



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

New Construction

Case # 18-118: Canopy  
164 Union Ave.  
Memphis, TN 38103

Applicant: Erich Heger  
300 Centerville Road  
Warwick, RI, 02886

Owner: MHF Memphis VI LLC  
300 Centerville Road  
Warwick, RI, 02886

Background: DRB review is required for this project because it received a 15-Year PILOT at the June 12, 2018 CCRFC Board Meeting. The project involves the new construction of a full-service hotel at the above address.

The owner and development team, Magna Hospitality Group and GDS are proposing this project on the former Benchmark Hotel site which is an approximately .49-acre site, situated at the corner of B.B. King Boulevard and Union Avenue in downtown Memphis.

The applicant has demolished the existing structure on site and will redevelop the site as a 4+ star full-service hotel with approximately 170-keys. Existing basement parking will be used with the new construction of a new 5-story hotel above. The hotel will feature a ground-floor bar/restaurant space at the corner of Union Avenue and B.B. King Blvd.

Project Description: The Canopy by Hilton Downtown Memphis is a new hotel development project that will be a hybrid of new construction with an existing sub floor and foundations. The new proposed project will have a variety of public amenities at the street level with guestrooms and suites above the street level podium. The project proposes to maintain contextual building materials such as brick masonry and other architectural patterns that are seen throughout the Downtown Core of Memphis.

The Canopy by Hilton project will consist of 174 rooms across 4 elevated floors. On the first floor of the project, the podium will include a restaurant and bar, a coffee shop, fitness center and a small meeting room adjacent to the hotel lobby. In the center of the first level is a centralized lobby with natural light streaming from two large skylights from above. The hotel guestrooms above are designed around the centralized light well to allow as much light as possible to reach the public areas in the lobby, known as Canopy Central. The hotel restaurant is intended to be open all day and provide both indoor and outdoor dining options that will open onto the corner of Union Ave and BB King Blvd.

With a location adjacent to both AutoZone Park and The Peabody Hotel, this new proposed restaurant location would help energize this corner of downtown Memphis. The patio dining area will be elevated due to the foundation and existing basement parking.

The majority of the podium will be dressed with glass and aluminum storefront to allow all the ground floor spaces to be open and visible from the outside. Other materials such as brick, exterior grade wood siding, and architectural finished cast-in-place concrete will also be used on the ground floor for durability and high traffic areas. The hotel above will be clad majority in brick veneer and a deep bronze-grey metallic metal panel. The metal panels will be used on the south east corner of the hotel tower to help emphasize the identity of the project since it is the most visible façade and corner of the project. Simple aluminum framed windows will punch with repeated patterns on all four elevations of the project.

Site lighting and architectural lighting will further enhance the project's position and sense of identity in this downtown location. Multiple public mural locations are proposed on both alley sides of the project to help promote local city art programs and artists. Architectural and brand signage will also contribute to an overall sense of high-quality design and creativity.

Architectural lighting, public art and signage will be addressed more fully in a separate application.

**Staff Report:**

This corner site falls into the Downtown Core and is adjacent to the Gayoso-Peabody Historic District. The proposed construction is consistent with the Downtown Memphis Design Guidelines and DMC priorities of drawing upon local design traditions and enhancing the pedestrian experience

The proposed design of the Canopy Hotel aims to be of its time while also looking to local design tradition, specifically drawing from Memphis' rich heritage of architectural elements and material inspiration. The exterior materials will be a blend of brick in stacked bonds and deep bronze-grey metallic metal panels with aluminum framed windows and wood and concrete accents. The palette is a blend of contextually appropriate materials with a modern look and composition.

The building will not only activate the prominent corner on which it is located, but also the pedestrian connections along Union Ave., Third Ave. and Rendezvous Alley. Although the Union elevation includes a porte-cochere, it maintains its urban edge and does not interrupt the pedestrian experience.

Additionally, the location of the restaurant and the patio on the corner creates an opportunity for interaction between diners and pedestrian, further opening the hotel to the street. Amenities on the first floor create an open layout that in combination with glass walls will provide strong visual interest for guests and pedestrians passing the hotel.

Staff believes the hotel as proposed is a welcomed design at one of the main corridors to Downtown Memphis. It looks to Memphis design traditions and is designed with pedestrians in mind. The result is a structure that will extend the energy of both Union Ave. and BB King Blvd. and help connect points of interest in the core of Downtown Memphis.

Staff recommends that the brick fence surrounding the outdoor patio include some decorative feature that allows for openings in the brick wall. This will improve the pedestrian experience by adding more visual interest on the corner.

**Staff Recommendation:** **Staff recommends approval with the condition that the applicant return with a separate application for architectural lighting, public art and signage. Additionally, staff recommends that openings be added to the brick wall surrounding the outdoor dining area.**