



Design Review Board (DRB) Staff Report
Prepared for the October 5, 2022 DRB Meeting

New Construction

Case # 22-48:

University Lofts
440 Monroe Avenue
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant:

Parker Sitton
VP of Real Estate
Six Land Company, LLC
215 Union Street, Suite 400
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Owner:

Andrew Berner
President
University Lofts and Jetton General Contracting
215 Union Street, Suite 400
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Background:

DRB review is required for this project because it received a 12-year PILOT at the August 9, 2022 CCRFC Board Meeting.

After demolishing 440 Monroe (Holliday Events and Flowers) and 16 Monroe (a vacant warehouse), the applicant will construct a new podium-style multifamily building with 89 parking spaces on the ground floor, and 105 apartment units on the three floors above. The total square feet for this new construction is just over 58,000 sq. ft. The average furnished apartment unit will be approximately 400 sq. ft. and include utilities and WIFI. There will also be resident common spaces on each floor with a balcony that overlooks the Ravine. The apartments will be targeted to the employees and students of the surrounding Medical District, and others who would be attracted to the convenience of a furnished apartment option.

Project Description:

University Lofts is a podium-style building with three residential stories above a garage. The L-shaped building is situated on a site with frontage on South Lauderdale Street and Monroe Avenue and abuts a corner building. The south elevation will face Monroe Avenue. The vehicle entrance to the ground floor parking is located at the western end and includes a metal gate. A wall screens the

ground floor parking from the street. The expanse of the wall is broken up with five brick veneer columns with small insets between them. Here, the wall is a painted cementitious material. The applicant intends to install art by local artists. The options are to have large panels hung or to commission wall murals to fill the expanse. Landscaping lines this section of the building. Trees within tree grates line the sidewalk providing shade and additional visual interest for pedestrians. The street entrance to the elevator lobby is located on the eastern end of the South elevation. At this corner of the site, the Monroe Avenue bridge overlooks the Ravine.

Three floors of living units are built above the ground floor parking garage. At the south elevation, the building bookends are finished with a brick veneer (ACME Brick DTP224 – “Heritage”) and topped with precast concrete caps. The eastern end includes a brick relief with the “UL” logo. The second and third floors have black vinyl casement windows punctuated by large brick veneer arches. On Level 4, EIFS painted charcoal (SW Industrial “Granite Grey”) will be used.

The west elevation will face a neighboring building. In a small setback, 12 open air parking spaces will be striped. At Level 1, the ground floor parking will be exposed but screened from the street with landscaping. Levels 2 and 3 will have vertically hung fiber cement siding painted copper (SW #6349 “Pennywise”). Level 4 will be EIFS painted charcoal. Three rows of eleven (11) black aluminum casement windows will be seen at this elevation.

The north elevation abuts an adjoining building. Covered and open air parking spaces will be striped here facing the adjoining building wall. The flow of vehicle traffic will be directed along the north under the building and exit onto South Lauderdale Street. A driveway continues beside open air parking spaces with a metal slide gate before the exit onto South Lauderdale Street. The exit from the ground floor parking area will be screened with landscaping near the building. A second set of stairs will be located here.

The northeast elevation faces the Ravine. This area of the site has surface parking broken up with landscaping islands. A concrete and steel engineered retaining wall separates the site from the Ravine below. On the retaining wall, a stainless steel trellis system with climbing greenery will be installed. Above the retaining wall, a composite deck fence system in a medium brown color will be installed. The boards will be hung vertically on a black metal structure.

On the northeast elevation, Levels 2 and 3 will have fiber cement siding vertically hung in a board and batten pattern and painted “Copper Penny” and punctuated by black aluminum casement windows. On Level 4, EIFS will be used. The relationship to the Ravine will be highlighted by placing the common access black metal balconies on the East façade. The façade material here is brick veneer.

Staff Report:

The proposed project is located in the Edge District, a growing neighborhood and major gateway into Downtown. In place of a vacant warehouse and empty lot, University Lofts will introduce residential units for population to support the growing number of businesses in the neighborhood. This increase in density supports the Memphis 3.0 strategy to “build up, not out.” Moreover, the furnished units appeal to the student population from the nearby medical institutions nurturing a walkable neighborhood.

This compact development seeks to optimize an interesting site. The automobile is subordinate with parking being underneath the building at the ground level and screened. The scale of the building is compatible with nearby development, like The Rise Apartments. The brick veneer materials used reflects existing neighborhood buildings. While limited to the subordinate facades, the vertical installation of the fiber cement board ensures longevity. EIFS is only used as an accent material on the upper levels, which is consistent with the recommendations of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

Along the Madison Avenue corridor, pedestrian comfort is ensured by introducing trees along the sidewalk and visual interest with local art at eye level. The site engages with the Ravine by creating a landscape trellis on the retaining wall and balconies for residents.

Staff Recommendation:

Staff recommends approval, with the condition of later approvals for lighting, the final public art, and signage.