



Owen ARCHITECTURE, PLLC

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Assistant City Manager Aaron King &
Assistant City Manager Ben Rowe
City of Winston-Salem
PO Box 2511
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27102

Re: Possible Restaurant Occupancy on the First Floor of the
Union Station Building
City of Winston-Salem
Winston-Salem, North Carolina
20-04

August 27, 2025

Dear Sirs:

The City of Winston-Salem has asked Owen Architecture, PLLC to comment on the feasibility of designing a restaurant on the main floor of the Union Station on Martin Luther King Jr. Drive. As an architect who has designed many restaurants in Winston-Salem, most of which were in historic properties or older buildings, I have extensive knowledge of the challenges involved in such design work. I have also served on the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission for eight years, four of which as its chair, giving me a good understanding of the regulations and requirements for such properties.

Winston-Salem's Union Station is both a locally and nationally recognized historic building. Forsyth County and the City of Winston-Salem, through the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission, utilizes the Local Historic Landmark program and regulations to protect and preserve buildings of this type for future generations. Winston-Salem has only a small number of buildings with both designations. In 2015, the City of Winston-Salem carried out an extensive renovation of the building, restoring it to its original 1920s glory.

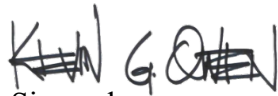
In restaurant design, the kitchen is often the most challenging aspect. Even small diners require a lot of equipment and ventilation, but none are as intensive as the exhaust hood above the cooking elements and the grease trap on the sewer exit. Both are difficult to place and route out of the building space.

Over the last several years, Owen Architecture has been asked to review proposals for potential kitchens on the main floor of Union Station. Although they have functioned as kitchens, the amount of destructive work necessary to achieve the goal would be extensive and would likely damage or ruin many parts of this historic landmark.

In my opinion, placing a restaurant on the main floor of the Union Station building, though possible, would destroy many of the historic elements of this building and make it impossible to meet the requirements of the Historic Resources Commission's Design Review Guidelines for Local Historic Landmarks as well as the Historic Requirements set forth by the National Register of Historic Places.

An alternative option might be to provide a catering or warming kitchen, which generally includes a basic setup suitable for temporary or singular events. Installing a sink and multiple power outlets may be sufficient for these purposes and not require as many floor penetrations or exterior changes. Most importantly, this type of solution would not need a grease trap. Further evaluation of this scenario is needed, but collaboration with the Historic Resources Officer, Building Code Official, and an experienced Winston-Salem caterer and Restaurant Architect could help develop a feasible design.

As much as I believe it would be nice to have a more public way to access the beautiful top floor of our Union Station, I don't believe a restaurant is possible. I do think, however, that a catering or warming kitchen might make the space a little more usable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "K. G. OWEN". The signature is stylized with some overlapping strokes.

Sincerely:

Kevin G. Owen, Architect

Former Chair of the Forsyth County / Winston-Salem Historic Resources Commission