



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

Exterior Renovation

Case # 19-132: Ambassador Hotel
345 S Main St.
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: PKM Architects
676 Marshall Ave. Suite 101
Memphis, TN 38103

Owner: Ed Cabigao
4670 Johnson Cove
Memphis, TN 38117

Background: DRB review is required for this project because it received a 15-Year PILOT lease for the adaptive reuse of a historic building for 10 apartment units and ground floor retail at the November 8, 2019 CCRFC Board Meeting.

The subject property is a vacant 3-story building on the west side of South Main Street, in the block between Talbot and Vance. This building originally served as the Main Street portion of the historic Ambassador Hotel.

The applicant plans a full renovation of the 15,000 sq. ft. building for a restaurant tenant on the ground floor and a total of 10 apartments on the upper floors. An outdoor patio in support of the restaurant will be added to the parking area immediately south of the building. The upper two floors will be leased by a short-term rental company under a 5-year master lease.

The applicant will return with a separate application for enhanced architectural lighting, public art and signage.

Project Description: The proposed renovation includes the following scope of work:

- Brick tuck-pointing
- Restoration of architectural precast elements
- New windows
- New storefront system

- Parking lot improvements including an area for outdoor dining with a metal canopy
- New signage (separate application)

Staff Report:

The proposed site improvements are consistent with the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines and DMC priorities of designing with authenticity while honoring the heritage of the city. The property is located in the South Main Street Historic District and will separately apply for approval from the Landmarks Office.

The proposed renovations will appropriately refresh the Ambassador Hotel building in the Downtown Core. The scope of work enhances the curb appeal of the property, while tastefully updating its appearance.

Improving the experience of pedestrians in the public realm is one of the DMC's priorities, and this project will help further that goal on South Main St. A new storefront system on the ground floor will increase the visibility of commercial vibrancy planned for the first floor while adding a modern system to the building.

The present exterior of the building consists of a variety of brick colors that present a mismatched brick exterior. The applicant plans to stain or paint the brick a charcoal grey in order to provide a cohesive character while maintaining the brick exterior. Additional precast architectural details will be restored to preserve the character of the building.

Although signage is being addressed in a separate application, the applicant is proposing a new projecting sign that would be similar to the size and design of the original sign on site. They are also proposing a new painted wall sign at the location of the present ghost sign since staining/painting the brick will remove the ghost sign presently visible.

Exterior lighting will be enhanced for pedestrians in the form of the active first floor, enhanced architectural lighting (included in a separate application) and site lighting in the parking lot.

Outdoor dining will be removed from the existing SOB location and added on the NE corner of the parking lot which will help screen the parking lot from Main St. There will be additional landscaping to screen the remaining open section of the lot.

Staff is supportive of the proposed design and feels that it is an appropriate direction for the renovation of the property. The

proposed improvements strategically use high-impact modifications to reimage a building in a historic district and the South Main corridor of Downtown.

Additionally, with a location in a Retail Node, staff is eager to see the investment in renovated retail space in the South Main neighborhood.

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