



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the April 6, 2022 DRB Meeting

New Construction

Case # 22-16: Conwood II
645 N. Front St
Memphis, TN 38107

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Owner: Billy Orgel
Tower Ventures
495 Tennessee St.
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Background: DRB review is required for this project because it received a 20-year PILOT at the March 9, 2021 CCRFC Board Meeting. The Conwood II is a new-construction building being developed as a part of the larger revitalization of the Snuff District, which includes the previously-approved renovation of the historic Conwood building (DRB case #20-03), and 61 Keel (DRB case #19-131). The Conwood II will be constructed on what is currently vacant land directly to the south of the original Conwood building.

The proposed building consists of four apartment stories containing a total of 294 multifamily units, built over a two-story garage podium containing 400 parking spaces. The ground floor of the development will also feature 6,212 square feet of leasable restaurant and retail space, as well as amenity space and four townhome-style residential units.

Project Description: Conwood II is a podium-style building with four residential stories built above a two story garage. One-and-a-half stories of the garage are above grade, and the garage's vehicular entrance is located roughly at the building's midway point on Front Street. The garage is screened along the Front Street façade with a combination of liner development, landscaping, and architectural screening. A 3,067 SF restaurant space lines the building's ground floor at the northeast

corner, adjacent to a 3,145 SF retail space facing Front Street. A lobby and amenity space serving the apartment building is located just south of the retail space, continuing the pattern of ground floor activation. The ground floor is further punctuated by four townhome-style units with entrances on Front. Two of these units will be located directly south of the garage entrance, with the other two located at the southeast corner. Three outdoor courtyards will be built on top of the garage (level 3 of the building). One will be located on the east side of the building above the primary garage entrance, while the other two will be located on the west side, with one on the south end, and one on the north.

Landscaping is used to enhance the pedestrian experience around the building and provide additional screening for the garage. Climate appropriate street trees and shrubs, including Ginkgo and columnar Poplar trees will be located in planting areas on the north, south, and east sides of the building. The largest concentration of street trees will be located near the south end of the building's Front Street façade, in order to screen the largest exposed section of the garage. On the north end of the building, a pedestrian plaza incorporating seating, planters, and patterned stone pavers will link Conwood II with the original Conwood building currently under renovation.

Brick will be the primary exterior material on the ground floor of the building's Front Street facade. The brick color has been selected to match the brick used on the original Conwood building. A perforated aluminum architectural screening system will be installed on the exposed sections of the concrete garage facing Front. Some brick will also extend up to the third residential floor on the Front Street façade. Cement fiber panels will be the primary siding material on the upper residential floors of the building, with smaller sections of corrugated metal siding used as an alternate material. Small sections of EIFS siding will be used as an accent material in between window groupings on the upper floors – no EIFS will be used on the ground floor or other areas that pedestrians might come into contact with. Black window and door frames will be used to match the windows of the original Conwood.

Staff Report:

Some of the key principles of the Downtown Design Guidelines include designing new buildings to fit with their context, enhancing the pedestrian experience, and keeping the automobile subordinate. The proposed Conwood II building fulfills these principles with a design that is oriented to the pedestrian, reduces the impact of its parking component, and relates to existing buildings in the neighborhood.

The two-story garage at the base of the building has been thoughtfully screened with a combination of ground-floor retail, landscaping, and townhome units, as well as a perforated aluminum screening material. Although the garage is not invisible, it is well integrated into the overall design of the building, and does not visually dominate it. The pedestrian experience is further enhanced by additional landscaping and streetscaping, including a pedestrian plaza with benches and greenery that links the Conwood II with the original Conwood building. The design of these buildings is further connected through the use of matching materials and other architectural references. The result is a building that is undeniably new, but responds to its context in order to build on the strengths of the growing Snuff District.

Staff Recommendation: **Staff recommends approval, conditioned on additional applications for signage and lighting.**