



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

Exterior Renovation

Case # 20-67: 113 Madison Ave
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: S. Berry Jones
S. Berry Jones Architects
1503 Monroe Ave
Memphis, TN 38104

Property Owner: Gustavo Bermudez
1322 Madison Ave
Memphis, TN 38104

Background: DRB review is required for the exterior elements of this project because it received an Exterior Improvement Grant from the Center City Development Corporation (CCDC) at its September 16, 2020 meeting.

The subject property is a two-story commercial building (ca. 1890). Over the years, the building's exterior has been heavily modified. All of the windows along November 6th St. have been filled, and the second-floor windows have been entirely covered with glazed brick. The building has remained vacant for over a decade.

Gustavo Bermudez, the current owner of the building, is the owner of Los Comales, a successful Mexican restaurant with two locations in Memphis. He plans on converting 113 Madison into a new restaurant location. This conversion will include extensive renovations, including major changes to the primary façade on Madison.

Project Description: The existing Madison façade of the subject property features a mid-century recessed storefront and brick siding that covers the entirety of the second floor. The changes proposed in this application dramatically open up this façade, along with the east side of the building facing November 6th St.

The ground-floor of the renovated Madison façade will feature three large double doors with prominent glass panels, topped with

decorative limestone arches. The central pair of doors will serve as the building's primary entrance. On the second floor, three additional glass double-doors open on to a small balcony. Three smaller windows rest above these doors, with exterior light fixtures installed in between. The existing brick on the façade will be painted.

On the northeast corner of the building, facing November 6th St, the treatment on the façade is continued, with a matching arched door on the ground floor, a double-door opening onto a Juliet balcony on the second floor, and a small window installed above. Further south on the east side of the building, eight windows will be installed where original openings had previously been bricked up. Four additional exterior light fixtures will also be installed between the second-floor windows, and the existing brick will be painted to match the brick on the Madison façade.

Staff Report:

The Downtown Design Guidelines encourage property owners to maintain character-defining features on historic buildings, and to replace existing historic storefront elements as faithfully as possible. This may seem to clash with the present application, which represents a noticeable departure from the building's current appearance. But despite the historic nature of the subject property, the building has been significantly altered by previous renovations to the point where virtually no original features are present on the building's Madison façade. As such, it is difficult to argue that the applicant should be required to recreate features that no longer exist on the building.

However, not all of the new features depart from the original. On the November 6th St. elevation, the applicant plans to restore the building's original brick, including architectural details like the brick dentil in between the first and second floors, and the brick arches above the windows. The new windows will be located in original window openings, reopening a side of the building that had been left blank for decades.

Overall, staff deems the proposed changes appropriate to the building, given the context of the building's past history of significant alterations. Compared to the building's existing condition, the renovated building will be far more welcoming to pedestrians, with significantly greater levels of transparency on every visible side. Along with the previously-approved exterior changes to the neighboring 111 Madison, these enhancements will help lead activity from Main Street onto Madison, increasing vibrancy on a vital corridor.

Staff Recommendation: **Staff recommends approval, with the condition of additional approval for signage at a later date.**