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Land Use Control Board unanimously approves \$104M mixed-use development project, 35 Central

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With plans for an upscale, boutique hotel that has a rooftop restaurant and bar, 35,000 square feet of office space, 75 residential apartment units, and a \$104 million price tag, [35 Central](#) is an ambitious project — especially when you consider that it's [Bob Berry's first foray into commercial real estate development](#).

Berry and co., however, are chugging right along. And on July 8, the project — located at 3535 Central Ave. — gained unanimous approval from the Memphis and Shelby County Land Use Control Board (LUCB).

The site is roughly 500 feet away from the University of Memphis, and currently the home of Third Church of Christ, Scientist, though the organization is preparing to move.



COURTESY FLEMING ARCHITECTS

35 Central received approval from the Land Use Control Board on July 8.

"I go by this site, many, many times a day," said Margaret Pritchard, an LUCB member, during the meeting. "And I think this is a wonderful project. ... This will just revitalize that corner, and it needs it."

Planned effect

The design plan shows a seven-story hotel with 115 rooms and a rooftop restaurant and bar, as well as a six-story building with parking on the first two floors; offices and a courtyard on the third level; and 75 apartment units on levels four through six. The hotel is also expected to have a pool and/or spa, a workout space, room service, and a concierge, according to the application filed with the Memphis and Shelby County Division of Planning and Development.

And given its proximity to the U of M, it could see high demand, while being beneficial to the university.

"I just want to remind the board about the potential market for this hotel," said Dedrick Brittenum of Brittenum Law, who's representing the development, during the meeting. "[Staying at the hotel] will be families who come to visit...guest professors, out-of-town family members of residents who live in the area, out-of-town business visitors, and this would be an exhilarating facility for the U of M, in conducting meetings and hosting events."

Fleming Architects is handling the design for the project, which is expected to have a significant economic effect on the community.

Brittenum touted multiple figures, including \$11.87 million in direct and indirect wages, and \$2.4 million in taxes, annually, as well as 234 direct and indirect jobs.

This is in addition to the \$104 million construction cost, and 386 construction jobs that would lead to about \$22.8 million in wages.

Parking, parking, parking

While the board approved the project unanimously, not everyone in the community is excited about 35 Central.

A handful of residents of the nearby Central Cove neighborhood voiced their opposition in the meeting and in letters, and their main concern seemed to revolve around potential parking issues.

“Parking,” said Central Cove resident Jenny Madden during the meeting. “Parking, parking, parking, parking.”

The concern is that the scope of the project’s offerings — a hotel, offices, and apartments — will create a high volume of visitors who could overtake the amount of available parking, thereby affecting the adjoining neighborhoods.

“I don’t see how the proposed parking will accommodate the amount of required parking,” Madden said. “Additionally, if the hotel is hoping to host events... it begs the question, where are all these people going to park?”

They also expressed concerns about additional traffic, and the noise that could be generated from the rooftop bar and restaurant.

“We support the economic development of the area, but not to the detriment of the current neighborhood,” she said.

Brittenum pushed back against this, noting that developments of this nature — when located in the University District — only need 120 parking spaces, but that they’re providing 286. He also said the project’s traffic consultant, Martin Lipinski — director emeritus of U of M’s Intermodal Freight Transportation Institute — predicts just 150 trips a day.

As for the noise, he doesn’t think it will be much of an issue.

“First and foremost, this is a hotel,” he said. “People go to hotels for rest and relaxation, and they expect a certain quietness.”

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