



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

New Rooftop Sign

Case # 23-76: BCBS Rooftop Sign
240 Madison Ave
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: Sophorn Olsen
LRK
50 S BB King Blvd Suite 600
Memphis, TN 38103

Owner (if different): Walk-Off Properties LLC
240 Madison Ave Suite 603
Memphis, TN 38103

Background: The subject property is the Commonwealth, located at the northwest corner of Madison Ave. and N 4th St. The site is located within the Central Business Improvement District (CBID) and the Ballpark Sub-district for purposes of the CBID Sign Code. DRB review is required for this project because the proposed sign deviates from the Sign Code.

Project Description: Installation of a new illuminated channel letter rooftop sign and sign frame at the subject property. Sign will be constructed of open aluminum channel bodies with exposed LED neon tubing, and will be attached to the new metal frame, facing east. Sign will consist of two graphic elements depicting the blue cross and blue shield logo as well as text reading "OF TENNESSEE." Sign cabinets for the graphic elements will be 8 in. deep, with a blue inside face and satin black returns, while text cabinets will be 4 in. deep, with white matte inside and satin black returns. The sign will be 26 ft. 6 in. (w) by 13 ft. 7 in. (h).

Staff Report: The CBID Sign Code permits rooftop signs in the Ballpark Sub-district, but imposes the additional requirement that "signage must face the direction of the ballpark and be visible from the interior of the ballpark." Since the proposed sign is located on the roof of a building to the north of the ballpark and faces east, it does not face the direction of the ballpark, though the rear of the sign would be

visible from the interior of the ballpark. Additionally, the sign does adhere to the remaining requirements for rooftop signs in this district, which are outlined below:

- The sign's building must exceed 40 feet in height.
- Signage must consist of individual lettering attached to a minimally visible frame.
- The horizontal length of the sign shall not exceed 50% of the length of the roof on the side of the building where the sign is located.
- The total area of the sign shall not exceed 350 square feet.

Staff is supportive of this rooftop sign. Madison Avenue is an important connector between the Downtown Core and the Medical District, and the proposed sign will be made of high-quality materials that contribute to the visual appeal and connectivity of this corridor. Within the Ballpark Sub-district, rooftop signage for the Peabody Hotel and Prospero currently face east and are visible from Madison Avenue, as are the highly-visible wall signs for iBank and First Horizon. It is staff's opinion that the proposed sign would further contribute to the visual appeal of the skyline along Madison Avenue, denoting the transition into the Downtown Core, while maintaining the existing character.

The CBID Sign Code provides that exception to the Code provisions may be provided when "outstandingly creative design solutions are offered." The DRB has previously approved rooftop signs at both the Chisca and Old Dominick's Distillery under this provision. Staff would suggest that the DRB approve the proposed rooftop sign under this creative signage provision of the Code if the Board agrees with staff and finds that the sign is appropriate for its context and complements the building on which it is located.

Staff Recommendation: **Staff recommends approval, (with conditions if necessary)**