



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the June 1, 2022 DRB Meeting

Exterior Renovation & New Construction

Case # 22-23: Spotlight Productions
649 N. Second St.
Memphis, TN 38107

Applicant: Fabian Matthews
Spotlight Productions
649 N. Second St.
Memphis, TN 38107

Background: DRB review is required for this project because it received approval for an Exterior Improvement Grant at the April 20, 2022 CCDC Board Meeting.

The subject property at 649 N. Second St. is a historic two-story commercial building in Uptown that houses Spotlight Productions, a local media production company. The applicant plans on making cosmetic improvements to the existing building, and constructing a 1,000 SF addition to the west side of the building, on space that is currently used for parking.

Project Description: The primary planned alteration to 649 N. Second is the addition of a 1,000 SF studio attached to the west side of the building. The addition will be a single story, and extend 40 feet from the west wall of the existing building. The roof of the addition will include a rooftop patio surrounded by railing that can be accessed from an existing door on the back of the existing building. A stair on the west side of the addition will also provide access to the patio from the street level.

To provide additional visual interest to the ground level, weathering steel panels perforated with an artistic pattern will be installed on the south wall facing Looney Ave. The perforated panels will also be backlit to provide additional pedestrian-scaled lighting and visual interest. Additional pedestrian lighting will be provided by wall fixtures providing down lighting on each panel. One parking space will remain behind the building, screened by shrubs.

The other planned changes to the existing two-story building are straightforward cosmetic improvements. Existing brick will be repaired and tuck-pointed where needed, and repainted. And new wall lights will provide architectural lighting that highlights the visual rhythm of the historic structure, and.

Staff Report:

Both the proposed addition and the related renovations to the original building at 649 N. Second are consistent with the Downtown Design Guidelines. The addition is visually subordinate to the original structure, and maintains visual compatibility without attempting to blend into the building or create pseudo-historic features. While the studio addition cannot include ground-level transparency due to the nature of the use, the use of decorative steel panels is a high-quality and creative strategy to provide a more interesting and comfortable pedestrian experience. The cosmetic improvements and additional lighting planned for the original structure further improve the property, making it an even stronger asset to the surrounding neighborhood.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval.