



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the August 5, 2026 DRB Meeting

Exterior Building Renovation

Case # 26-49:	64 S. Front St. Memphis, TN 38103
Applicant/Owner:	DSSA Properties, LLC Seth Arnett, project representative PO Box 784 Brentwood, TN 37024
Background:	DRB review is required for this project because it received a \$60,000 Exterior Improvement Grant (EIG) at the July 15, 2026 Center City Development Corporation (CCDC) Board Meeting. The subject property is a vacant three-story commercial structure (built ca. 1875) located on the east side of Front Street, between General Washburn's Escape Alley to the north and Union Avenue to the south. The historic building was recently acquired by the applicant, with plans for a full renovation for office use. It is anticipated that JSI Consulting, an entity affiliated with the ownership group, will occupy the building after renovation.
Project Description:	The first phase of the project is focused primarily on exterior improvements, including repair and restoration of the original first floor storefront, roof repair, replacement of all windows to match the historic openings, repair and replacement of the skylight monitor as needed, and masonry repair with tuck pointing. The project is also undergoing interior demolition and asbestos abatement, including the removal of asbestos floor tile. For purposes of Design Review Board consideration, the exterior scope of work includes the following primary components: <u>Masonry repair and tuckpointing:</u> Masonry restoration and stabilization will include pressure washing the front and rear elevations; chemically removing existing paint from the lower portion of the front elevation; performing masonry restoration on the front elevation; and applying a masonry dye/stain and sealer to both the front and rear elevations to achieve the closest feasible match to the building's historic appearance. Restoration

work on the rear elevation is anticipated to be minimal due to prior brick replacement and limited deterioration.

Painting & coatings:

Preparation and painting of exposed metal elements on the front and rear elevations, including lintels, columns, stair treads, doors, and exterior metal components.

First-floor storefront.

The current plan is to replace the storefront to match historic conditions. The existing cast iron columns will be repaired and painted.

Historic window replacement:

The project includes the replacement of 13 windows on the front elevation and 6 windows on the rear elevation. The new windows will match the historic style, profile, and configuration in accordance with the requirements of the Memphis Landmarks Commission, the State Historic Preservation Office, and the National Park Service as part of the federal Historic Preservation Tax Credit approval process. The final window design is pending completion of interior demolition and asbestos abatement, which will expose the original historic windows to allow for accurate replication.

Rear (alley) elevation

The rear exterior wall is not original to the building and was fully replaced after a structural failure in the past. The applicant plans to add windows to the rear exterior wall on the second and third levels. These new windows and openings will reflect historically appropriate conditions.

Staff Report:

Downtown Memphis is strengthened when businesses choose to invest in and occupy its historic buildings. Projects like this not only preserve important pieces of the city's architectural heritage but also provide companies with the opportunity to establish a lasting corporate presence in distinctive buildings that reflect the character and authenticity of Downtown. Rehabilitating historic commercial buildings for owner-occupied office use represents a long-term investment in both the business and the community, helping create stable employment, encourage additional private investment, and return underutilized properties to active and productive use.

The Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings in a manner that preserves their defining architectural character while allowing them to meet contemporary business needs. Original storefronts, windows, masonry, and other

significant architectural features should be retained and restored whenever feasible. Where replacement is necessary, new elements should be compatible with the building's historic proportions, materials, detailing, and craftsmanship so that the building's historic integrity is maintained.

The proposed rehabilitation successfully balances historic preservation with the functional needs of a modern office user. Recreation of an appropriate storefront, masonry repairs, and historically appropriate replacement windows will reinforce the building's architectural character while creating a professional and highly visible corporate headquarters. Rather than occupying a conventional office building, the investment transforms a prominent historic structure into a recognizable business address.

The project also enhances the pedestrian experience by preserving an active and transparent street level storefront. Large storefront windows and entrances maintain a strong visual connection between the office and the public sidewalk, supporting a vibrant, walkable streetscape while celebrating one of Downtown's historic commercial buildings. The result is an investment that preserves an important historic resource, establishes a permanent corporate presence, and contributes to the continued revitalization of Downtown Memphis.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval of the application subject to the following conditions:

1. Final designs for all new windows shall be submitted for administrative staff review and approval prior to installation.
2. A front façade elevation drawing showing the proposed storefront design shall be submitted for administrative staff review and approval prior to installation.
3. A rear (alley) elevation drawing showing the exact number, location, and dimensions of all new windows proposed on the rear elevation shall be submitted for administrative staff review and approval prior to installation.
4. A final plan for any brick dye, stain, or similar cosmetic treatment shall be submitted for administrative staff review and approval prior to installation. The design team shall perform a spot test in an inconspicuous location to evaluate the appropriateness of the proposed treatment before proceeding with the full dye/stain application.