



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

New Construction

Case # 18-94R1: Museum Lofts  
138 Huling Ave.  
Memphis, TN 38104

Owner: 138 Partners, LLC

Applicant: Christopher Speltz  
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.

The original application came before the DRB at the September 5, 2018 DRB Board Meeting. The board provided direction for modifying the design prior to board approval. The amended design created in response to the boards' comments is included in this application.

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 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 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 brick veneer, smooth hardi board, fiber cement boards and a mural. They are unable to include windows do to limitations of the property line.

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.

The primary changes from the original application include introducing red blend tumbled brick that is more in character with the neighborhood than gray brick, while also increasing the total amount used on all elevations. The design was also simplified to reduce the amount of overlapping materials and parapet heights. Additionally, the windows and garage ventilation screens of the east elevation now align and are accented with a new metal element. Lastly, the northern elevation has been significantly improved with brick on the ground floor and an artistic treatment.

Signage and specifics on the artistic treatment 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.

Staff believes the newly proposed design follows the board's directives and offers a stronger design to the South Main neighborhood. The board's comments encouraged the applicant to take more cues from the neighborhood and specifically consider the building on site as well as the surrounding context. Secondly, they wanted to see more consistent and intentional design such as keeping all windows types consistent and introducing more order with the windows at the parking garage level. Staff feels the modified design responds appropriately to the boards' comments and recommends approval.

**Staff Recommendation:**

**Staff recommends approval with the condition that the applicant return with a separate application for signage and specifics on artistic treatment.**