



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

Site Improvements

- Case # 19-108: 200 Beale St.
Memphis, TN 38103
- Applicant: Beale St. Management
203 Beale Street, Suite 300
Memphis, TN 38103
- Owner: City of Memphis
125 N Main St.
Memphis, TN 38103
- Background: DRB review is required for all private development projects that receive a public incentive and any public project located Downtown, such as a redesigned public park. This application involves the significant renovation of Handy Park.
- Handy Park is located on Beale St. in between BB King Blvd. and Rufus Thomas Blvd. and is a public park that includes an amphitheater, two commercial buildings on the SW and SE corners and open space.
- Following the Handy Park Design Challenge that was issued in March 2018, Kimley Horn was selected to reimagine Handy Park as a well-utilized community gathering place designed for multiple uses while maintaining all necessary security requirements.
- This application includes plans for Phase I of the proposed site improvements which includes a new perimeter fencing system, landscaping, lighting, outdoor seating and additional site enhancements.. The applicant will return with a separate application for Phase II which will include the renovations of the stage and signage.
- Project Description: The opportunity to transform Handy Park into a world-class civic space is immense. The design proposes an exciting vision to reclaim the park as an inviting urban civic space and as a memorable concert destination.

The existing perimeter fencing, brick façade along Beale Street, and long black walls serve as barriers against daily use of the park. Because of these barriers and the underutilization of the space, the applicant proposes eliminating the restrictive brick façade and perimeter fencing and opening the park by creating more transparent and accessible edges from public sidewalks. Peeling away these outer layers will restore the critical pedestrian connections to Beale Street and Peabody Place, and will support the vibrancy of Handy Park.

The new modifiable perimeter fence will act as public art, will create a critical park and streetscape edge, and will allow for an open public park during daytime and non-event hours in its open position. In contrast, on nights when Beale Street Management and the Memphis Police Department deploy security, the fence will be suitable for security needs in its closed position.

The re-imagining of Handy Park as a multi-functional space is only natural given its history as an open public park and as the home of the New Market House. Along the central axis, the open market plaza will contain movable café seating and a bosque of trees to cast critical shade during warm weather. At center-stage, the statue W.C. Handy will be prominently placed in the center of the park and highlighted with colorful lighting, along with the rest of the park, drawing in nightlife with a bright and festive ambiance. Additional functional lighting will be added as well.

Handy Park is poised to host a broad range of activities year-round. Replacing the chair-back seating with a central sloped event lawn will allow for more casual concert seating and a place for daily social interaction. Shaded plaza spaces in the northern corners of the park will give park users additional seating options for event spectators and for casual conversation.

The revival of Handy Park as an open and inviting urban civic space is a key component in building and maintaining a successful downtown Memphis. At the same time, while understanding that nightlife on Beale Street is also important to downtown Memphis, creating a safe environment with a modifiable fencing element and critical lighting needs are at the forefront of this design.

Any modifications to the stage and signage will be included in a separate application.

Staff Report:

The proposed site improvements are consistent with the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines and DMC priorities of enhancing the public realm and providing signature open spaces.

The proposed site improvements collectively work to increase pedestrian access to the park, support a variety of uses, and create a flexible space that accommodates events while having a high quality daily function.

The proposed fencing solution is a creative approach to addressing mutual needs to open the space to Downtown and have the ability to close it for events and evenings on Beale. The corten panels will be attractive and unique, while also primarily serving a security function, which has determined the width of the openings and the height of the fence.

The proposed landscaping includes 21 new trees and additional plantings that are appropriate for the site, provide increased shade and maintain a natural character of a park while being designed for active and flexible use.

The proposed lighting plan incorporates a variety of fixtures, locations and style to create various levels of light for pedestrian comfort, highlighting site features and overall safety.

Staff is supportive of the proposed design and feels that it is an appropriate direction for the transformation of the park. The proposed plan strategically use high-impact modifications to reimage an important public park at the gateway of Beale St. and meet all necessary safety considerations.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval with the condition that the applicant return with a separate application for any modifications to the stage and signage.