



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

New Construction

Case # 18-94: 138 Museum Lofts
663 & 673 Cooper St.
Memphis, TN 38104

Owner: 138 Partners, LLC

Applicant: Christopher Schmidt
Renaissance Group
9700 Village Circle, Suite 100
Lakeland, TN 38002

Background: DRB review is required for this project because it received a 10-year PILOT at the June 12, 2018 CCRFC Board Meeting. The subject property is located at the northeast corner of Huling Avenue and Mulberry Street. The site consist of attached vacant buildings on two parcels covering about 0.6 acres. Once home to Lucky Cosmetics, the oldest portions of the building date back to 1901. A more recent addition to the east was added in 1956. The applicant plans to demolish the existing buildings on site and construct a new 4-story building. The new building will include a 76-space parking structure on the lowest level and 68 residential units above. Unit size will vary from 580 sf micro units, 830 sf studio lofts, and up to 1,268 sf for two-bedroom units.

Project Description: The new construction will consist of three floors of apartments built above structured parking with vehicular access on St. Martin St. Due to drastic grade changes from east to west, parking will not be visible from Mulberry St. Where parking is visible, garage ventilation screens will be used to create openings along ground floor of the southern and eastern elevations. The three floors of apartments above will be built around a central courtyard that has a shallow pool and minimal landscaping. The entrance with the lobby and office for the apartments will be oriented towards Huling Ave.

The material palette will include charcoal brick veneer, corrugated metal panels, ACM panels and fiber cement board paneling. The southern and western elevations will primarily use corrugated

metal panels, ACM panels and charcoal brick veneer at the ground floor. The eastern elevation will include some of these materials at the corner, while primarily using fiber cement panels. The northern elevation, while only partially visible, will use fiber cement boards in two paint colors without windows, do to limitations of the property line. Considering this limitation, staff recommends the applicant pursue an artistic treatment or building badge on this elevation, and return with a separate application for their approach.

The design aims to make both corners along Huling the focus of the structure with understated corner features and plans to incorporate signage with metal canopies on the southern and western elevations.

Additional site improvements include street trees that will be added along Huling and Mulberry in tree grates and exterior lighting along the western, southern and eastern elevations.

Signage will be addressed in a separate DRB application.

Staff Report:

For purposes of the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines and Principles, the subject property is located in the Neighborhood Center context. Although it is adjacent to the South Main Historic Preservation District, the site is not located within the Landmarks District.

Remaining a vacant and blighted building in the South Main neighborhood, the development will increase density and vibrancy in the South Main neighborhood. Its location connects South Main Street to South Third Street, while helping to knit together the heart of the South Main neighborhood and the South City neighborhood.

The basement parking allows the cars to primarily be hidden from view, keeping the automobile subordinate, and using the grade change of the site to the development's advantage. Site improvements such as exterior lighting and street trees help to further strengthen Mulberry and Huling as pedestrian corridors and extend the vibrancy of South Main.

The Design Guidelines state that exterior building materials should contribute to the visual continuity of the design context, by featuring materials used elsewhere in the neighborhood. Although cementitious siding is not ideal as the dominant exterior cladding in a historic warehouse district, the proposed design minimizes its presence and incorporates additional materials for more prominent

portions. The building's character will be very similar to recent new construction in the area, such as 266 Lofts, a recent project by the same developer and architects which features similar design and blend of materials.

Staff Recommendation: **Staff recommends approval with the condition that the applicant return with a separate application for signage and a proposal for an artistic treatment on the north elevation.**