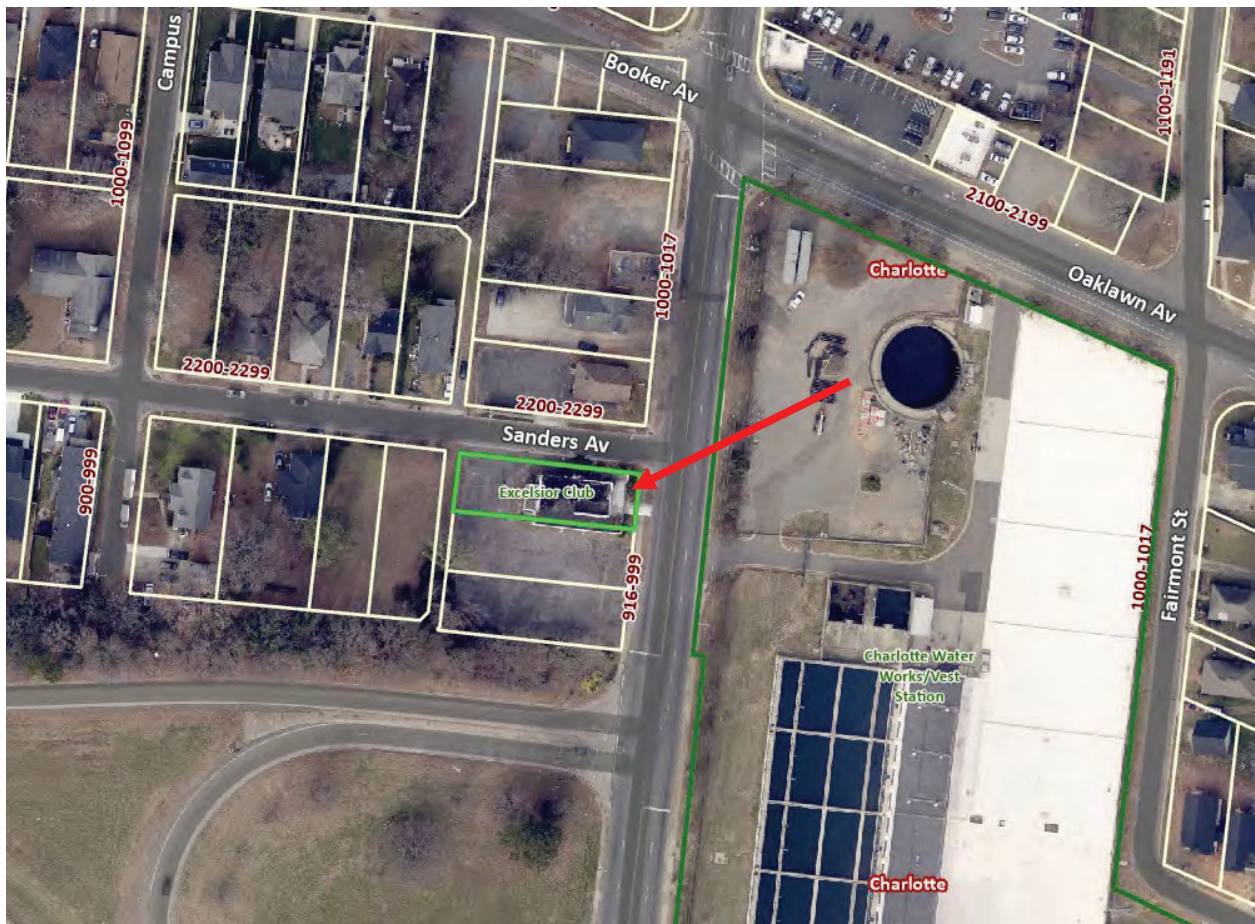
Due to the condition of the historic building, safety concerns, and overall exterior appearance, staff recommends the application to be approved with conditions to be determined by the Commission, if necessary. The new building is not a replica but takes design cues from the Excelsior Club building and is comparable in its size, scale massing, materials and design.

Staff also recommends that the building should not be demolished until County building permits are issued.

## Exhibit A

### Polaris 3G Map – Mecklenburg County, North Carolina

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**Original Four-Square House, c. 1910s**

**Exhibit B**  
**Existing Conditions**

**PROPERTY CONDITION ASSESSMENT**



EXCELSIOR CLUB  
921 BEATTIES FORD ROAD  
CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

ECS PROJECT NO. 48:4336

FOR  
KENNEDY PROPERTIES, LLC

JULY 9, 2025





Front Elevation



Front Awning and Corner Parapet



Rear Elevation



Left Elevation





Second Level Roof





First Level Roof



High roof apparent partial collapse, note the sloped front parapet



Low roof apparent collapse area



Typical exterior cracking



Typical exterior deterioration



Typical damage to interior finishes



Biological growth



Apparent 9x9 floor tile



Damage to second floor ceiling finishes





39 - Interior showing partially collapsed second floor



40 - Partially collapsed second floor, heavy damage



41 - Partial view of second floor balcony area, damaged finishes



42 - Partial view of second floor balcony area, damaged finishes





43 - Collapsed area of first floor



44 - Collapsed framing





45 - Collapsed framing



46 - Area of previous demolition



49 - Area of previous demolition



50 - Area of previous demolition



55 - Extensive debris



56 - Extensive wood rot due to long-term water infiltration





As of 11/3/2025

**Exhibit C**  
**Proposed Plans**



# REIMAGINING A CULTURAL LANDMARK

## THE EXCELSIOR



PRESENTED BY



CROSLAND  
SOUTHEAST

## DEVELOPMENT TEAM

### Shawn Kennedy

FOUNDER, KENNEDY PROPERTY & DEVELOPMENT

Shawn Kennedy is a real estate investor and entrepreneur with a passion for community uplift. He leads Kennedy Property & Development, a firm dedicated to delivering affordable and workforce housing across North and South Carolina—including in Charlotte, Statesville, and Myrtle Beach. Shawn brings a mission-driven focus to real estate development, prioritizing access, equity, and long-term community benefit.



### Tim Sittema

MANAGING PARTNER, CROSLAND SOUTHEAST

Tim Sittema brings over 40 years of real estate development and capital markets experience to this initiative. As Managing Partner at Crosland Southeast, he has led transformative projects throughout the Southeast and Rocky Mountain regions. Tim also serves as Founder and Board Chair for Freedom Communities, a nonprofit working to dent generational poverty in West Charlotte, and 12-year board member of Project 658, a nonprofit primarily serving the immigrant community in East Charlotte, exemplifying his commitment to place-based philanthropy and inclusive growth.

# HISTORY

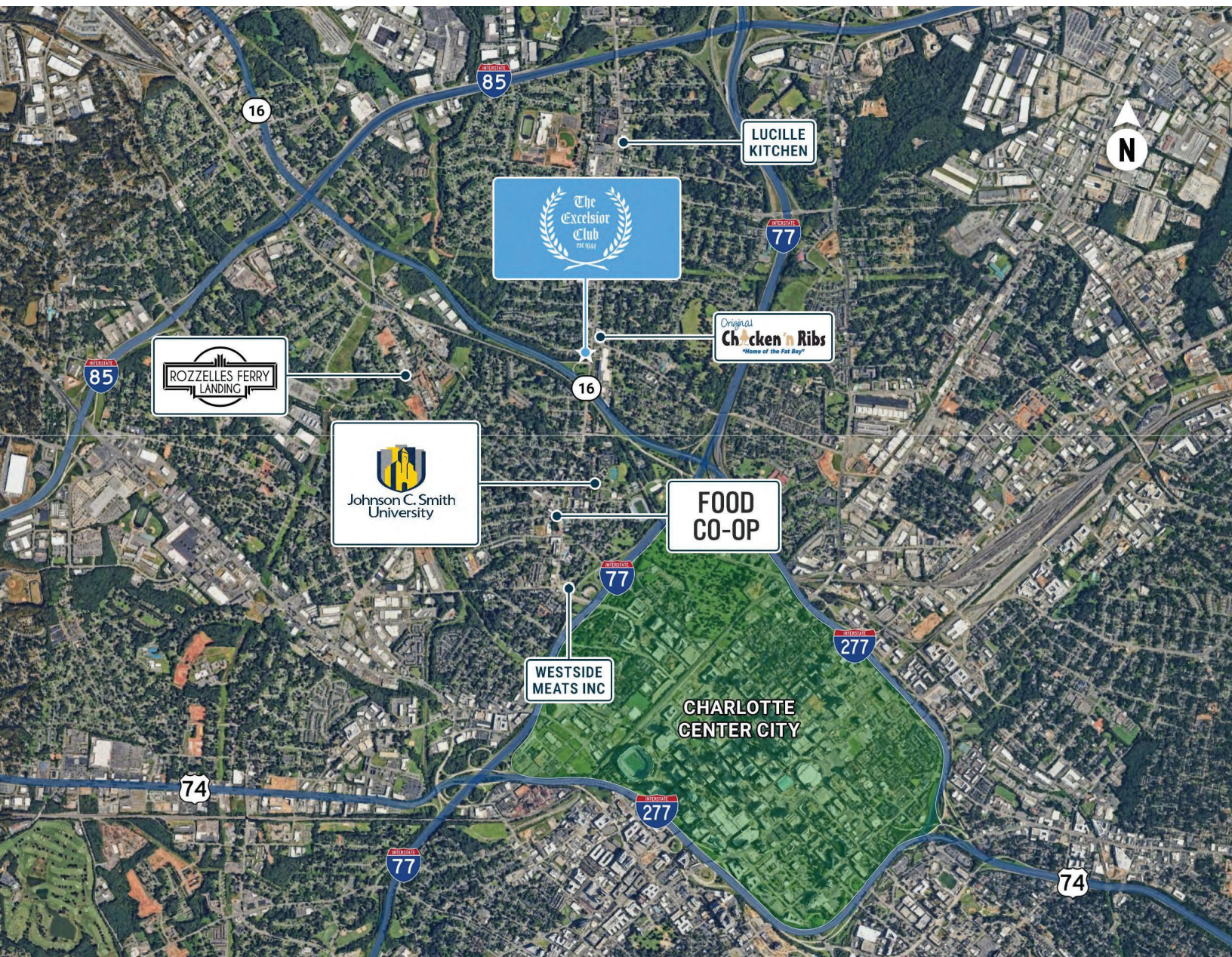
## A SACRED CULTURAL LEGACY SINCE 1944

Founded in 1944 by visionary Jimmy McKee, the Excelsior Club became a sanctuary for African Americans during the era of segregation. Nestled in the heart of Washington Heights, it served as a gathering space for artists, activists, and leaders—hosting jazz greats, civil rights icons, and generations of Charlotte's Black community.

Its closure in 2016 marked the end of an era. Now, through thoughtful redevelopment, we are restoring its purpose while reimagining its role in the future of the city.









Aerial View of the Existing Site Conditions.

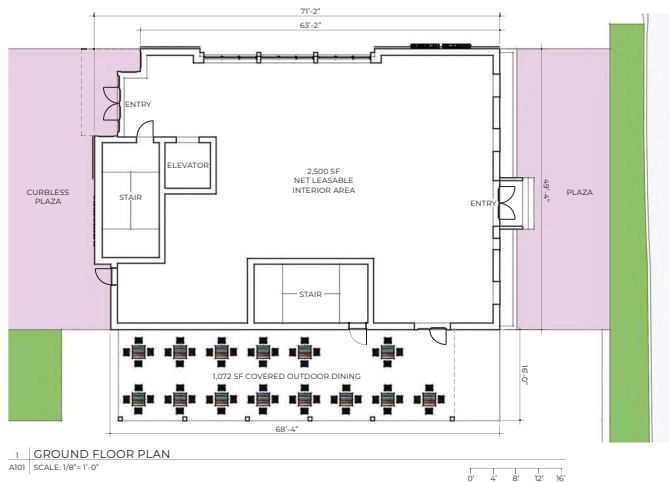




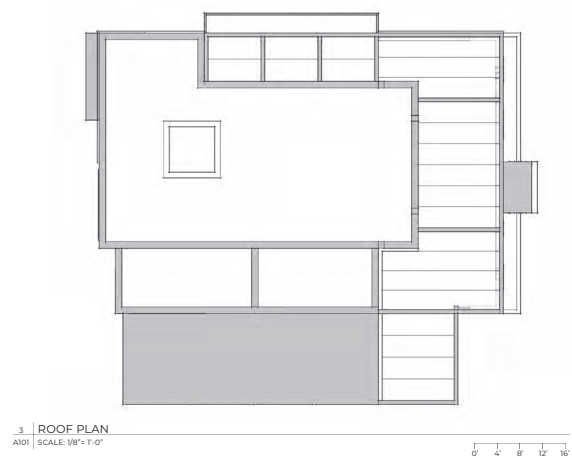
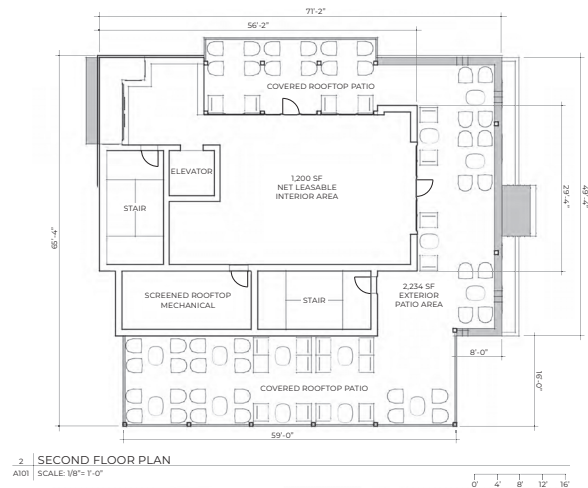


EXCELSIOR • CHARLOTTE NC • Existing Site Plan





| BUILDING DATA                  |          |
|--------------------------------|----------|
| GROUND FLOOR NET LEASABLE AREA | 2,500 SF |
| GROUND FLOOR GROSS AREA        | 3,414 SF |
| GROUND FLOOR OUTDOOR PATIO     | 1,072 SF |
| SECOND FLOOR NET LEASABLE AREA | 1,200 SF |
| SECOND FLOOR GROSS AREA        | 2,328 SF |
| SECOND FLOOR PATIO AREA GROSS  | 2,234 SF |



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NOT FOR  
CONSTRUCTION



**CROSLAND  
SOUTHEAST**

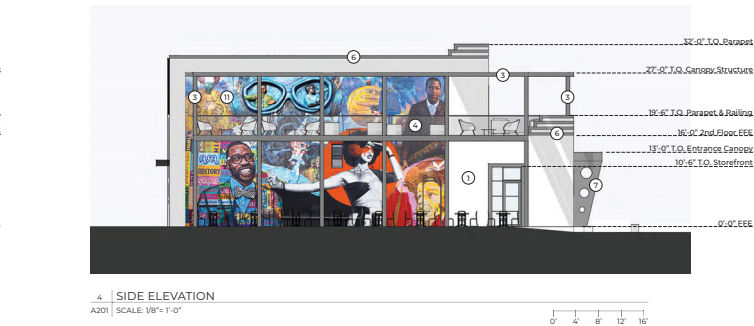
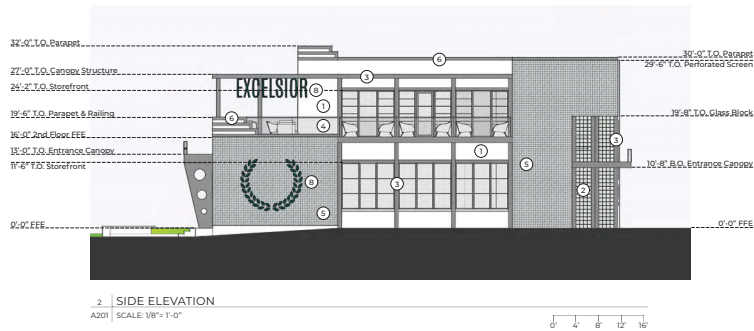
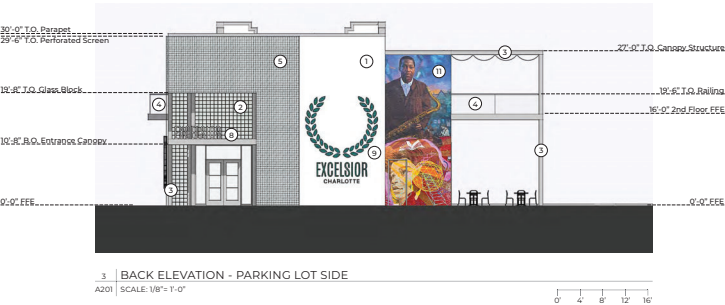
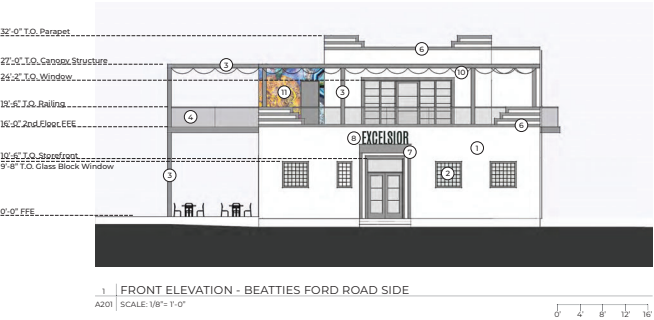
CHARLOTTE- MECKLENBURG **EXCELSIOR CLUB**  
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION 921 BEATTIES FORD RD, CHARLOTTE, NC  
APPLICATION 09-26-25

FLOOR PLANS

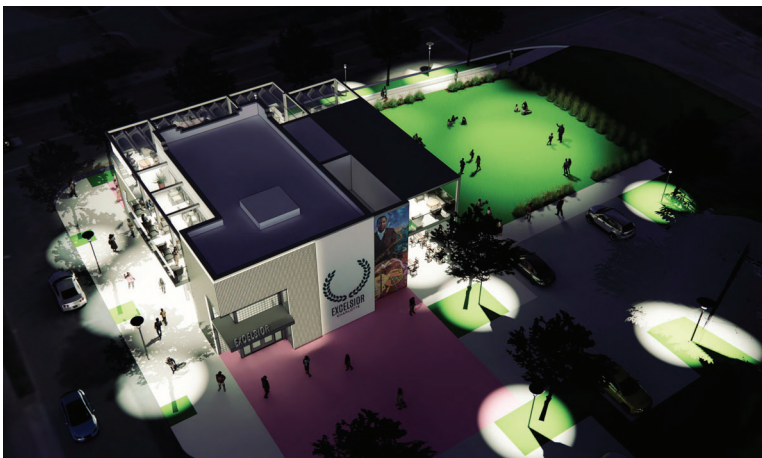
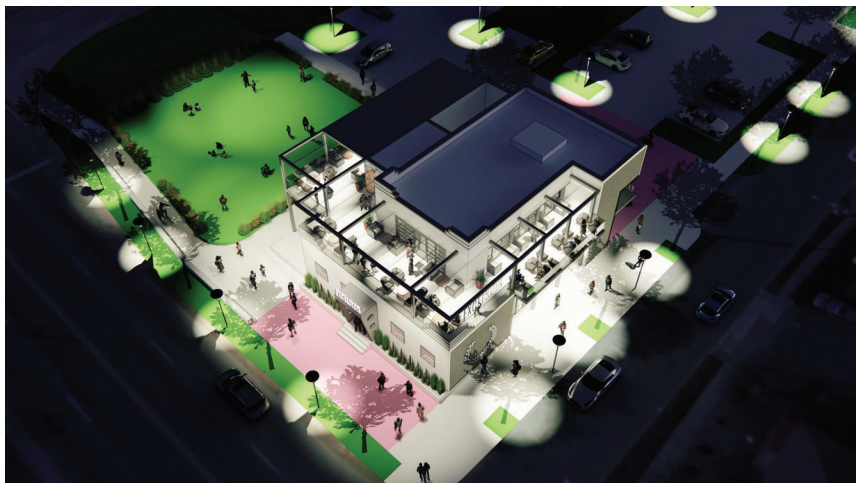
**A101**

- ① STUCCO | COLOR: WHITE | FINISH TEXTURE TBD.
- ② GLASS BLOCK | COLOR: TBD
- ③ FINISHED STRUCTURAL STEEL | COLOR: TBD
- ④ RAILING | GLASS PANELS
- ⑤ PERFORATED METAL SCREEN, ILLUMINATED
- ⑥ METAL COPING | COLOR: TBD
- ⑦ METAL WRAP FOR ENTRANCE CANOPY | COLOR: TBD
- ⑧ ILLUMINATED EXCELSIOR SIGN | COLOR: TBD
- ⑨ PAINTED EXCELSIOR SIGN
- ⑩ WATERPROOF RETRACTABLE FABRIC SHADE CANOPY | COLOR: WHITE
- ⑪ MURAL\* | TO BE DESIGNED BY ARTIST IN COLLABORATION WITH ARCHITECT

\* Mural shown on the elevations is an example for illustrative purposes only to indicate where the mural is to be located.







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CONSTRUCTION



**CROSLAND  
SOUTHEAST**

CHARLOTTE- MECKLENBURG  
HISTORIC LANDMARKS COMMISSION  
APPLICATION

**EXCELSIOR CLUB**  
921 BEATTIES FORD RD, CHARLOTTE, NC  
09-26-25

RENDERINGS

**A202**



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09-26-25

RENDERINGS

**A203**