



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the September 1, 2021 DRB Meeting

Exterior Renovation

Case # 21-67: Shoppers Garage Renovations
85 N. Front St.
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: Downtown Mobility Authority
114 N Main St.
Memphis, TN 38103

Owner: City of Memphis
125 N. Main St.
Memphis, TN 38103

Background: Shoppers Garage is a public parking garage that spans the block between Adams and Jefferson on the west side of Front St. The garage is owned by the City of Memphis and operated by the Downtown Mobility Authority (DMA). The garage was built circa 1957, and includes 340 parking spaces on a 1.22 acre site. On October 28, 2020, the DMA authorized the allocation of up to \$1 million dollars in improvements to Shoppers Garage. Because the renovation project is being facilitated by DMA incentives, and concerns a city-owned public facility, DRB review is required for the exterior portions of the project.

Project Description: The planned alterations to Shoppers Garage are focused on creating a more safe and inviting experience for garage users and pedestrians. The most significant exterior change to the building will be the removal of the CMU block material from the openings on every elevation, dramatically increasing the visibility into the interior spaces of the garage. Painted steel guardrails will be added at the base of the openings, and the interior of the openings will be painted to match. The overhead doors and toll collection station will also be removed from the garage's primary entrance on Front Street, further opening the space.

New signage reading "PARK HERE," composed of individual 2 ft. high aluminum letters will be installed beneath the canopy at the primary Front St. entrance. Each letter will be down lit by individual lights installed under the canopy.

All exterior concrete will be cleaned and painted. Existing concrete will be repaired on portions of the façade that have seen significant deterioration. Wall pack lights will also be installed on each exterior wall of the garage to improve visibility and safety. The existing attached shed on the southwest corner of the garage will be demolished, along with the adjacent overhead doors on the west side. This space will be infilled, and additional new signage will be placed at this location.

Improvements to the site will include a small dog park at the corner of Front and Adams, which will be surrounded by a vinyl-coated chain-link fence. All the existing trees on the Front St. side of the site will be retained, with the exception of the magnolia adjacent to the garage's primary entrance, which will be removed to improve visibility. New angled parking and paving will be added to the west side of the building, providing definition to what is currently a space with no clear use.

Staff Report:

In its current state, Shoppers Garage is an underperforming public asset in a key location. The lack of visibility into the interior of the garage, paired with the deteriorated condition of the garage's exterior and inconsistent lighting, produce a structure that feels foreboding whether you're in a vehicle or on foot.

Although the proposed renovation of Shoppers Garage will still retain most of the garage's original character, the exterior alterations will dramatically improve the garage's appearance and functionality. The exterior will be cleaned, repaired, painted, and lit, creating the impression that space is cared for and meant to be used by people. Removing the CMU block from the exterior openings will create a stronger connection between the building and the street, and create opportunities for natural surveillance. And the addition of public space in the form of a dog park on the northeast corner of the site will further increase pedestrian comfort by adding activity at all hours of the day.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval, with the condition that the final paint colors and signage are submitted for administrative approval.