



**Design Review Board (DRB)  
Staff Report**

Signage, Public Art & Architectural Lighting

Case # 18-89R1: archimania  
663 & 673 Cooper St.  
Memphis, TN 38104

Applicant/Owner: Barry Yoakum  
356 South Main  
Memphis, TN 38103

Background: On August 1, 2018 the Design Review Board (DRB) of the Downtown Memphis Commission (DMC) approved the application for exterior renovation and new construction at the above referenced location with the conditions that architectural lighting, public art and signage must be submitted for DRB review as a separate application.

This project involves the adaptive reuse of two existing vacant buildings along Cooper Street and new construction to the rear of the site. The building at 663 Cooper, formerly the Sheet Metal Workers Union office, will be renovated to serve as the new headquarters for archimania, a local architectural firm. archimania currently rents office space in the South Main neighborhood. The building at 673 Cooper, formerly an insurance office, will be renovated to serve as office space for Loaded for Bear. Located to the rear of the office space, new construction will yield five rental apartments ranging in size from 425 sq. ft. to 590 sq. ft. Thirty-eight (38) parking spaces will also be provided.

Project Description: This application is reviewing the proposed architectural lighting, public art and signage:

**Architectural Lighting:**

The approach to enhanced architectural lighting has multiple components.

Firstly, the bench, which is designed to span the width of the façade along Cooper, will be illuminated and create an urban edge along the sidewalk for approximately 190 feet on South Cooper.

Along the site bench, there is a ledge with a recessed tape light in a low-profile extrusion that provides an even washing from an illuminated fixture that highlights the cast-in-place concrete wall.

Secondly, the courtyard, which is located between the two buildings and open to the sidewalk, will be illuminated. The approach includes low sight lighting and raised lit canopies on the south and the east. Additionally, site lighting is provided in the courtyards to provide subtle accents of additional site plantings and walk paths.

Lastly, functional lighting will be used in the parking lots and in other locations on site to ensure pedestrian comfortability and safety.

**Public Art:**

The proposal for public art includes painting an abstract mural on the parking lot between archimania and Redeemer Presbyterian Church and parking lot on the southern edge of the property. The graphic demonstration will cover approximately 10,500 square feet of asphalt and concrete surface. The murals aim to create a unique space when it is absent of cars.

In determining this as the location for public art, the applicant identified two marginalized areas within the site to enliven. The applicant will use a coating system that is directly applied to the asphalt.

**Signage:**

- One (1) monument sign to measure 10 ft. (w) x 3 ft. (h) and read “archimania.” The sign is solid steel with push-thru acrylic letters that will be internally illuminated with LED tubing and measure 5 ft. 2 in. (w) x 10 ½ in. (h). The sign cabinet is 6 in. thick and attached to the bench element located in front of the entrance to the archimania office.
- One (1) monument sign to measure 13 ft. (w) x 4 ft. 6 in. (h) and read “Loaded for Bear.” The sign is made of solid aluminum panels with push-thru acrylic letters that will be internally illuminated with LED tubing and measure 6 in. (h) x 8 ft. 8 in. (w). The sign cabinet is attached to the bench element located in front of the entrance to the Loaded for Bear office.

**Staff Report:**

The proposed architectural lighting, public art and signage included in this application appears to be consistent with the original application and proposed design of the exterior renovation and new construction.

The addition of the horizontal bench element creates a dynamic entrance with an expansive stair that provides access the courtyard, a ledge that will be used for signage, and an opportunity to incorporate enhanced architectural lighting. Collectively, these elements animate the building's frontage on Cooper Ave.

The additional components of architectural lighting are minimal in order to highlight the architecture and accent the proposed design. Staff recommends the board determine if this is an appropriate approach for architectural lighting.

The public art proposal seeks to decorate an otherwise neglected space of the property. Staff agrees that the overall design is an attractive and creative approach, however has concern about the visibility of the mural from those traveling down Cooper in addition to the lifespan of the product. Staff recommends the board determine if this is an appropriate approach for public art.

The signage is compliant with the CBID Sign Code.

**Staff Recommendation:**

**Staff recommends approval of the signage as proposed with the condition that the board determine the appropriateness of the architectural lighting and public art proposals.**