



The
Home Inspection
Company

AAD Inspection Corp.

Commercial Inspection Report



**200 S. Main Street
Bellevue, Idaho**

Inspection Date: 02/10/2007





Subject Property: **200 S. Main Street, Bellevue, Idaho**

This report format has been certified to be in substantial compliance with the Standards and Practices of the American Society of Home Inspectors

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OVERVIEW

Dear Deida Runswick,

Thank you for choosing me as your building consultant.

Your prospective property is amazingly sound and well renovated for its age and style. However, a number of rather typical inspection issues were identified.

Please review this report carefully before proceeding with your purchase.

If you need further explanation regarding this property's conditions, please don't hesitate to call:

Our 24-hour, 7-day office number is: (208) 338-9144.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Stan Audette".

Stan Audette, building consultant

-
- APPROXIMATE YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION: Early 1900's
 - CURRENT WEATHER: Cold (24°F), clear, calm, and dry.
 - RECENT WEATHER: Similar.
 - OTHER CONDITIONS: The building is occupied and in use as
Mama Inez' Restaurant and the Bank Bar
 - CLIENT(s): Deida Runswick
 - AGENT: Damon Savoia
 - AGENCY: Inside Outside Real Estate
 - THOSE PRESENT: Damon Savoia (at first, for introductions)
Rodolfo (restaurant manager) and his crew
Patrons of the restaurant and bar

Suggestions for Understanding and Using This Report

No property is perfect.

Every building has imperfections or items that are ready for maintenance. It's the inspector's task to discover and report these so you can make informed decisions. This report should not be used as a tool to demean property, but rather as a way to illuminate the realities of ownership.

Maintenance costs are normal.

Homeowners should plan to spend around 1% of the total value of a property in maintenance costs, annually. (Annual costs of rental property maintenance are often 2%, or more.) If considerably less than this percentage has been invested during several years preceding an inspection, the property will usually show the telltale signs of neglect; and the new homeowner may have to play "catch up" with large sums of money and time.

This report is not an appraisal.

When an appraiser determines worth, only the most obvious conditions of a property are taken into account to establish a safe loan amount. In effect, the appraiser is representing the interests of the lender. Home inspectors focus more on the interests of the prospective buyer; and, although inspectors must be careful not to make any statements relating to property value, their findings can help buyers more completely understand the true costs of ownership.

This report may include (upon specific request) cost estimates for repair or replacement of certain items.

Where estimates are given, they may appear as a range of possible costs. The low figure of the range is the inspector's best guess of current material costs, alone – the higher figure of the range includes reasonable retail profits on the materials, together with reasonable labor costs, overhead, and profit for qualified contractors. The client is encouraged to obtain several bids from licensed contractors before agreeing to any work, however.

This report may include estimates of normal useful lives for certain items.

Where estimates of normal, useful life for any components or appliances are offered in the report, the inspector is relying upon widely published data for similar items or systems. When these data are compared to known or estimated ages given in the report, the client may form his or her own opinions as to likely remaining life.

We offer future assistance at no cost.

If you find yourself needing a second opinion regarding repairs or renovation at any time in the future, please give us a call. Most of the time, we should be able to help you avoid high-pressure marketing tactics or costly errors in judgment. Consultation by telephone costs you nothing.

If You Have Any Questions please feel free to contact us at any time. We will be happy to discuss your report or provide further maintenance tips.

(Master copies of all reports are kept in our files for future reference.)

Good Luck! We wish you the best!

SERVICE AGREEMENT

(PLEASE READ CAREFULLY)

Between: **AAD INSPECTION CORP.** (Company)

And: **Deida Runswick** (Customer)

Re: **200 S. Main Street, Bellevue, Idaho** (Subject Property)

The Company agrees to perform an inspection and prepare a report to enhance the Customer's knowledge of major systems and aspects of the Subject Property. Information conveyed will consist of professional opinions, only, and will be based upon the Company's customary efforts to maintain accuracy.

While the Company strives to discover and report in a manner that can significantly reduce the Customer's future possible health, safety, and financial risks, the Customer agrees that it is not reasonably possible to eliminate all such risks through the procurement of this inspection service. It is further understood and agreed that the inspection may be limited to readily accessible areas of the property and that the report will be based upon observations of apparent conditions existing at the time of the inspection. The Company shall not be required to dismantle items or systems, move, remove, or lift personal property, debris, or snow in order to perform the inspection, but may do so at its option. The Company is not responsible for the discovery or reporting of latent or concealed defects or deficiencies. (The Company cannot perform a functional inspection on a system if its respective public utility has been shut off.)

The inspection and report might not address and are not responsible to address the possible presence of, or danger from, any potentially harmful substances or environmental hazards including (but not limited to) radon gas, lead paint, asbestos, urea formaldehyde, toxic or flammable chemicals, or water and airborne hazards. Any information that may be conveyed by the Company for the benefit of the Customer with regard to such hazards is not to be construed as being in compliance with inspection or reporting protocols of any regulatory bodies unless such compliance is specifically claimed in the report.

This company and its inspectors are not licensed or insured as pest, fungus, or mold/mildew inspectors. Any information that may be conveyed by the Company for the benefit of the Customer with regard to pests or bio growths, or conditions conducive to their attraction or proliferation is made without warranty. These services are available from others licensed or certified in their respective fields.

The inspection and report do not address compliance or certification regarding past or present governmental codes or regulations of any kind. We are not code inspectors.

THE COMPANY IS NOT AN INSURING AGENT IN ANY RESPECT. The inspection and report are not intended as (or to be used as) a guarantee or warranty (express or implied) regarding the adequacy, performance, or condition of any structure, item, or system. All warranties (both express and implied) are disclaimed, including any warranty of merchantability or of fitness for a particular purpose.

In no case shall the Company be liable to the Customer for any special, incidental, or consequential damages. In no event shall the Company's total liability to the Customer for damages, losses, and causes of action, whether in contract, tort (including negligence and malpractice), or otherwise exceed the amount actually paid by the Customer for the Company's inspection and report.

If legal action is brought against the Company for any reason, the Customer agrees to pay reasonable expenses for pro se defense or representation by an attorney if the Company prevails.

The Customer agrees to hold Damon Savoia & Inside Outside Real Estate forever harmless regarding liabilities for any or all consequences arising from the inspection and report.

The report is provided for the exclusive and confidential use of the Customer.

The use of any information conveyed through the inspection and report by any party shall be deemed as a contractual understanding, acknowledgment, and acceptance of all terms of this agreement.

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INSPECTION FINDINGS

(Defects, Imperfections, Etc.)

1. The following photo shows the right (north) side of the building. While I believe the north half of the brick portion of the building was probably built just after the turn of the century; the rear addition appears to have been built around 1979. The south half of the brick portion of the building appears to have built in the 1930's, I believe.





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2. This is the rear of the building. The roof in the right foreground is over the box bailing machine.



3. This photo is of the left (south) side of the building, taken from the rear.



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- This photo is of the front and left side of the building, taken from across Main Street. (The photos showing this building from all angles that customers might approach strike me as being rather devoid of signage that might help perspective patrons recognize that this building houses one of the state's best Mexican restaurants. At this time, the Coldwell Banker real estate sign makes a larger statement than the restaurant sign.)



The photo, above, also shows that the right half of the building was built a number of years before the left half. (Actually, there is a structural brick party wall down the center of the present property that once separated the building.) The style of brickwork in the left half indicates a construction period closer to the 1930's

- The interior of the "Bank Bar" portion at the right front of the property has mosaic tiled floors applied directly over concrete. For the most part, these mosaic tile floor surfaces are in great condition. However, the following photo shows a few small



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tile pieces separating from the concrete just inside the main entry door.



Another small area with missing mosaic tiles has been filled in with mortar. This area is just east of the center of the meat counter.



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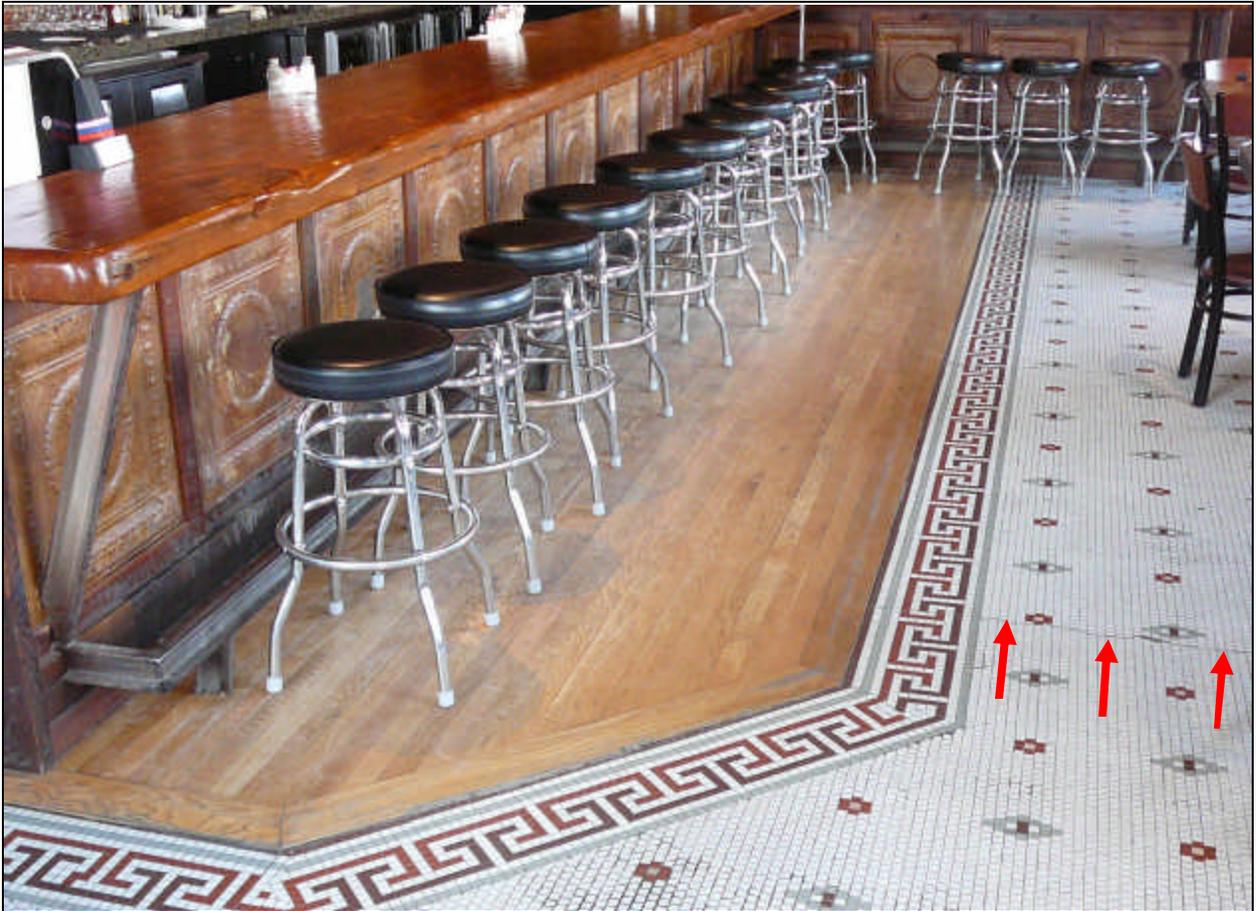
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6. The following photo shows the overall layout of the “Bank Bar” interior, as viewed from the front. Of particular note in this photo is the condition of the hardwood flooring finish under the bar stool areas. I suggest that this area of the hardwood floors be refinished at this time (to avoid further abrasion damage to the wood, itself). I also suggest planning to apply carnauba wax to the hardwood flooring surfaces on a regular basis in this area. One such wax can be purchased in large tins through Ace Hardware Stores. It is Trewax® in the clear version. The wax is very hard. It should be applied each time with #0000 steel wool pads to scrape away any soils left on the floor from previous applications. The wax will require a power buffing machine for this large an area. (In contrast, the finish of the hardwood flooring of work area behind the bar is still in great condition.)



Also, note the crack lines in the mosaic tile flooring. These are simply following the control joints of the underlying concrete. They are to be expected. (One such crack line is pointed to by the small red arrows in the photo, above.)



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7. The electrical junction box between the meat counter and the brick wall (at the east end of the bar area) is missing its cover plate.



8. The wall switch for the pass-thru freezer between the backs of the kitchens is missing its cover plate.



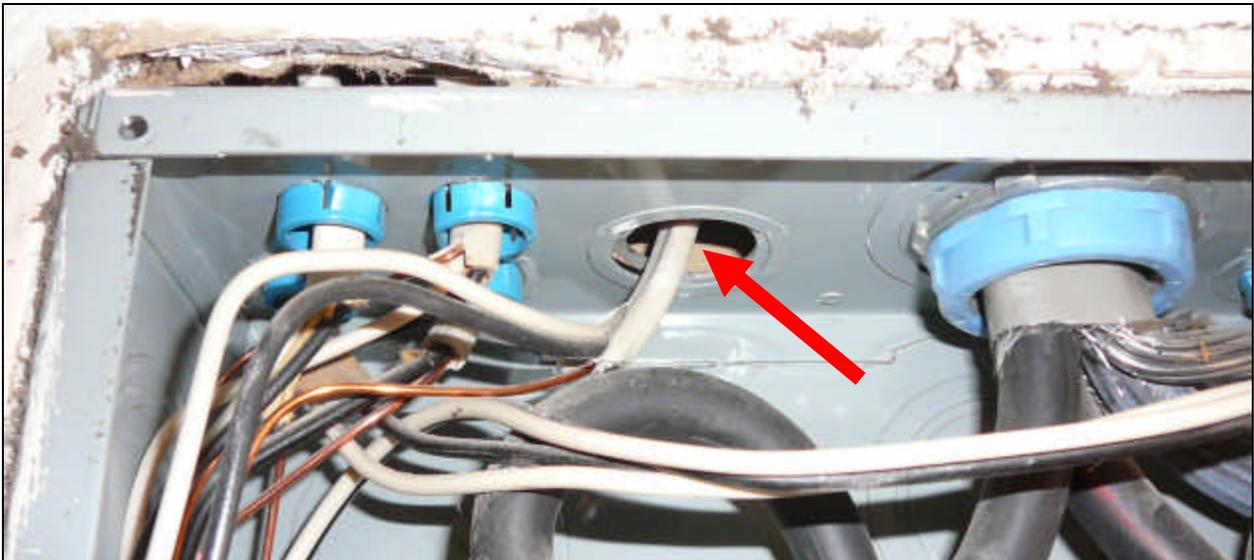
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9. The spray head at the kitchen sink for the upper rear apartment is broken. A qualified plumber should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



10. A branch circuit has been inappropriately added from the distribution panel across from the kitchen of the upper rear apartment. The photo, below, shows the Romex® - style cable leaving the panel without a required clamp bushing. This indicates work done by someone other than a qualified electrician. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



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11. The float valve for the toilet of the upper rear apartment lets water out of its top that tries to spray past the tank lid. I noticed water on the floor around the base of the toilet after flushing it. (There may also be leak past the toilet's floor flange.) A qualified plumber should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



12. The rim of the vanity basin in the bathroom of the upper rear apartment is cracked. A qualified plumber should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



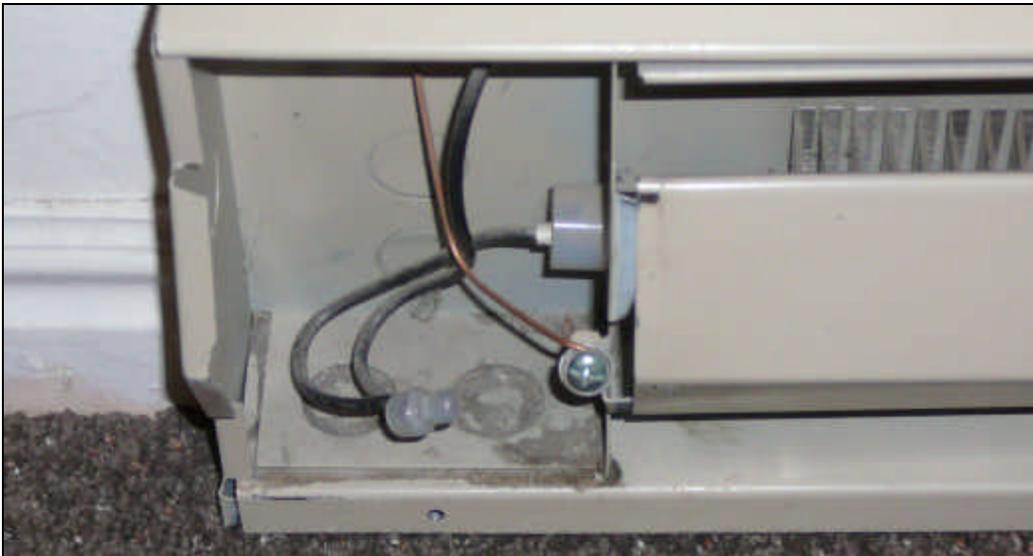
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13. The free-standing natural gas space heater in the upper rear apartment seems to work fine. However, its wall thermostat has been removed. (I had to temporarily touch the thermostat wires together to make the heater work.) A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



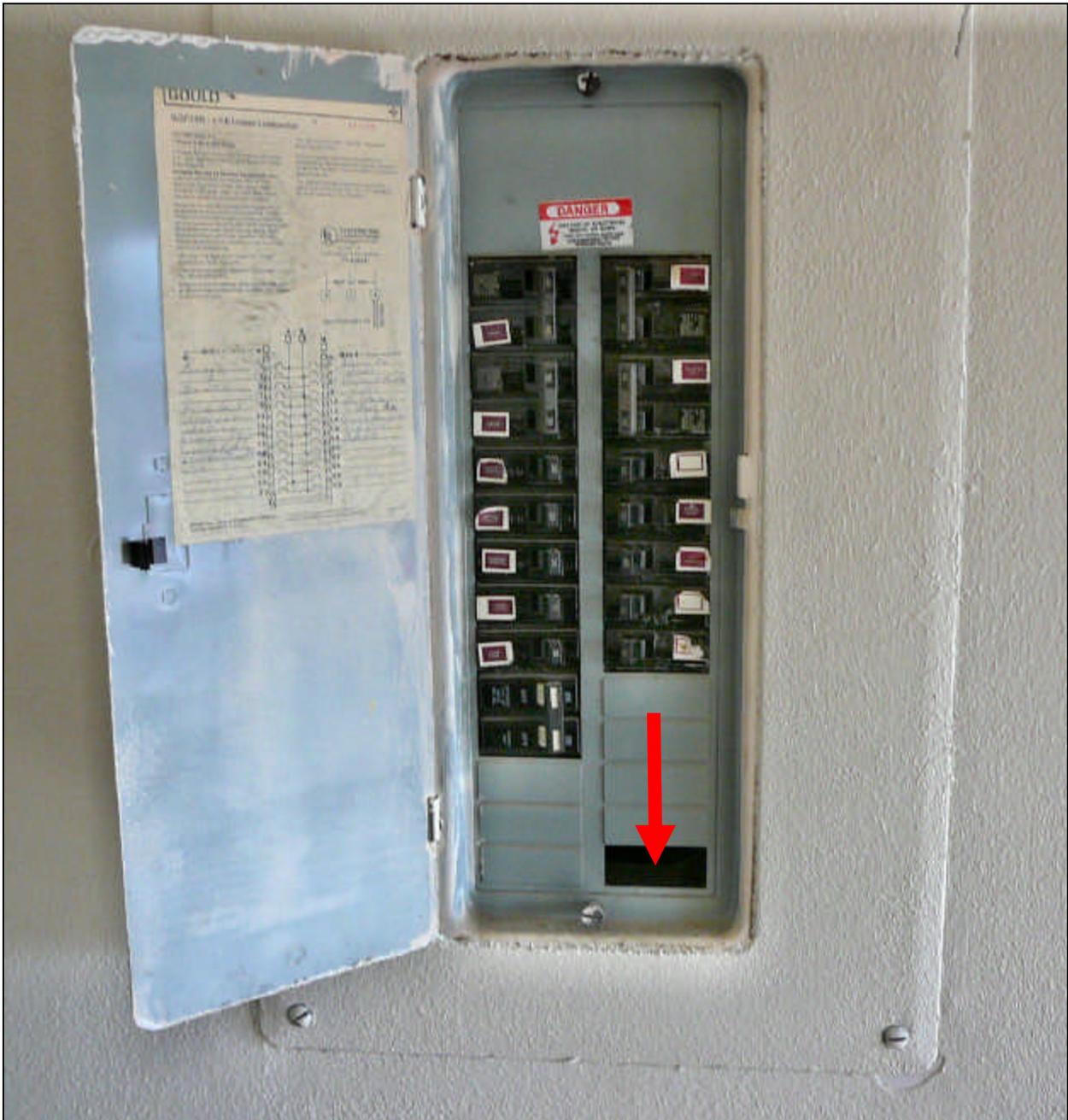
14. The junction box cover for the electric baseboard heater at the rear of the living room for the upper rear apartment is missing, exposing live wires. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



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15. One of the circuit breaker positions in the distribution panel across from the kitchen in the upper rear apartment is open. A black plastic pop-in cover plate made for that purpose should be inserted to block ready access to live buss surfaces behind the intermediate panel. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.

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16. The wood at the exterior side of the atrium door frames from the upper rear apartment to the balcony area is exposed where paint is peeling and missing. I suggest removing all unsound paint, repriming all resulting bare wood surfaces, and repainting to reasonably match adjacent trim.



17. The spaces between guard railing members along the perimeter of the balcony to the west of the upper rear apartment are too great to provide adequate protection for infants or small children. If toddlers are to be present, I strongly suggest remaking these guard railings to meet today's codes.



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18. The balcony stairway from the upper rear apartment area down to the rear exterior of the building does not provide adequate closure to protect infants or small children. If toddlers are to be present at any time, I strongly suggest upgrading these guard railings to meet today's codes.



19. The air conditioner compressor unit sitting on the balcony of the upper rear apartment appears to serve the apartments, in general (although I was not able to verify this). I believe it is associated with the natural gas furnace found in the small

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closet south off the landing area of the interior stairway. NOTE: I did not attempt to operate this compressor unit, as the outside air temperatures were too cold. This is a 5-ton compressor unit with a 2003 manufacture date.



20. The evaporative cooler shown in the following photo appears to be associated with the south kitchen. It was not in operable order at the time of this inspection.



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21. The rectangular steel exhaust ducts (from the kitchen, below) may have had some problems with leaks. As can be seen, makeshift tarps have been placed over some of their joints. A qualified HVAC contractor should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.

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22. The switch boxes on the wall just inside the stairwell from the balcony area to the HVAC room needs wall plates.



23. The following photo shows the 100-gallon natural gas water heater that seems to supply hot water for the restaurant and the apartments. (I believe this water heater recently replaced several other electric water heaters.) It has a year 2002 manufacture date indicated on it labels.





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24. The water heater has had some past leaks. However, they appear to have been repaired. The following photo shows some mineral deposits left from the leaks. I suggest monitoring this appliance for future leaks.



The following photo provides a close-up of the suspected past leak point.



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25. The TPRV (Temperature-Pressure Relief Valve) discharge line for the gas water heater dumps into a catch pan; but the catch pan has no drain to the exterior, itself. Unnecessary flooding could occur if the TPRV were to operate. A qualified plumber should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.
26. The water heater makes percolation noises when its flames are on. This indicates the possibility of considerable mineral buildup at the inside bottom of the tank. The life of the appliance might be meaningfully extended if a qualified plumber were to remove as much of the sedimentary mineral buildup as possible.
27. A junction box is open, uncovered, on the wall in the HVAC room beneath the electrical distribution panels on one of the south walls. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



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28. The intermediate panel front for the #1 Distribution panel in the HVAC room has breaker position knockouts that need closure. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



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- 29. Electrical Pane #2 in the HVAC room has numerous circuit breaker positions that should be covered with pop-in fillers. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



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30. Panel #4 in the HVAC room is mounted on the west wall. However, its panel front has no screws in place. I suggest adding screws to keep the cover in place.
31. The following junction box is open and should be covered. It is low on the west wall of the HVAC room. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



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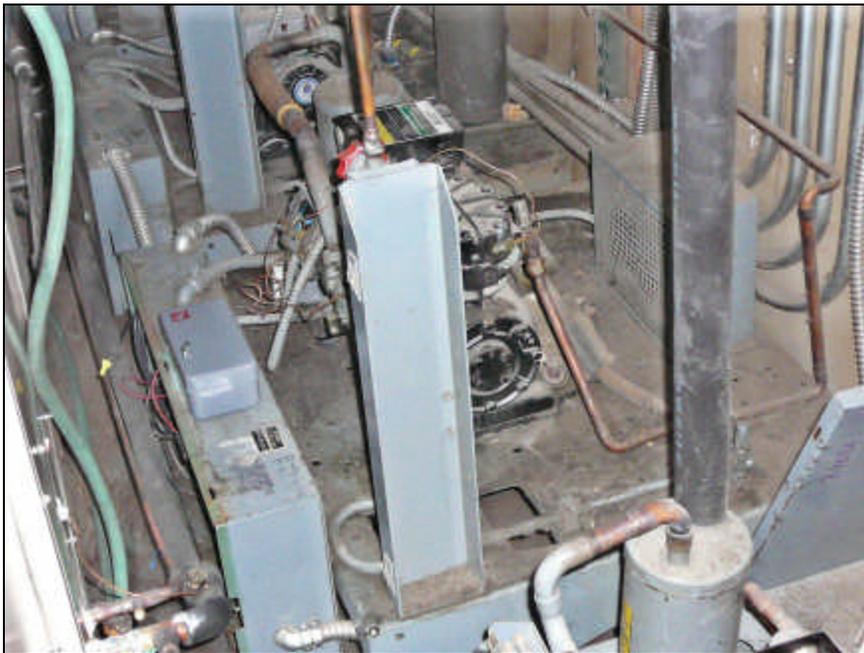
32. The following series of photos shows the five compressor units along the north wall of the HVAC room. The photos show the amount of dust that has been allowed to collect on these units. I suggest having them cleaned and serviced at least annually.





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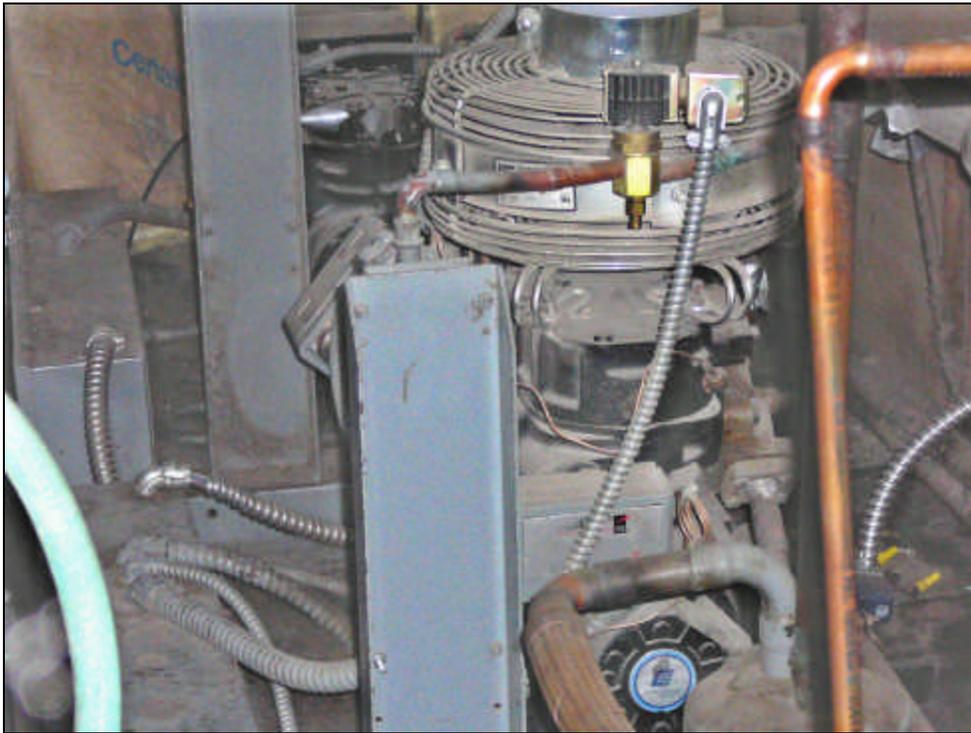
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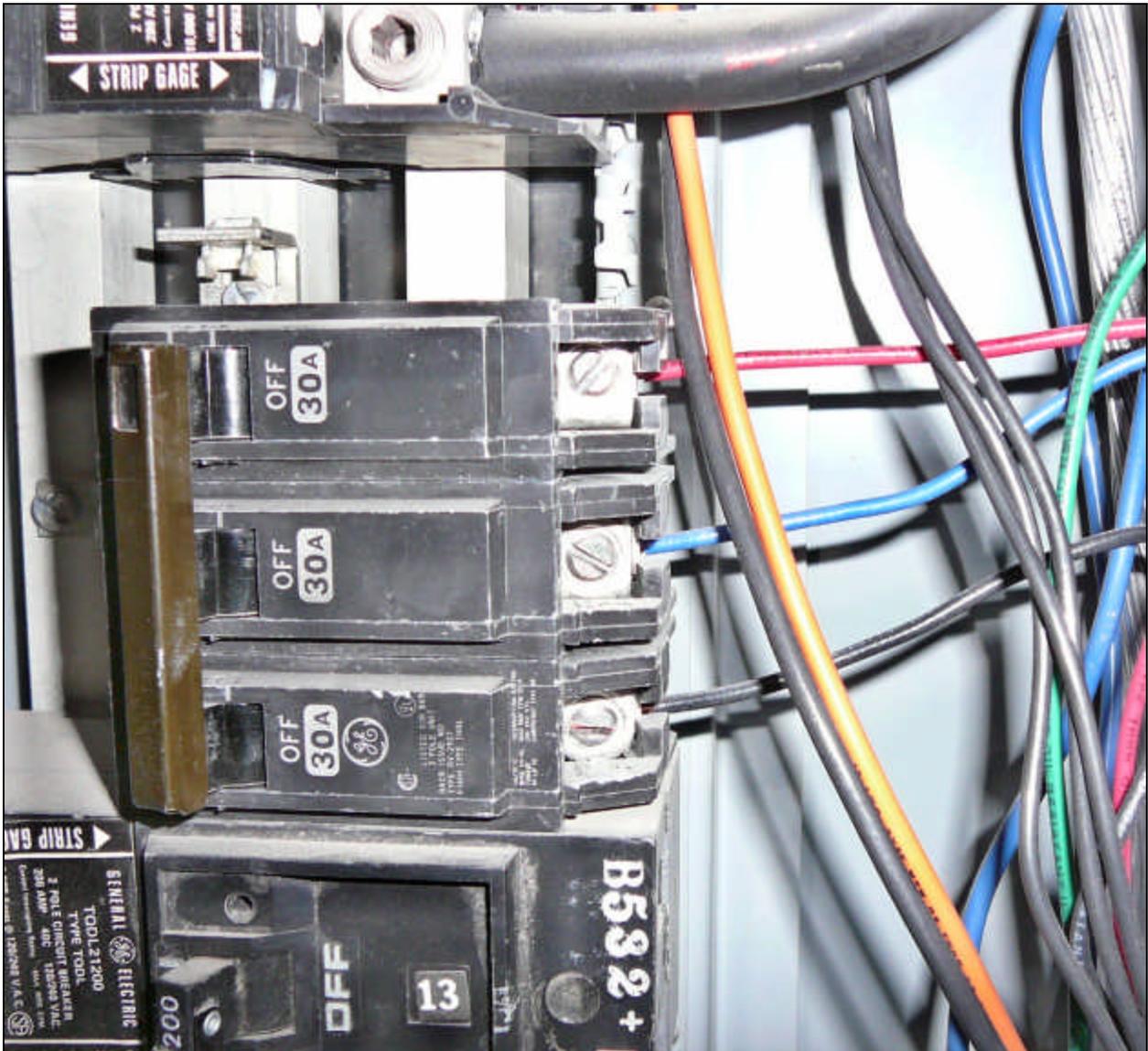
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33. The three-phase circuit breaker at head level in the #2 electrical panel of the HVAC room serves an HVAC blower unit. However, the conductors are only 12-gauge. I suggest having a qualified electrician determine whether these wires are adequately sized for the breaker. (Normally, 30-amp circuit breakers should be feeding wires at least as large as 10-gauge.)



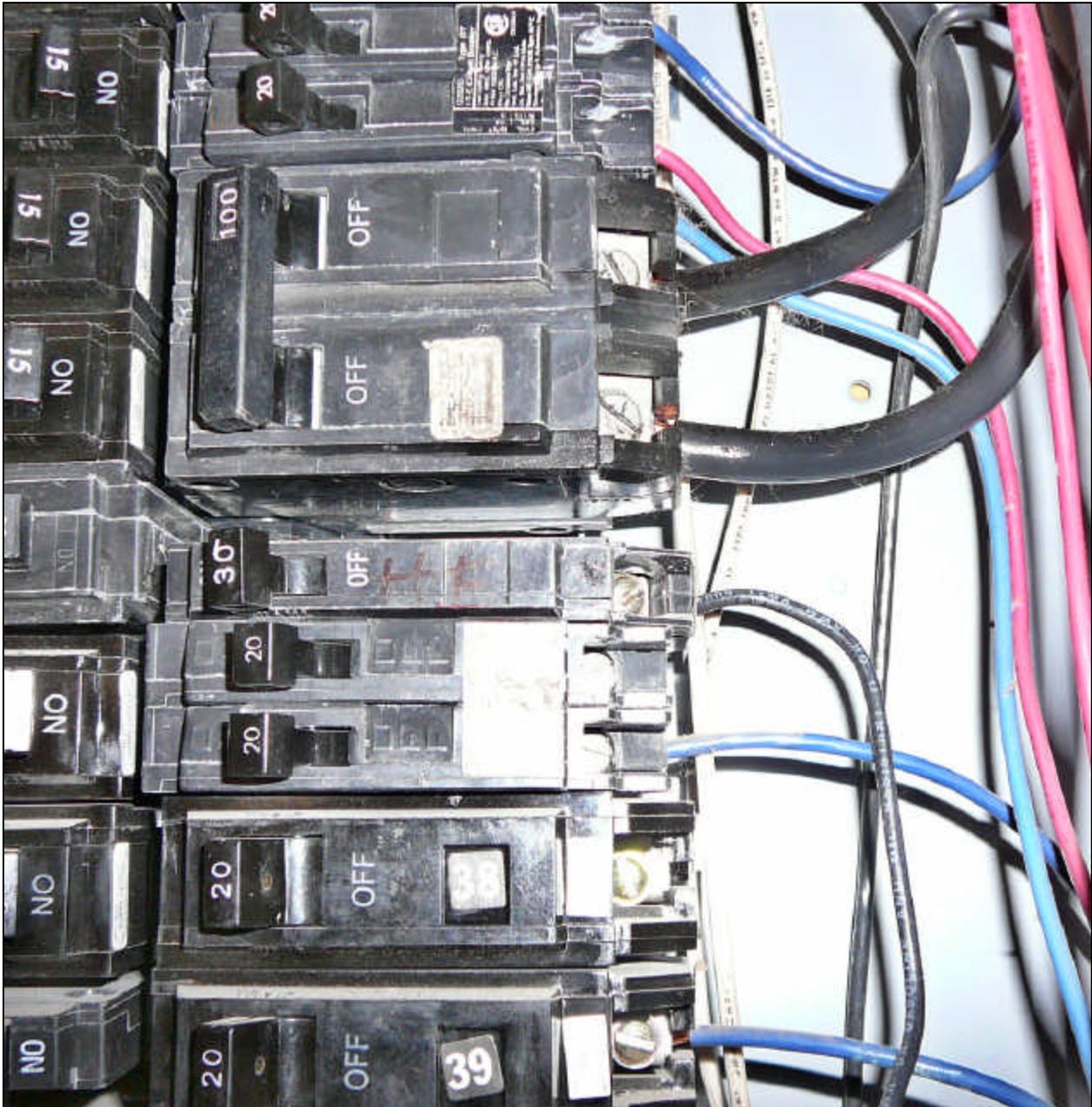
34. Even though the various electrical panels in the HVAC room are remote from the service entrance, they have their various neutral and ground conductors terminated to the same busses. It's my understanding the "subpanels" such as these should

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have “floating” neutral busses, isolated from the ground busses. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.

35. The 30-amp circuit breaker of Panel #1 in the photo, below, feeds a 12-gauge branch circuit. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



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36. The two 30-amp circuit breakers in Panel #1 shown in the photo, below, feed 12-gauge branch conductors. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



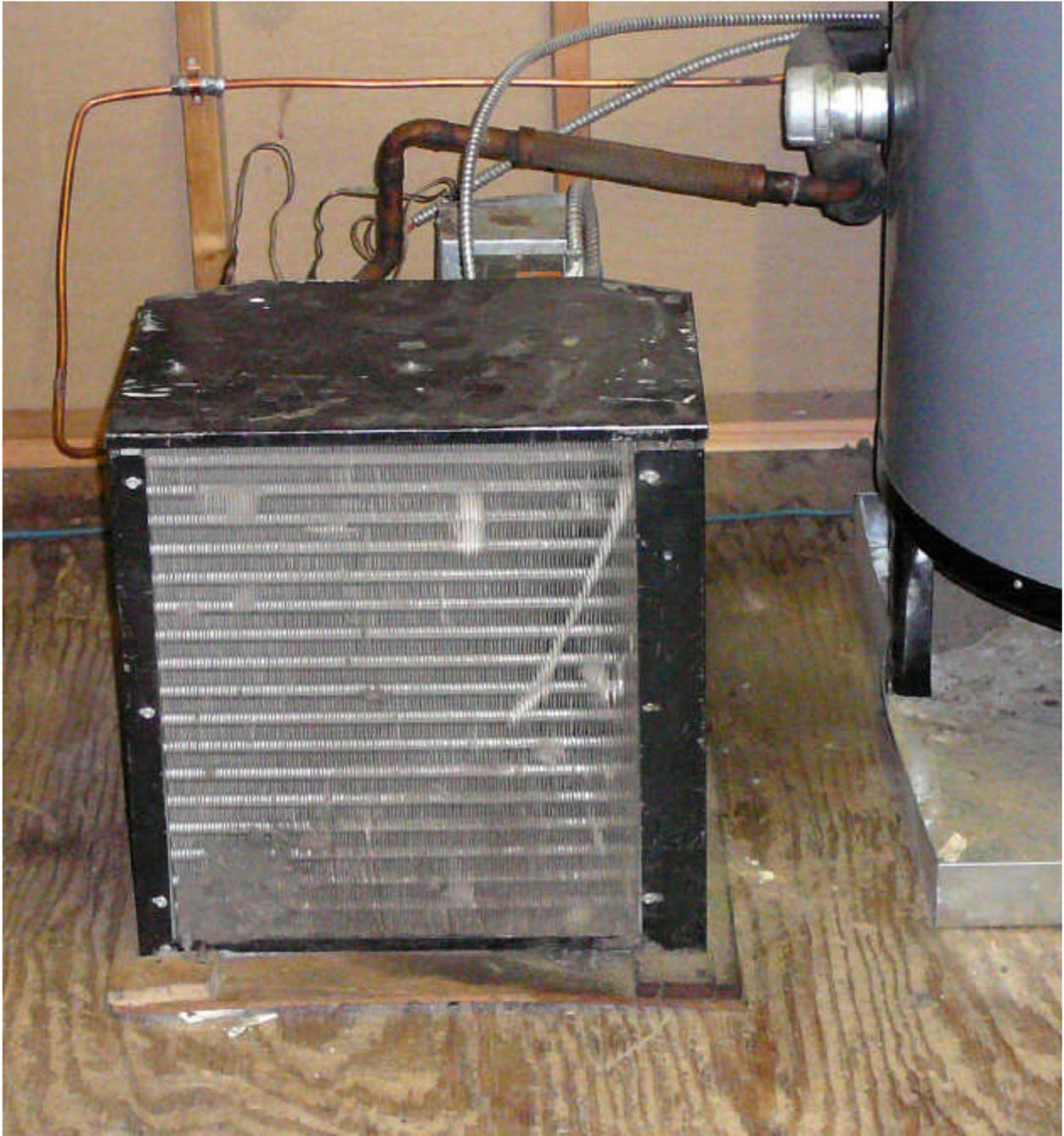
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37. The compressor unit on the floor of the HVAC room near the water heater has dust accumulated in its fine metal fins. This will soon begin to lower its efficiency and shorten the life of the compressor. I suggest having this (and all other similar compressor units) serviced at this time and at regular intervals, hereafter.

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38. The water stains on the walls of the HVAC room are from condensate formed because of moisture in the air getting cold when contacting the refrigerant lines. Perhaps additional insulation around the refrigerant lines would not only reduce the condensation; but increase the efficiency of the units. I suggest asking a qualified refrigeration specialist about this.



39. I noted some similar water stains between sheetrock panels on the west wall of the laundry room (east of the HVAC room); but was not able to attribute these stains to condensate or to roof leaks. I suggest having someone else look into the source of these water stains. (Perhaps the current owner or restaurant manager may know something about these stains.)

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40. The following photo shows an open junction box on the ceiling of the HVAC room. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



41. The following photo shows an open junction box in the cubby accessible over the stairs near the north central entry door to the building. This cubby is behind a hinge-down trap door in the east wall of the stairway.



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42. The doorway at the top of the first flight of stairs up from the north central entry to the building swings out over the stairs. This is somewhat more hazardous than a door that would swing out over a landing. (At least the handrailing is immediately accessible on the opposite wall of the stairs ☺.)

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43. The “dark room” (now abandoned) over the mid landing of the interior stairway has numerous wall outlets and switches without cover plates.



44. This photo was taken from within the “dark room”, looking back towards its short, open stairway back to the main interior stairway.



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45. This photo shows the rather unsafe set of wooden stairs (built much like a ladder) that leads from the main interior stairway into the “dark room”. I suggest considering removing this stairway, or blocking access to it.

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46. This photo simply shows the same stairway, from its lower end.



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47. The electrical distribution panel above the east side of the main interior stairwell has no apparent panel ground. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.
48. The small, single-paned, double-hung window of the bathroom off the upper right central apartment is rather drafty.
49. The lower sash for the window of the living room of the upper right central apartment will not stay raised by itself. (However, the single-paned window has two storm panels installed at its exterior, anyway.)
50. The vanity sink of the bathroom off the upper level hallway has a trap for its drain; but has no obviously qualifying vent stack. A qualified plumber should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.
51. The GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupting) outlet across from the kitchen sink of the upper left front apartment did not trip as it should. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.
52. The walls in the upper left apartment have many missing wall plates for their various receptacles and light switches. The cover plates should be put back into place.
53. Most of the cabinets in the upper left front apartment have no cabinet doors over them.
54. The casings are missing around the bathroom door of the upper left front apartment. This allows no privacy for the bathroom, as one can see through, past the door's edges.
55. The brick towers rising above the parapet walls around the perimeter of the original north (right) section of the building's rooftop have decaying mortar crowns and brick mortar. I suggest remaking the mortar crowns and repointing the bricks, as necessary, at this time.

(NOTE: This is a job for a very experienced brick mason familiar with matching older mortars to older bricks. One such restoration mason in Idaho is: David Hurds, of English Heritage, LLC. His business phone is: 208-433-0940. His cell phone is: 208-861-1160. His e-mail is: bricky@gobigwest.com.)

The tower above the left side of the front entry door is pictured at the top of the following page.

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56. This is another brick tower at the rooftop perimeter that needs repair.





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57. This is yet another brick tower at the rooftop that needs repair.



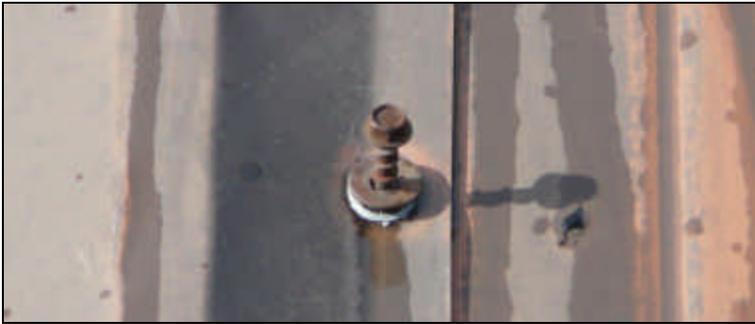
58. The stamped sheetmetal roof covering over the rear addition to the building is rather “beat up” by years of snow and ice, as seen in the following photo. (Note how the eave is very wavy due to distortions from ice loading.)



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59. The sheetmetal roof covering over the rear addition of the building has numerous washer-head screws that are backing out, as shown in the following photo. I suggest resetting (or replacing) these screws annually.



60. The following photo is of the north half of the rooftop, looking eastward. It shows a fairly new (about 6 to 7 years old) mineral-surfaced, modified bitumen ("torch-down") roll roof covering that was very expertly applied.



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61. This photo is of the south half of the rooftop, looking westward. This roof covering appears to be a little older. It consists of a “snow-coated” cloth membrane apparently “mopped” onto a previous roof surface. It appears to be in good condition. I cannot estimate its age, however. Therefore, I suggest asking for further information from the current owner.



62. This south half of the rooftop has a number of drains, as shown in the following photo. These drains are connected to piping in the attic spaces that let the water out to the exterior.





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63. This photo is of the south section of the rooftop, looking eastward.



64. This photo shows a closer view of the cooling fans associated with the main HVAC air handler for the restaurant and bar.





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65. The local fused disconnect box for the cooling fans that are shown in the preceding photo is open, with wires hanging out. I suggest keeping this box closed.



66. This is the nameplate on the exterior of the cooling coils that are shown in the previous photos. (This information may come in handy when communicating with HVAC contractors.)



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67. The parapet wall between the two original buildings has a sheetmetal cap with joints that need to be periodically sealed against water entry.



68. This photo shows yet another joint atop the parapet wall over the party wall between the two building sections. This joint must be kept sealed against water entry.

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69. This photo focuses on the interior side of the parapet wall at the front of the building (over the south half). Please note what appear to be repair patches. Please note, also, that I was unable to see all roof covering surfaces because of partial snow cover.



70. This photo shows a close-up view of a typical section of roof covering over the south half of the building.



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71. The abandoned steel tower that appears to have held holiday season lights was left atop the roof covering. I strongly suggest not allowing any objects with sharp edges to be left anywhere atop either of the two flat-sectioned roof.



72. The following photo focuses in on the only small section of eroding bricks that I could see around the entire exterior of the building. It appears to me that sections of the brick exterior have been repaired in timely fashions through the years. The following photo also seems to indicate that the original building was made taller, or that the present parapet wall was extended or remade since original construction. (The brick in the top half of the following photo appear newer than those of the rest of the building.)

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73. The following three photos focus in on the north wall sections by each of the windows, showing some recent grout repointing and possible replacement of whole sections of brick. (Notice the different glazes on some of the brick sections under the window in the third photo.)



(Notice the broken window sash glass in the photo above.)

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74. The following photo focuses in on the right rear (northwest) corner of the original building, where newer bricks were added in the past.



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75. This photo shows the incoming overhead power lines from the nearby transformer pole, where they meet the weatherhead at the right rear corner of the older section of the building. (Note that this is a 400-amp overhead service drop.)



76. Power for the entire building is brought from the transmission/distribution pole about 100 feet northwest of the building's right rear corner. This transformer bank consists of a 50-kVA and an approximate 25-kVA transformer wired to provide the equivalent of 3-phase power to the building from the 2-phase overhead distribution line. The building is provided with 3-phase, 240-volt, open-delta power on Idaho

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Power's Rate 9, according to the Idaho's PUC regulations.



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77. This photo shows a close-up of the two transformers that serve this property.



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78. This is an even closer view of the transformers.



79. The overhead electrical power is brought down from the weatherhead into a 400-amp main switch in the large box left of the window in the following photo.



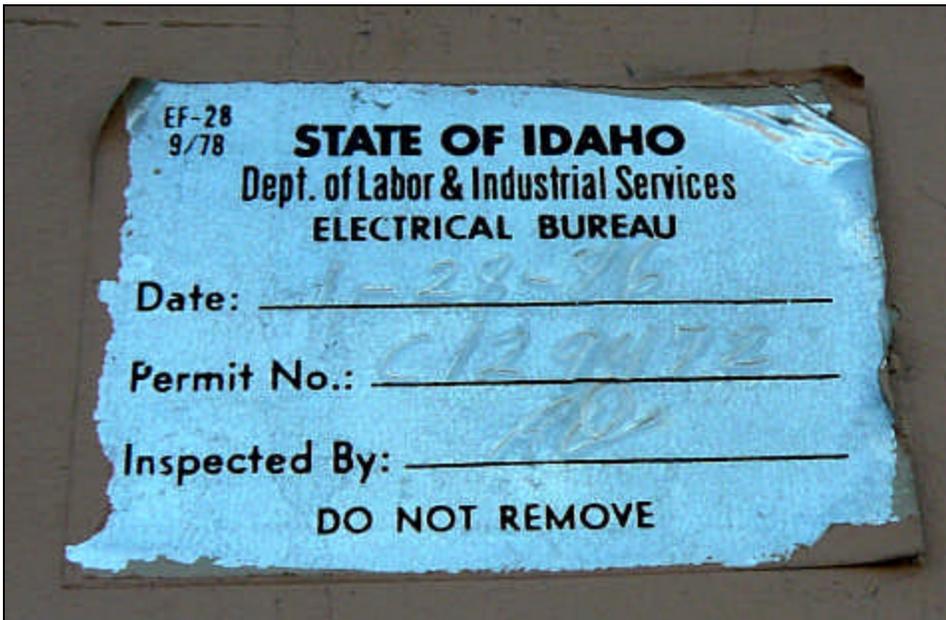
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The CT-style electric meter (Current Transformer Meter) is in the box immediately to the right of the window.



80. The code sticker on the front panel of the main fuse disconnect box is shown below. The date of the inspection indicates that the present configuration of overhead service was established in 1986.





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81. The following close-up of the main fused disconnect box shows its ratings.



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82. The exterior light fixture just outside the rear exit from the south kitchen has a broken base that should be replaced. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.



83. The concrete parking area behind the building has spalled surfaces (most likely due to the continued use of deicers containing salt). However, the concrete still seems to be sound. Please note that this area tends to stay wet because of ice and snow melting from the roof. The section of roof over the north half of the building drains to the rear eave of the sloped sheetmetal roof over the rear addition. Since snow and ice must slide off this roof, no gutter can be kept in place. I suspect it might even be somewhat dangerous at times under this rear eave of the roof when employees must use this entrance.



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84. As can be seen in the following photo, the vertically applied T1-11 plywood siding at the rear of the building would benefit from repainting at this time.



Since this type of rough-sawn fir plywood veneer tends to “open” its grain to the weather through the years, I suggest considering brushing or mopping on a sealer to fill the coarse grain openings. Such a sealer can be rather easily made by mixing drywall dust with an oil-based primer to the consistency of warm butter. By brushing the sealer back and forth over the surfaces numerous times, the drywall dust works its way into the pores of the open-grained surfaces, filling them. Then the oil-based primer in the mixture has a chance to truly use its surface tension to bridge the fine pores and form a weatherproof coating. After the mixture cures, any good quality water-based alkyd or latex exterior paint may be applied.

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85. The following photo shows the unpainted eave fascia along the rear of the building. I suggest painting this wood.



86. This photo shows the same type of T1-11 fir plywood siding at the upper level at the rear of the building (at the rear of the 2nd-story HVAC room). One can see that the plywood siding is “thirsty” for more paint. Therefore, I suggest filling and repainting all such plywood exterior surfaces in the near future.

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87. The 2x4-foot acoustic-style ceiling panels over the restaurant's dining area have some places damaged by occasional water leaks from the laundry room and/or bathrooms at the 2nd story above the rear of the main dining room. However, I witnessed no active leaks at the time of this inspection.
88. The GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupting) outlet in the bathroom off the south kitchen failed to trip upon an imposed ground fault. A qualified electrician should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.
89. The toilet in the bathroom off the south kitchen was running water after its flush cycle completed. This is a waste of water. A qualified plumber should address and/or correct this issue, as necessary.
90. The kitchen outlets of the upper rear apartment are grounded, but not GFI-protected. I suggest considering upgrading these with GFCI (Ground Fault Circuit Interrupting) outlets even though not required by codes in effect at the time of construction.

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DESCRIPTIONS OF MAJOR SYSTEMS & FEATURES

Foundation

Description of foundation system: Cast-in-place concrete footings and stem walls form the perimeters. Intermediate support is provided by concrete slab-on-grade floors throughout the original front portion of the building. The rear addition has dimensional lumber joists built up over an apparent concrete slab.

Comments: The foundation was observed from the exterior, only. No signs of significant movement since original construction were observed. The foundation system appears adequately sound for its age and type.

Under-Floor Crawl Spaces

Comments: I was not able to find any under-floor crawl spaces. It appears that there are no accessible spaces under the wooden floors of the rear addition. The only place where I could see any evidence of floor framing was in the drain collection area under the stairway between the Bank Bar and the north kitchen. This area exposes some dimensional lumber floor joists that appear to be sitting directly over earth and concrete, with no clearances to either.

Grading & Drainage

Types of systems in place: The north half of the roof drains to the rear (west). The south half of the roof drains into roof drains where the water is carried through cast iron drain piping and discharged to the exterior. The surrounding sidewalks and paved parking areas drain effectively away from the building. (There are no gutters along the back side of the building, as the heavy snows would only tear them off, if installed.)

Comments: The grading around the perimeter of the foundation generally allows surface waters to flow away from the dwelling.

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Roof Covering

Method of roof inspection: Viewed by walking upon all surfaces.

Current top roof covering: The north (right) half of the original building (over the Bank Bar side of the business) has a newer modified bitumen (“torch down”) mineral surfaces roll roofing very expertly applied. The south (left) half of the original building (over the restaurant’s seating area) has a snow-coated cloth overlay that appears to be in very good condition and rather new, also. The roof covering over the sloped “shed-style” roof for the rear addition is of factory-coated brown stamped sheetmetal. It is older—perhaps 20 or more years, I believe.

Estimated age: I believe that both front roof sections are no more than 5 years old. However, the stamped sheetmetal roof covering over the rear addition (the kitchens and upper rear apartment) appears to be 20 or more years old.

Number courses in place: One, only.

Estimated “Remaining Functional Life”^{*}: I believe that both front roof coverings should have from 15 to 20 years of remaining functional life. However, the sloped sheetmetal roof may have only from 3 to 8 years remaining functional life (with maintenance and repair at this time).

Estimated “Remaining Economic Life”⁺: I believe that both front roof coverings should have from 12 to 17 years of remaining economic life. However, the sloped sheetmetal roof over the rear addition may have only 0 to 5 years remaining economic life.

* “**Remaining Functional Life**” is the amount of time left before an average homeowner would choose to replace a roof because of leaks occurring that are too numerous or expensive to simply repair.

+ “**Remaining Economic Life**” is the amount of time left before a roof would most likely need to be replaced in order to satisfy a prospective buyer who may be receiving advice from a roofing repair contractor or other inspector. (Most prospective buyers and some lenders like to be assured that at least 3 to 5 years of “useful life” remain.)

Comments: All sections of the roof coverings will need ongoing annual maintenance. (However, this is typical for commercial flat roofs and for sloped sheetmetal roofs in this climate.)

Roof Structure & Attic

Accessibility and/or method of inspecting attic: I entered and viewed most areas.

Roof Framing: Sloped lumber roof joists.



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Roof sheathing (decking): Solid Pine boarding.

Type and thickness of insulation: There is no insulation over the upper ceilings of the original portions of the building. (I neglected to enter the attic spaces over the rear addition. However, there is an easy access hatch near the bathroom of the upper rear apartment.) I suspect this area is under-insulated, as well.

Comments: The attic spaces appeared dry and well ventilated at the time of this inspection. No structural problems were noted.

Walls (Interior & Exterior)

Perimeter wall structures: Structural brick (four courses thick, I believe.)

Partition wall structures: Stud wall construction, except for the structural brick wall running east-west down the interior center of the original building. Of course, the original rear wall of the building is not a "partition wall" separating the patron spaces from the kitchens.

Exterior surfaces: The exterior walls of the original portion of the building are entirely of brick. However, the exterior walls of the rear addition are of vertically applied T1-11 fir plywood, typical of the late 1970's.

Interior surfaces: Most of the interior wall surfaces of the lower level are of sheetrock applied over stud wall framing to allow installation of the newer electrical systems. However, I believe that lath and plaster may still remain in some areas at the upper level in the older section of the building. Nonetheless, most of the wall and ceiling surfaces throughout the entire building are now covered with sheetrock, taped, textured, and painted.

Comments: The exterior and interior wall surfaces are in generally satisfactory condition.

Ceilings & Floors

Ceiling structures: Dimensional lumber joists.

Floor structures: The floors throughout the restaurant and bar patron areas are slab-on-grade concrete with various floor coverings. The floors in the kitchen areas at the rear of the building have diagonal pine boarding and other wooden floor coverings over dimensional lumber joists over earth and/or concrete, with no accessible crawl



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spaces. The upper floors have diagonal pine boarding over dimensional lumber joists.

Comments: The floor and ceiling surfaces are generally in good condition throughout this building.

Doors

General descriptions: Some of the original true raised-panel fir doors remain at the upper level. However, slab doors have also been installed.

Comments: The doors on this property were in generally good condition.

Windows

General descriptions: The windows at the lower level are mostly fixed, thermal-pane units. The windows of the upper rear apartment are thermal-paned and aluminum-framed. The windows of the upper level left front apartment are thermal-paned. However, all other windows at the upper level in the older section of the building are still original, single-paned, wood-framed.

Gas Fireplace & Chimney

General description: Free-standing natural gas space heater.

Location of gas valve (if any): Inside the control chamber of the gas appliance.

Comments: All parts of the space heater appeared intact, clean, and safe for use. However, the wall thermostat was not in place. (I operated the appliance by temporarily connecting its two thermostat wires.)

Sidewalks and Parking Areas

General descriptions: Concrete flat work.

Comments: The concrete is in good condition for its age. Some surface spalling is noted—especially in the rear parking area (Cosmetic, only.) Some typical cracks, but no tripping hazards. The cracks may be kept filled with mortar or grout to keep the dimensions of any water inside the cracks or voids to an absolute minimum. This technique will maintain the slabs as long as possible against their eventual breakup



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by minimizing the leverage that freezing water can gain during its freeze/thaw cycles in this climate.

Stairways

Description: Wood treads.

Comments: This stairways do not meet today's standards, but are typical of the periods of construction.

Cabinets & Closets

Comments: The cabinets and closets were in generally good order. All cabinet doors, drawers, rollout shelves, and closet doors are operated (unless personal property prohibits).

Service & Entrance Panels

Service type: Overhead service.

Service amperage and voltage: 400-amp, 240-volt open-delta.

Service entry conductor materials: Stranded aluminum.

Locations of meter, main, and sub-panels: A commercial-style CT meter is located at the right-rear building exterior. There are six distribution subpanels in the building. One panel is located in the east wall of the main stairwell. Another panel is located in the east wall of the kitchen area of the upper rear apartment. The other four panels are located in the HVAC control room at the upper level of the older section of the building.

Comments: The main panel covers were removed and replaced during the inspection.

Branch Circuits

Types of overcurrent protection: Circuit breakers.

240-volt conductor materials: Stranded aluminum. Solid copper.

120-volt conductor materials: Solid copper.



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Comments: The branch circuits of this building are now grounded. (Although older-style “knob-and-tube” wiring remains in places, I believe it has all been abandoned in favor of the newer “Romex-style” cabling.)

Lighting

Comments: The lighting is generally in good order.

Receptacles & Switches

Descriptions: The lighting and receptacle circuits are part of a newer, 3-wire, grounded system.

Comments: A representative sampling of outlets were tested ... all that could be easily reached.

Restaurant and Bar Heating Equipment

Energy source: Natural gas.

Type: Central furnace, by Reznor®, 250,000 BTU capacity.

Location: In the HVAC room at the upper level of the left rear corner of the original portion of the building.

Method of heat distribution: Central, forced-air system, with ductwork.

Filter types and locations, if applicable: Two, 16x26x2-inch, passive, disposable filter elements are kept in a vertical orientation at the east end of the air handler in the HVAC room.

Comments: The furnace is now about 4 years old. This type of furnace typically lasts from 12 to 17 years, but may last considerably longer if its filters are kept clean and if it is professionally serviced on a regular annual basis.

The furnace was operated in its heating mode for about 5 minutes. The flame shape, color, and action were observed during startup and blower operation. The accessible portions of the heat exchanger and other furnace components were visually inspected.



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Restaurant and Bar Cooling Equipment

Energy source: Electricity.

Type: Refrigerative, air-to-air.

Location:

Method of cool-air distribution: Central forced-air, integral with the heating system.

Comments: The compressor unit is now about 4 years old. This type of appliance will usually last from 12 to 18 years, but may last considerably longer if kept professionally maintained on a regular annual basis.

The outside air temperatures were too cold to allow me to functionally test the air conditioning system without risk of damage to the compressor unit. (Compressor units should not be operated whenever the outside air temperatures are below 45 or 50 degrees Fahrenheit.)

I suggest having the air conditioning system serviced early each summer by a qualified contractor. However, in order for the service to be meaningful, the outside air temperature must be above 70 degrees Fahrenheit when this service is performed.

Make sure the service person first inspects the fine air fins of the heat exchanger coils at both the outside air compressor unit and at the indoor refrigerant coils near the furnace to ensure that they are not clogged with dust. (This must be done prior to making any adjustments to the coolant charge.)

This annual maintenance is very important to ensure that the compressor unit operates the minimum number of hours during each cooling season. (The life of a compressor unit is directly related to the number of actual running hours – not the number of years it sits on the property.)

When a gas furnace is part of the overall HVAC system, I suggest having it serviced annually at the same time as the air conditioning. (Gas furnaces should be checked and serviced annually, but the time of year doesn't matter so much.)

Ducts & Vents

Descriptions: Insulated in the attic spaces.

Comments: The ductwork was inspected for continuity only where visible access was available.

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NOTE: Although air flow may be discernible at supply registers, inspectors are not able to determine whether the availability and balance of air flow is acceptable to all prospective occupants.

Water Supply Systems & Fixtures

Source of domestic water: Public water system.

Location of main shut-off valve: In the space under the main stairwell.

Supply piping: The buried potable water service line from the public system to the building is of 1½-inch black plastic pipe. The supply piping throughout the building is mostly of 1-inch, ¾-inch, and ½-inch rigid copper with soldered fittings.

Comments: All visible supply piping appeared in good order. No leaks in the pressurized piping were found.

Drains, Wastes, & Vents

Type of collection system (if known): Public collection system.

Visible house drain piping materials: Older cast iron. Newer black plastic.

Comments: All drains were operated during the inspection. No leaks associated with drain plumbing or fixture seals were visibly apparent at the time of the inspection. (However, some leak stains were noted in the ceiling tiles over the rear of the restaurant's patron area.)

Water Heating Equipment

Energy Source: Natural gas.

Capacity: 100-gallon.

Model year (or date of installation):

Location: In the upper left rear HVAC room.

Comments: The flame chamber appeared reasonably clean and dry. No active leaks or signs of excessive corrosion were noted.

Dishwasher (in upper rear apartment)

Description: Built-in, under-the-counter.



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Comments: I ran the dishwasher through a complete “normal” cycle. Its soap dish opened, its spray wands rotated, and it did not visibly leak during operation.

Food Waste Disposer (in upper rear apartment)

Comments: The appliance appeared to be in good order.

Kitchen Exhaust (in upper rear apartment)

Type: Range hood, above cooking appliance, venting to the exterior.

Comments: The appliance appeared to be in good order.

Major Cooking Appliances (in upper apartments)

Descriptions: Free-standing electric range/oven.

Comments: All heating and control functions appeared to be working correctly at the time of this inspection.

Bathroom Exhaust Fans and/or Heaters

Comments: All bathroom exhaust fans appeared to discharge adequately to the exterior.

Dryer Vent

Description: Rigid sheetmetal tubular ducting.

Termination: The dryer exhausts up through the roof with an appropriate vent cap.

Fire Protection Equipment

Comments: I did not assess the fire protection equipment or systems, their presence, or lack thereof. These issues would best be discussed with the local fire marshal and would most likely be of greatest importance if and when any substantial remodeling was to be planned.

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OWNERSHIP TIPS FOR THIS PARTICULAR BUILDING

Each of the following subjects was included in this report because it pertains directly to this particular property. Each short article is written by Stan Audette for the benefit of his customers in hopes that their ownership experience will be enhanced.

Guarding Against Molds, Mildews, and Other Fungi.

Molds and mildews (recently so often referred to as “toxic molds and mildews”) can grow anywhere in and around our homes where the conditions are right. Molds need darkness, relative humidity above 50%, and organic food sources.

Sunlight will kill mold rather quickly. One way to kill mold or stop it from getting a “foothold” is to periodically let as much sunlight as possible into the areas where it might otherwise thrive.

Dry environments will not allow mold to grow. Even though mold spores may be present in almost any air, the spores must land on surfaces that can provide enough moisture for them to live. Otherwise they become dormant and eventually die. Surfaces that are being continually wetted or which never dry out can support mold colonies even when the surrounding air is relatively dry. However, if the air, itself, is continually above 50% relative humidity, the mold can thrive on otherwise dry surfaces.

Food sources can include even fine dust or lint that collects on otherwise indigestible materials. Wood, paper, or any other material containing cellulose can be a food source to molds. The significance of this is that most building materials contain these nutrients.

All these molds, mildews, and fungi have spores that are naturally produced and have been floating around in our daily environment for all our lives without causing much trouble for anyone. It’s the unique confinement of living spaces that lends itself to possibly harmful concentrations of these micro-organisms. That’s why we are learning to become more educated and more responsible with respect to mold.

Many types of molds typically found in today’s living environments may contain allergens that cause a wide variety of symptoms in individuals. These symptoms are most often related to the respiratory system, but may also involve rashes or dizziness. Not all people are allergic to these types of molds.

Some types of black molds have been identified as neurotoxins. These can cause severe, long-term damage to the nervous system. People can be hurt by these molds without ever developing an allergy to them.

Allergy doctors can usually identify which of the known molds may cause allergic reactions in any individual, but the doctors are not equipped to tell that individual whether he or she may be

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exposed to those molds in their daily environment. Southern Idaho now has mold specialists who can survey a home and identify any molds or mildews that may be present. Slide samples of molds or other fungi can be sent off the microbiologists. Air samples can be taken.

Southern Idaho also has several mold mitigation contractors trained in removing or treating mold and reducing the conditions that may be conducive to the growth of molds.

Furnace Maintenance

Furnaces should be cleaned and checked annually. However, it's not that important what time of year this maintenance is done. For this reason, it's usually wisest to have the 5 minutes or so of annual furnace maintenance done at the same time as any annual air conditioning service. This strategy can save homeowners the cost of an additional, unnecessary service contract fee each year.

Furnace Filters

The type of filter element being used in this system must be either washed or replaced as often as monthly to ensure the longest possible furnace life. It would be wise to consider the installation of finer filters to extend the life of the heat exchanger. I suggest contacting several local heating and cooling contractors to gain more knowledge about the types available. The simplest, cheapest furnace filters (such as often purchased in grocery stores) will typically extend furnace life up to 17 to 22 years. However, the more expensive and more efficient types can help the furnace's heat exchanger last up to 35 or 40 years. The better filtering systems provide the added benefits of helping keep the living spaces cleaner and reducing symptoms for allergy sufferers.

Air Conditioning System

Air conditioning compressor units (the outdoor portion of the system) should not purposely be run when the outdoor air temperatures are below 45 or 50 degrees Fahrenheit. (The cold oil in their sumps tends to lift up and into the Freon (coolant), leaving none to lubricate the compressor.)

When the outdoor air temperatures are between 50 and 70 degrees Fahrenheit, the compressor can safely be run and some cooling will take place; but this cooling effect is due primarily to the fact that the outdoor air is cooler than the living space air—not due to any change-of-state of the coolant (from liquid to gas).

Air conditioning systems cannot work as designed until the outdoor air temperatures reach at least 70° Fahrenheit. For this reason, annual maintenance should not be scheduled each spring until the outdoor air temperatures will be at least this warm. Heating and cooling maintenance contractors cannot tell whether the coolant charges are correct when outdoor temperatures are below 70 degrees.

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It's also important for the maintenance contractors to verify that the fine air fins of both the outside and inside refrigerant coils (heat exchangers) are free of dust clogging. (An access panel must be available to see the coils at the indoor unit. Sometimes, an access must be cut through the sheetmetal.) Freon (or other coolant types) cannot be correctly adjusted unless the coils are clean.

One should avoid purposely restarting a compressor unit within the first 3 to 5 minutes after it is stopped. (It is more difficult for the compressor motor to restart against a load. Allowing a few minutes for the coolant pressures to equalize helps take the load off the compressor.) During power outages, it's a good idea to quickly turn the thermostat to the "off" position until power is restored and appears to be stable. These precautions can help prolong the life of the compressor motor.

Air Conditioner Condensate Leaks

When refrigerative-type central air conditioning systems are working in the summer months, the indoor refrigerant coils unavoidably collect moisture from the air in the form of condensate, which gathers into larger and larger droplets of water until it drips off the coils. This water is gathered in trays beneath the coils where it flows by gravity into a condensate drain to carry the water away from the system. The drain piping should be routed either to the exterior or to another suitable drain—not just into a crawl space.

If the intended collection and drain path becomes clogged with the typical dust and lint that also lands on the same refrigerant coils (especially if the furnace filters aren't doing their job), the condensate can build up and overflow the collection trays. This causes water to leak down out of the system in places where it can often cause damage. Therefore, one should periodically check all areas directly beneath the indoor refrigerant coils of the air conditioning system for signs of leaks during the summer months when the air conditioning system is in operation. (Searching for the typical 3/4-inch and 3/8-inch soft copper tubing emerging from one of the metal cabinets at or near the furnace or indoor air handler, where the system blower is usually located can identify the indoor refrigerant coils. The larger of these copper-tubing lines is usually covered with black foam rubber insulation. Both lines are usually found running side-by-side from the indoor coils to the outdoor compressor unit.)

Condensate leaks down into the heat exchangers of combustion furnaces can lead to damaging corrosion that can cause breaches in the heat exchanger walls and threaten to let carbon monoxide from the flames into the living spaces.

Condensate leaks down into the crawl spaces or through the flooring can attract termites or lead to dry rot damage or the development of molds and mildews.

One should look for telltale signs of water trails or rust on metal parts of the furnace or ducting (plenums) under the refrigerant coils, or stains left from water puddles on floors adjacent to the furnace or air handler cabinets. Of course, if actual water is found puddling, then one can know for sure that a condensate leak is occurring.

If any signs of condensate leaks are noted, a qualified heating/cooling contractor should be contacted to make any necessary repairs before other problems develop.

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Inlaid Vinyl Floor Coverings in Bathrooms

Even though most contractors carefully seal the joints between the fronts of tub curbs and adjacent inlaid vinyl floors, water can also run to the walls. For this reason, I suggest extending a silicone sealant bead along the bottoms of all baseboard moldings around the entire perimeters of bathrooms that have inlaid vinyl floors.

Condensate at Aluminum-framed Windows

The aluminum frames around the windows of this home will usually become colder than most other surrounding surfaces during the winter months. As a result, moisture held in the warmer living space air will tend to condense on these surfaces. Often times, this condensate will form water droplets that gather and run down to form puddles on the windowsills. If this condensate puddles deep enough or often enough, it can damage the finishes of the windowsills or even discolor the surrounding wood or sheetrock materials.

There are several precautions homeowners can take to minimize the formation of condensate around these windows: a) keep humidity levels in the living spaces reduced to a reasonable level by utilizing exhaust fans to discharge humid air from the house that is produced by cooking involving the boiling of liquids, or by bathing and showering, b) position window coverings in such a way that some warmer air can circulate between them and the colder window surfaces, or c) allow more outside air to be mixed with inside air each day. (Since the colder outside air cannot hold as much water vapor, once it is brought up to living space temperatures its relative humidity drops dramatically).

Rust Stains on Concrete from Water

If water available for irrigation has a lot of iron (ferric ions) dissolved in it or rust (ferric oxide) particles suspended in it, constant watering of adjacent lawn or landscaping areas may result in reddish brown deposits accumulating on the concrete from the nearly unavoidable overspray. Although these stains are difficult to remove, they tend to wear away in time if something can be done to minimize the repetitive wetting of the concrete. Often times, an adjustment of the landscaping will help.

One can install decorative borders adjacent to the concrete flatwork of the driveways, walkways, patios, etc. that don't require watering and which provide enough separation to eliminate the occasional overspray of watering systems.

The rust-colored stains, themselves, can usually be greatly reduced (if not eliminated) by treating them with chemical cleaners designed for that purpose. The most effective product I've seen so far for removing these stains is made by Behr®. It's their Concrete Etchant and Rust Remover.

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Small Shrinkage or Settling Cracks in Sheetrock Surfaces

It is completely normal for new houses to acquire small cracks here and there in sheetrock surfaces due to initial settling and shrinkage. Usually, these cracks will begin appearing within the first year; and 80 per cent of their total movement will have occurred within the first 3 to 5 years.

The homeowners can usually very satisfactorily fill these cracks with matching painters caulking. (Elmers[®] now makes painters caulking in several colors that may match some of today's typical wall colors.) The matching caulking should be pressed as deeply as possible into the cracks, but all excess caulking should be immediately wiped from the surrounding surfaces with a damp Terrycloth[®] towel. In this manner, only the visibly contrasting black shadows of the cracks are eliminated. (If excess caulking is left on the wall or ceiling surfaces next to the filled cracks, it will be too visible. Even a closely matching caulking color will appear very different if enough surface area is in view; it won't reflect light the same as the adjacent paint; and its texture won't match.)

Draw-String Window Coverings

Any of the popular window coverings that incorporate drawstrings to raise and lower them can be operated in a manner that will greatly extend their expected lives. Rather than using only the tension of the draw strings for raising the window coverings, one may do most of the lifting by placing one hand under the center of the window covering's bottom rail to support most of the weight while simultaneously keeping only mild tension on the draw strings. In this manner, the window coverings are not raised by the strings, but only held in place by the strings.

Conversely, when wishing to lower the coverings, one may hold the drawstrings in their "release" position with only very slight tension. Then, rather than applying enough downward tension on the strings to cause the locking cams to release, one can gently lift the center of the bottom of the window coverings to release the cams. In this manner very little actual tension is required on the drawstrings to release the cam.

By following the procedures outlined above, very little wear occurs on the draw strings as they follow around their pulleys, and very little "tugging" is done on the window coverings attachment hardware to the window casings or walls. The window coverings will last much longer.

Removing Yellowish-Brown Deposits from Dishwasher Interiors

Rust-colored stains that often build up inside dishwashers can usually be removed by allowing the appliance to cycle through one or more full "normal" washes with the soap container filled with either citric acid crystals or with oxalic acid crystals. The citric acid or oxalic acid crystals can be purchased through most pharmacies. (In the Treasure Valley area, Orville Jackson's General Store in Eagle, ID usually stocks the oxalic acid crystals, whereas most other pharmacies may need to order it from their

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suppliers.) A good source of citric acid crystals can be found in the orange-flavored drink, Tang[®] (available in most grocery stores).

Avoiding Baked-on Food Soils in Oven Door Viewing Panels

I often see brown streaks of baked-on food soils deposited on the inner layers of glass in oven door “windows”. Once food soils get inside the oven doors, disassembly of the doors is required to access the surfaces to remove the stains.

To avoid this problem, I suggest being aware that cleaning fluids can easily enter the interior of oven doors through their edge seams and especially through their latch lever holes which are provided for the “self-cleaning” functions. Since the “self-cleaning” processes do not reach any food soils deposited beyond the oven door’s flexible seals, homeowners usually need to clean these perimeter surfaces separately with a strong detergent. I encourage the homeowners to wring all excess moisture from their cleaning rags before attempting to scrub these surfaces. Any water or detergents that get into the oven door may look clear at first (as they run down the inner glass surfaces), but any organic soils dissolved or suspended in the water will eventually darken and become baked on.

Importance of GFI Devices

Over the past 30 or so years, the electrical code authors have begun to recognize the importance of increased protection against inadvertent small electrical shocks due to ground faults. Physiologists have discovered that electrical currents as small as 30 to 60 milliamps per square centimeter passing through a heart muscle can cause fibrillation. This is probably the most serious condition that electrical currents can produce. Once a heart goes into fibrillation, it often requires a defibrillator to save the patient. (Most of us don’t have this type of equipment in our homes.) Ironically, if greater amounts of current pass through the heart muscle, it’s far more likely that the heart will simply spasm in response to the shock and then regain its normal rhythm.

Research has found that older people and persons with unsound hearts are much more susceptible to small shocks that might be below the threshold of perception of younger, healthier people. For this reason, it’s quite possible that a malfunctioning appliance in a home could be creating small shocks that don’t bother one user, but which could kill another user.

The electrical industry has addressed this danger by requiring the installation of protective devices (commonly known as GFIs, for Ground Fault Interrupters) to serve all outlets that are within six feet of plumbing fixtures or major appliances likely to have exposed surfaces directly connected to ground. Outside outlets and outlets over bare concrete surfaces are also required to have this type of protection.

These GFI devices are usually set to open (trip) a circuit if an imbalance between the “hot” and “neutral” conductor flows greater than 10 milliamps is measured. While some of these devices are incorporated into GFI-type circuit breakers, the more modern implementation is the use of GFCI

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(Ground Fault Circuit Interrupting) duplex receptacles ... the outlets most often seen with special “test” and “reset” buttons.

The GFCI outlets were originally designed for use on fully grounded circuits, i.e., circuits having a black, white, and a bare ground conductor. However, these outlets can also be appropriately applied to ungrounded circuits. (This is a little-known fact within much of the industry which otherwise appears to be in conflict with the general rule about allowing only 2-hole outlets ungrounded circuits.)

NOTE: The locations and degree of implementation of GFI-type devices has changed dramatically over the past 30 or so years, according to codes adopted by various authorities. (One cannot expect an older house to be in compliance with today’s codes in all respects.)

Making Incandescent Light Bulbs Last Longer

Have you ever noticed that light bulbs seem to burn out just when you turn them on? That’s because their frail filaments are hit hard and suddenly by a large burst of voltage and current every time conventional switches turn them on. Those forces actually cause them to be “jarred” physically. (Sometimes, in a quiet room, you can actually hear the filaments sound like a released spring in response to the sudden energy put to them.)

To reduce the amount of unnecessary stresses that switches can place on light bulb filaments, I suggest considering the incorporation of what some people call “soft switches”. These are any number of solid-state dimmer devices that allow the lights to be turned on gradually, instead of simply “slamming” them with the sudden forces that most contacts create. Any dimmer switch that forces the user to move a dial or toggle through a continuously increasing range of voltage or current in order to get the fixture to its fully “on” position each and every time the light is turned on could be considered as a “soft switch”. (Any style of rotating-dial dimmer switch with a push-push on/off action, or a slide control in combination with a rocker switch that allows the dimming level to be set, but yet also allows a separate “on/off” action does not qualify as a “soft switch”.)

I suggest incorporating soft switches wherever expensive light bulbs are used, or where light bulbs are exceedingly difficult to access (such as at high ceilings or over stairways). The use of soft switches can extend bulb life by as much as a factor of 5 or 10.

Refrigerators and Freezers on GFI-Protected Circuits

Most garages built after 1976 have GFI-protected outlets. Other garages and exterior storage rooms are often subsequently “upgraded” with GFI-type protection. If refrigerators or freezers are plugged into these outlets they can sometimes cause “nuisance” trips of the protective devices. This can lead to food spoilage if the tripped conditions manage to go unnoticed for too long.

I suggest placing refrigerators or freezers in garages (or for other locations that may be protected by GFI-type devices) only upon non-GFI outlets. Usually, a qualified electrician can manage to provide such an outlet in these locations.

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Loose Door Knobs and Door Pulls

When the surface plates (escutcheons) of doorknobs and closet door pulls are allowed to slide loosely around on finished surfaces, the surfaces are often damaged. Therefore, I suggest keeping all hardware tightly secured to avoid such damage.

Laundry Valves

Since most washing machine hoses will eventually fail, it is wise to close the supply valves to which they are connected after each appliance use. For many homeowners, this would seem to be very inconvenient ... especially if the valves are hard to reach behind the washing machine or require many turns to operate. In these cases it would still be appropriate to turn the valves off during long periods of non-use, such as during vacations, etc.

Alternatively, more modern valve stations are made with simple globe valves that require only one-quarter turn for their full range of motion. Some valves are also available with a single lever to control both hot and cold valves simultaneously.

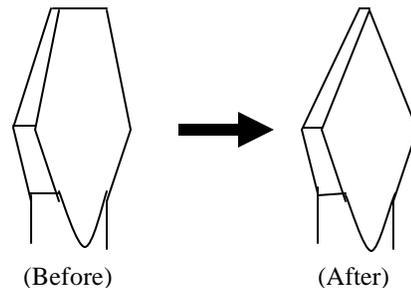
If easier valves are not a ready option, it may be prudent to employ only the more expensive, steel-reinforced washer hoses to help reduce the chances of flood damage.

Curing "Paint-Bridged" Double Hung Windows

The clearances built into the wooden sashes and frames of older-style double hung windows do not allow for more than one or two coats of carefully applied paint before the freedom of the sashes is severely impaired. If this condition is found, I make the following recommendations for regaining operability of the windows.

First, if paint is "bridging the joints between the wooden window frames and their adjacent moveable sashes, I suggest making a custom scraping tool that can remove a "V"-shaped wedge of paint uniformly along these joints, rather than simply attempting to free the joints with a knife or razor blade. (The narrow slices made through the paint with a knife blade may separate the sash from the frame, but the typical waviness of the cut line usually creates interlocking shapes that still prevent the sashes from moving as freely as they should. By removing a "V"-shaped wedge of paint, most of the interfering paint is actually removed.

A scraping tool can be rather easily made by bending the shank of an inexpensive slotted screwdriver



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at 90 degrees about one inch from its end, then grinding its end to a point, as shown in the adjacent diagram.

Keeping Wooden Drawer Glides Working Smoothly

Many older cabinets and closets have drawer boxes that depend upon wooden drawer glides, rather than any type of hardware. These drawers and their associated face frames and spreaders were typically made with very tight clearances as a mark of good craftsmanship. But, after years of paint thicknesses inappropriately applied many of the drawers no longer work very well (if at all).

First of all, I suggest avoiding the placement of any paint on the outer sides of any wooden drawer box unless it is designed to rely upon separate rollers or metal or plastic guide hardware. If too much paint has already been applied to the wooden surfaces, it may be necessary to strip the coatings away to obtain satisfactory action in the future.

If the bare wood sides of drawer boxes become unsightly with soils, they can usually be lightly sanded and/or bleached with a mixture of 1 tablespoon of oxalic acid crystals dissolved in a quart of water.

Once acceptable clearances are obtained between drawer boxes and their face frames and spreaders, etc., I suggest rubbing all gliding surfaces thoroughly with clear paraffin wax to lubricate them. (Do not use beeswax or soap, as the beeswax collects dirt and eventually becomes very gummy, and the soap doesn't last very long.) (NOTE: Once the paraffin is applied, paints and stains won't adhere to these surfaces in the future.)

By keeping paraffin wax on older-style drawers, they can be filled with heavy personal property and still glide more smoothly than many of today's hardware-based systems.

Reconditioning Older Tongue-and-Groove Softwood Floors

When older softwood floors become scratched, dented, and stained, one can usually use a floor sander to remove the damaged wood and finish to present fresh, clean wood that can then accept one of today's harder finishes (thereby adding better protection against further similar damage). However, these floors can be sanded only so much. Once there remains less than 1/16 of an inch of wood over the jointed sides of individual boards, these strips of wood tend to separate into long splinters that can rise up from the floor. Therefore, if too much sanding has already been done, one must resort to other methods of removing deep-set stains. (The amount of wood remaining over a tongue-and-groove joint can often be determined by sliding a thin razor blade down between individual boards until it stops against the "tongue" of the joint ... much like measuring remaining tread depth on rubber tires.)

Most water-born stains (typically darker-colored) can be successfully "bleached" away with a solution of oxalic acid. (One can make this solution by adding about 2 tablespoons of oxalic acid crystals to each gallon of room temperature water.) The solution is then simply flowed over the bare wood to let stand a few minutes. It is best to thoroughly rinse the acid solution away with fresh water

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after that. The acid crystals can usually be purchased through any pharmacy; however, Orville Jackson's General Store in Eagle, Idaho typically stocks the product for a reasonable price.

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