Design Review Board (DRB)
Staff Report

Exterior Lighting

Case # 20-101	371 S. Main St. Memphis, TN 38103
Property Owner:	Miguel Gomez 371 S. Main St. Memphis, TN 38013
Representative:	Steve Carter Gimbal & Company, LLC PO Box 172063 Memphis, TN 38187
Background:	The Gomez building is a renovation project at the southwest corner of Talbot Ave. and South Main St. The 0.13-acre site contains a 5,176 sq. ft. 2-story historic commercial building. The project was approved for an Exterior Improvement Grant at the October 21st, 2020, Center City Development Corporation (CCDC) meeting. The Design Review Board approved the designs for the building at its November 4th, 2020, meeting. At the November 4th, 2020, meeting, the Design Review Board requested that the applicant return with a separate exterior lighting application. The lighting application needs to include a detailed lighting plan and additional context on the chosen lighting features. Construction is expected to begin in spring 2021.
Project Description:	The differing masonry types indicate that the current structure was built in 3 different phases of construction throughout the mid-1800's and early 1900's. The original lighting features at 371 S. Main St. pre-dated electric lighting fixtures. It is most probable that the building contained gas lighting at the time of construction of the first phase. In order to ensure the historic integrity of the building, the applicant considered several different lighting alternatives for the renovation project. Due to the multiple phases of construction and differing

masonry types, a single period lighting concept would not align with the period of the buildings architecture in a cohesive, consistent manor.

The applicant has considered two styles of lighting: contemporary, expressive, and decorative lighting and/or subtle, non-feature elements that accentuate the buildings historic architecture.

The modern take on the classic industrial-style and gooseneck lighting fixtures are examples of decorative lighting features that would most-likely resemble historic accuracy. These feature elements resulted in being cost prohibitive once paired with matching details such as canopies, planters, etc. The expressive lighting without matching components appear inappropriate and overly-decorative by themselves.

The applicant is proposing subtle lighting that accents the building's original architecture. The proposed light fixtures along the S. Main St. façade provide a rhythm of pooled lighting that compliments the four (4) windows on the ground level. The same subtle lighting will also be used along the Talbot side and largely disappear during daylight hours. A down-light variant of the fixture will be used for the courtyard and rear balcony.

Staff Report: The South Main Historic District Guidelines suggest that lighting should be used to enhance or emphasize the historic character of the building and street, and should not overwhelm it. Lighting should be used to accent the architectural details, building entries, signage and sidewalks. Altering a property to convey a false historic appearance is inappropriate.

The applicant is proposing significant, high-quality exterior lighting improvements that enhance the pedestrian experience and refines a prominent building along South Main St. The subtle light fixtures are appropriate alternatives to the presumed gas lighting fixtures that would not be a probable solution today. Staff is supportive of the proposed lighting plan, in partnership with the Memphis Landmarks Office.

Staff Recommendation: **Staff recommends approval.**