



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the October 6, 2021 DRB Meeting

New Construction

Case # 21-49: Downtown Mobility Center
60 Beale St
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: Jason Weeks
LRK
50 S. B.B. King Blvd, Suite 600
Memphis, TN 38103

Owner: Downtown Memphis Commission
114 N Main St.
Memphis, TN 38103

Background: On October 28, 2020, The Downtown Mobility Authority (DMA) approved funding to construct a mixed-use Mobility Center on the site of an existing 1.3 acre surface parking bounded by Main St. on the east, Front St. on the west, Peabody Pl. on the north, and Beale St. on the south. The planned six-story Mobility Center will feature 975 parking spaces, approximately 13,500 square feet of retail space, and a bike commuter station with bike storage and showers.

Project Description: The proposed Mobility Center will be a cast-in-place concrete structure, skinned primarily with perforated aluminum panels. The building will feature six stories, with a seventh parking level on the roof of the structure. Active uses will partially or fully screen the parking component of the project on the ground floor of all four street frontages.

The building's ground floor on Main Street is lined by a large retail space with a glass storefront system. This retail space covers almost the entirety of the Main Street frontage, continuing Main Street's historic pattern of ground floor activation. The primary entrance to the retail space will be located near the corner of Main and Beale. The four visible levels of parking above the retail space will be screened by perforated bronze-colored aluminum panels staggered to create a pattern of openings.

A second retail space with a possible outdoor seating area will be located on the building's southwest corner, with its entrance and primary frontage on Front Street. The parking floors immediately above the retail frontage on Front will be screened with perforated natural aluminum panels, while the remainder of the structure to the north of the retail space will be screened with bronze-colored panels.

The Mobility Center's Beale Street frontage will be bookended by the east and west retail spaces, which will both have glass storefront windows facing Beale. A monumental exterior stair with an entry at the southeast corner of the building will be the defining visual feature of the Beale Street frontage. Below the stair, perforated natural aluminum panels will be used as the skinning material, while above the stair, bronze-colored aluminum panels will be used. Several enhancements to the Beale streetscape are also being proposed as a part of the project, including widening the sidewalk from 12 to 20 feet, creating a pick-up and drop-off area for rideshare passengers, and installing new bike racks. There will also be a secondary vehicular entry point on Beale, near the west end of the building.

The primary vehicular entrance to the structure's parking will be located on Peabody Place. A commercial bay which is contemplated to house a bike commuter station is also located on the ground floor facing Peabody. The upper floors facing Peabody Place will be screened by bronze-colored perforated aluminum panels in two configurations to provide visual interest. A cutaway section in these panels directly above the parking entrance will help to visually highlight the entrance. The Peabody Place sidewalk will also be widened from 9.5 ft to 11 ft., and new plantings and trees will replace existing landscaping on the street.

Staff Report:

Although the proposed Mobility Center is more than simply a parking garage, the Downtown Design Guidelines recommendations for structured parking are largely applicable in this case, due to the proportion of the building devoted to parking. The Downtown Design Guidelines recommend that structured parking should feature active uses on the sidewalk edge, appear similar in scale to other buildings in the area, and that parking levels above the first floor should be screened. Additionally, architectural screening on the structure should be an integral part of the building's design, with durable materials and finishes.

The Mobility Center follows all of these best practices. Every side of the building features an active use with sidewalk frontage. High-quality screening materials have been chosen and arranged to create

a visual composition that works as a united whole and provides both screening and visual interest. The building is similar in scale to neighboring buildings, which include the Autozone Headquarters and the Peabody Place Tower.

Beyond these building level features, the Mobility Center represents an important step toward connecting some of Downtown Memphis's most valuable assets. When pedestrians walking along the Main Street Mall or Beale Street reach the large surface lot at Main and Beale, it communicates that there are no more points of interest in that direction, and they should turn back. By replacing this lot with a mixed-use building, pedestrians will be encouraged to travel from Beale to the River, and from the Main Street Mall to South Main, weaving together portions of Downtown that were previously divided.

Staff Recommendation: **Staff recommends approval, conditioned on future approvals for exterior lighting and signage.**