



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

Exterior Renovation

Case # 20-25: 645 E. Georgia Ave.
Memphis, TN 38126

Applicant / Owner: Tyrone Currie
645 E. Georgia Ave.
Memphis, TN 38126

Background: DRB review is required for this project because it received a South City Good Neighbor Grant at the May 20, 2020 CCDC meeting.

The subject property is a 1-story commercial building on the south side of E. Georgia Ave., in the block between S. Lauderdale and McKinley St. The building sits next to vacant Shelby County Schools MLK Student Transition Academy (620 South Lauderdale St.) and Georgia Avenue Elementary (690 Mississippi Blvd.) The site contains a 42,000 square foot brick building with a surface parking lot to the north. The entertainment center has been a part of Memphis history for over 50 years (est. 1962), welcoming artists such as Aretha Franklin, Tina Turner, Lou Rawls, Ray Charles, Elvis Presley, Gladys Knight, Lionel Richie, and many others.

The proposed renovations will allow for the entertainment center to expand its business model to include educational tours and lectures in an effort to promote the rich history it has played in rhythm and blues, rock and roll, soul, jazz and gospel music genres in a city once known as the “Music Capital” of the world. The center hopes to provide additional jobs to the neighborhood, a safe environment for older community members to enjoy music, and an affordable venue for upcoming promoters and entertainers.

Project Description: The changes funded by the South City Good Neighbor Grant are primarily focused on the north side of 645 E. Georgia Ave. In its present condition, the northern façade is a large, blank brick wall, which includes the main entrance, one wall sign, minimal landscaping, a deteriorated ADA access ramp, and a small pavilion covering barred and boarded doors. The building has minimal

lighting and the parking lot is in much need of resurfacing and repairs.

The building's front entrance and structural beams will be framed with wood along with a new parapet wall. A new awning will be placed above the entry, along with new metal signage and LED lighting. The brick will be painted gray on the northern, eastern and western facades. Decorative wall lighting will be installed on the northern façade, and for additional safety, flood lighting will be installed on the eastern, western, and southern facades. The pavilion to the eastern side of the northern façade will be removed. The doors existing under the pavilion (currently boarded with burglar bars) will be replaced with metal exterior doors with wood grain metal finish.

Six (6) large outdoor vinyl banners are to be installed with rigid flex brackets along the expansive brick façade. Each of the elevations will highlight a legendary artist that has performed at Paradise – Elvis Presley, Johnnie Taylor, Tina Turner, Aretha Franklin, Bobby Rush and B.B. King. These banners are a budget-friendly, durable option for the applicant to fill a large blank canvas in a visually stimulating way. The banners are wind and weather safe and non-invasive to the principal structure.

Metal benches, decorative trash cans, wooden planters and landscaping will be added to either side of the front entrance, along with a new handicap accessible ramp. The parking lot will be resealed with asphalt-based emulsion seal and striped with white paint to allocate for 118 general parking spaces and 6 handicap spaces. Two (2) parking lot poles will be painted black with new LED lighting. The public sidewalks will be power washed and resurfaced. The rod iron fence will be repaired and painted black.

Staff Report:

The Downtown Design Guidelines promote creativity and encourage design that fits within context. The South City Good Neighbor Grant aims to strengthen the character of important places within the south city community through enhancing curb appeal and the pedestrian experience.

The proposed changes to 645 E. Georgia Ave. encourage property investment within the neighborhood and helps an existing business succeed. The landscaping, ADA improvements, lighting, painting, and addition of banners further activates the long standing character of the building. The building itself holds memories for many Memphians and residents of the neighborhood that expands

decades. The proposed designs encourage creativity and character, celebrate historic significance and meaning, and enhance the pedestrian experience for the neighborhood.

Staff Recommendation: **Staff recommends approval.**