



**Design Review Board (DRB)  
Staff Report**

Exterior Renovation

Case # 19-79: 124 Newsroom  
120 Monroe Ave.  
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant/Owner: 124 Newsroom, LLC  
120 Monroe Ave.  
Memphis, TN 38103

Background: DRB review is required for this project because it received an \$80,000 Exterior Improvement Grant and a \$200,000 Development Loan at the June 19, 2019 CCDC Board Meeting.

The subject property is a 0.126 acre parcel on the north side of Monroe Avenue, in the block between Main Street and Second Street. The property contains a row of 4 attached historic buildings. While the upper floors are vacant, part of the ground-floor of the property is currently in use as McEwen's restaurant.

Although the restaurant originally opened Downtown in 1997, the applicants have owned and operated it for more than 10 years. After leasing the property from a family trust for eleven years, the partners at McEwen's decided to purchase the property which includes their current space plus one additional bay to the east as well as the upper floors in all four buildings. The proposed renovation will include both the ground-floor and the upper floors.

This application includes plans for the exterior renovation. The applicant will return with a separate application for signage.

Project Description: Exterior improvements include repairs and painting of the existing stucco on the south façade. The existing EIFS on the west façade (November 6th alley) will be removed and replaced with stucco.

The brick on the north façade (rear alley) will be tuckpointed and repainted. The existing historic cast iron structure at the storefront at 124 will be restored to match the existing currently exposed cast iron at 120.

New wood storefronts will be constructed in all four bays. Fabric awnings will be located above the main entrance of the restaurant at 120 and at the residential and service entries at 124. The storefronts at 118 and 122 will incorporate ribbed art glass in the transoms to help with sun glare in the dining rooms and help differentiate the secondary bays from the primary entrance bays.

Two existing windows at the second level of 118 and one window at the November 6th alley will be restored, windows will be replicated to match on the Monroe façade, and all other windows in the alleys will be 1/1 single hung windows to match a traditional profile.

Architectural lighting will include up/down sconces at the pedestrian level and down sconces near the roof line.

Paint colors will be a gray palette with color highlights at the awnings and main restaurant entry door.

Signage and lighting fixtures will be included in a separate application.

Staff Report:

The proposed exterior renovation is consistent with the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines and DMC priorities of designing with consistency, improving the pedestrian experience and honoring the heritage of the city.

The proposed renovation works to preserve the character of the row of buildings listed above while also adapting the space for commercial expansion and residential use.

Embracing the architectural details of the building and some existing storefront features, the proposed design captures some individual design features for each building while introducing a more uniform approach to the upper floors including paint color, windows and lighting.

The storefronts are designed to emphasize the two separate entrances for both commercial and residential uses with projecting signs and awnings, while maintaining ADA access for each building.

The conversion of the vacant upper floors to residential uses and the addition of awnings and lighting, improve the pedestrian experience along Monroe, a significant street in the Downtown Core. Additionally, the introduction of ribbed art glass to help with sun

glare ensures all windows are transparent and allow for maximum visibility.

Staff believes the proposed renovation is a cohesive design that highlights the historic character of the building and retains the building's integrity while also adapting to the mix of uses. Staff recommends approval and is excited about this strong new addition to Monroe Ave.

**Staff Recommendation:** **Staff recommends approval with the condition that the applicant return with a separate application for lighting and signage.**