



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the November 1, 2023 DRB Meeting

New Sign

Case # 23-68: The Chisca Hotel Sign
272 S Main St.
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: Alex Corder
LSI Graphics
2950 Brother Blvd Ste 103
Bartlett, TN 38133

Owner (if different): Robin Warner
Sunshine Corporation
1355 Lynnfield Rd. Ste 120
Memphis, TN 38119

Background: The subject property is the historic Hotel Chisca, located at the southeast corner of South Main St. and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Ave. The site is located within the Central Business Improvement District (CBID) and the South Main/Warehouse 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.

There is currently a rooftop sign at the subject parcel. This sign reads "LYFE KITCHEN," and was previously approved at the August 2015 DRB meeting. The proposed sign would replace this existing sign and read "THE CHISCA."

Project Description: Installation of two (2) new internally illuminated sets of channel letters on both sides of an existing metal framework on the roof of the subject parcel facing north and south. The channel letter bodies, returns and trimcaps will be constructed of aluminum and read "THE CHISCA". The letter faces will be acrylic and vinyl with multicolored LEDs illuminating the faces. The sign will be 25 ft. (w) by 12.5 ft. (h).

Staff Report: The CBID Sign Code limits rooftop signs to buildings located in the Ballpark District or Peabody Place Entertainment District. Although the subject property is located in neither, staff believes that a rooftop

sign is appropriate at this location given the height of the building, historic precedent for a similar sign at this property, and the fact that the original rooftop sign frame is still extant.

If the DRB determines that a rooftop sign is appropriate at this location, the Code provides the following direction regarding the sign's size, design and type:

- 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.

In addition to the above referenced provisions, the South Main sub-district prohibits internally-illuminated signs. Traditionally, staff has interpreted that provision to be aimed at restricting large plastic light boxes wherein the entire sign face is illuminated and glows. In this case, each sign cabinet is formed in the shape of the letter, limiting the overall sign face area to the exact shape of the text copy. Staff opinion is that this approach to illuminating a rooftop sign in this context is appropriate.

Staff is supportive of this rooftop sign. Historically, a sign of similar size was located atop the Hotel Chisca. Although the new sign will be internally-illuminated, staff does not believe that allowing this sign type as proposed will have a negative impact on the neighborhood. Additionally, the DRB previously approved a similar internally-illuminated rooftop sign at the site in 2015. Moreover, given the placement of the sign on the roof and its orientation facing north and south, the sign will likely not be directly visible from within the South Main neighborhood and will not be visible to pedestrians walking by the historic building.

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