



**Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report**  
*Prepared for the September 6, 2023 DRB Meeting*

Exterior Improvements

Case # 23-59: 656 Madison Avenue (Multi-Use Renovation)

Owner/ Applicant: Emily Todd Dowdy  
Monroe Associates  
629 Monroe Ave.  
Memphis, TN 38103

Background: The subject property is located on the north side of Madison Avenue, in the block between Neeley Street and N. Orleans Street. The property contains a two-story multi-tenant commercial building. It is approximately 18,800 square feet. Some of the uses include the MMDC office, a large Airbnb, a small recording studio, warehouse space, and a maker studio.

DRB review is required for this project because it received approval of a \$40,000 Exterior Improvement Grant (EIG) at the October 19, 2022 CCDC Board Meeting.

Project Description: The exterior scope of work will include repairs and cosmetic improvements that will enhance the pedestrian experience and support the businesses located there. The exterior improvements facing the alley will have a high impact as it is frequented for parking and access to this building and adjacent commercial and residential buildings.

The exterior scope of work includes:

- Selected masonry tuckpointing, restoration and cleaning
- Removal and wall finish replacement of non-functioning window unit ACs
- New copper color metal awnings at the South, North and West facades
- Paint all exterior brick Duck White (SW 7010)
- Paint trim and accents Iron Ore (SW 7069)
- Treatment, preparation, priming, and application of special coating to existing metal awnings on North and West facade
- Repair and selectively replace sidewalk panels along Madison Avenue using standard 2500-3000 psi mix
- Install a steel plate projecting sign plate

- Select repair of garage doors facing the back alley
- Select gutter work

Staff Recommendation:

The proposed scope of work is consistent with the DMC’s goal of reusing existing buildings and extending the useful life of historic structures with thoughtful repair and cosmetic improvements. A key guiding principle for the Downtown Design Guidelines is to “design with authenticity.” That’s often interpreted as a recognition that Downtown Memphis is defined by a range of distinct architectural styles, materials and construction techniques. The planned renovation at 656 Madison successfully navigates this balance between refreshing and enhancing a historic building without obscuring or diminishing the appearance of the character-defining architectural elements. The Madison Avenue frontage will receive significant aesthetic enhancements including the replacement of asphalt shingles with a standing seam copper roof to match the existing canopy. Exterior painting will add cohesion and a unifying element to a multi-tenant building that features access from both the north and south sides of the building. Sidewalk repair and replacement will improve connectivity and enhance walkability along this well-travelled segment of Madison Avenue.

The rear elevation, to the north, fronts a public alley with increasing visibility as a result of the Orleans Station apartment development. With more people living, working, and walking through the neighborhood, the applicant is proposing to treat the rear elevation in a manner similar to the front elevation. This includes painting the exterior walls and adding a specialty coating to existing awnings to better match the appearance of the standing seam copper awnings along Madison. Other improvements to the rear include removing a window AC unit and painting gutters, downspouts, and railings as needed. While painting unpainted masonry is discouraged, it should be noted that this building has already been painted previously.

**Staff recommends approval.**