



**Request**  
**Project Name**  
**Council District**  
**Requested by**

**DTC Modifications**  
**535 Lafayette Street**  
19 – O’Connell  
Chip Howorth, applicant;  
535 Lafayette Street LLC, owner

**Staff Reviewer**  
**Staff Recommendation**

Wallace  
*Disapproval without all conditions or deferral with all conditions*



1 inch = 100 feet



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 2/6/20

### APPLICANT REQUEST

A request to modify various standards of the Downtown Code for property located at 535 Lafayette Street, (0.22 acres), at the corner of Lafayette Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, and within the Lafayette Subdistrict of the DTC.

### DTC MODIFICATION REQUEST SUMMARY

#### 1. Active Use Definition

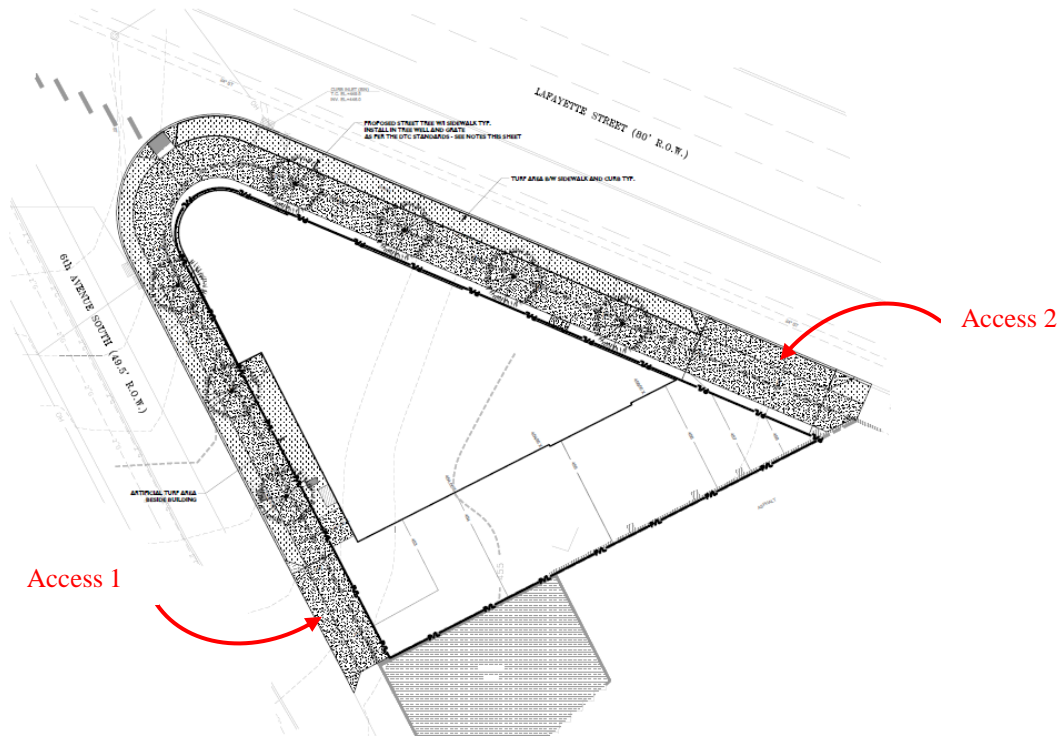
- Required: An active ground floor use requirement shall mean a habitable space occupied by retail, office, residential, institutional or recreational uses, specifically excluding parking and mechanical uses.
- Proposed: The applicant is requesting the DRC limit parking exclusion of active use to automobile parking.

#### 2. Vehicular Access

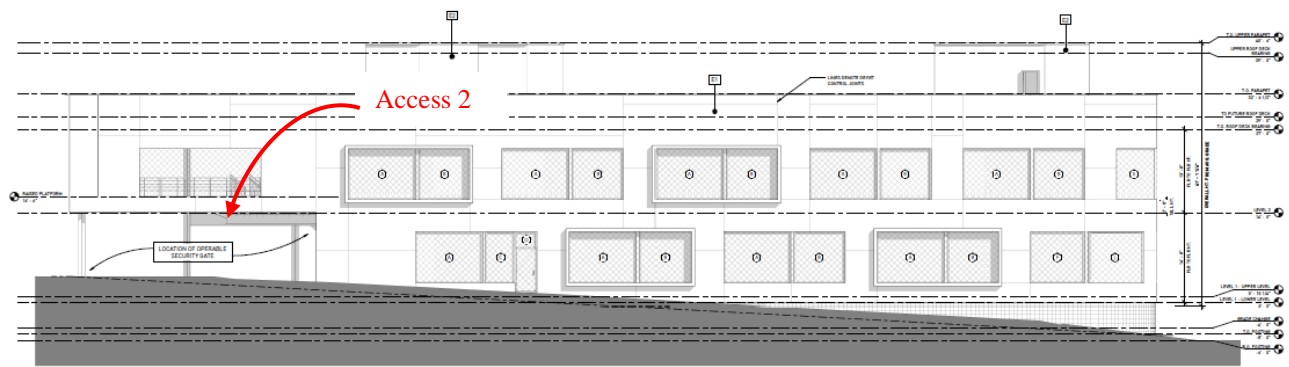
- Required: Access from public streets shall be considered in the following order: Other Streets, Secondary Streets, Neighborhood Streets, and then Primary Streets as approved by Metro departments. Lafayette Street is a primary street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue is a secondary street. Staff recommends access to occur from 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and not Lafayette Street. Reviewers shall consider the public safety, street character, and pedestrian experience.
- Proposed: Access points are proposed on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Lafayette Street.



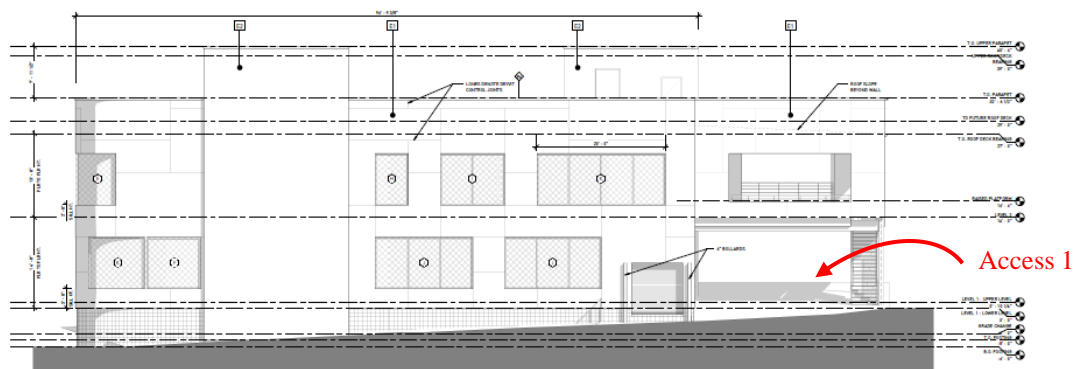
# Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 2/6/20



Site Plan



Lafayette Street Elevation



6th Avenue South Elevation



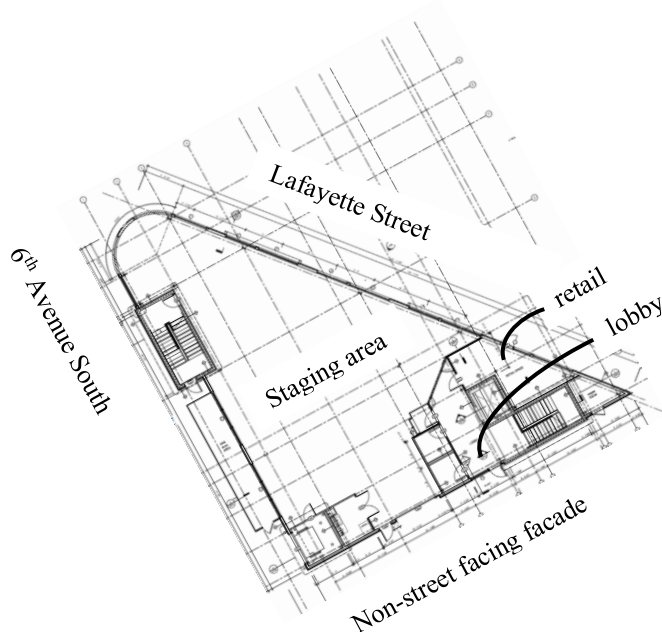
## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 2/6/20

### PROJECT OVERVIEW

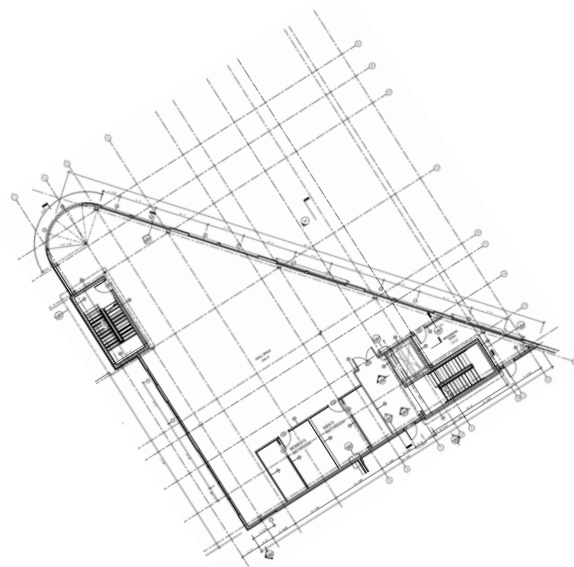
The project proposes a 2-story, 32-ft tall building to serve as Sprocket Rocket's business operations. The first floor consists of a staging area for pedal-powered vehicles. In this area, the vehicles will be used throughout the day by patrons, and parked, maintained, and serviced on when not in use. In addition to the staging area, there is a small check-in area and retail space for patrons. The second level serves as offices for the business and a large outdoor covered patio space that functions as a waiting area.

### PLAN DETAILS

The property is located at the corner of 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Lafayette Street. The site borders an adjacent property to the south. Pedestrian access is received from Lafayette Street and vehicular access points are indicated along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South and Lafayette Street.



**First Floor Plan**



**Second Floor Plan**

### ANALYSIS

#### Active Use Definition

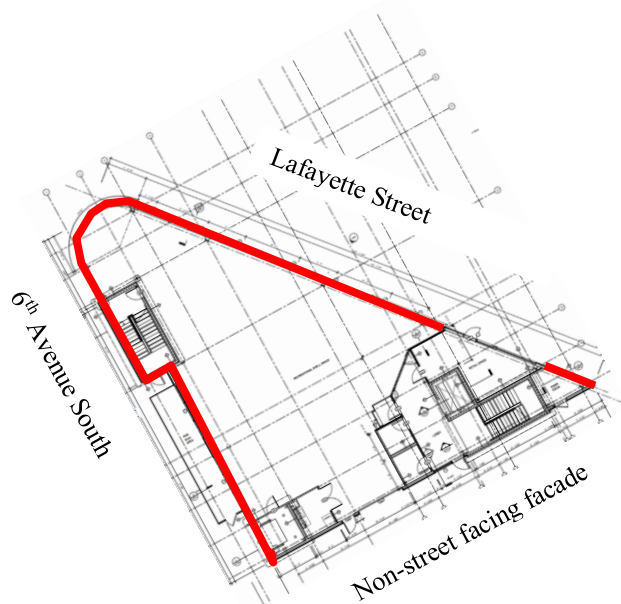
The Downtown Code requires an active ground floor use and defines active use as “a habitable space occupied by retail, office, residential, institutional or recreational uses, specifically excluding parking and mechanical uses (68).”

#### Non-Active Use

A ground floor active use is required of any project within the DTC and Planning staff has several concerns with the request to permit a non-active use. First, the proposed amount of non-active use is a significant portion of the building. The diagram below illustrates the area of frontage with a non-active use e.g. the parking, maintenance, storage, and rental of pedal vehicles. Approximately 70% of the frontage along Lafayette Street and 100% of the frontage along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South contain no active ground floor use.



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 2/6/20



### First Floor Plan

Secondly, the applicant has not presented a unique condition or site constraint that warrants a modification at this time. Based on site-specific issues, an applicant may seek modifications to the Downtown Code and any standard within the DTC may be modified, insofar as the intent of the standard is being met, the modification results in better urban design for the neighborhood as a whole, and the modification does not impeded or burden existing or future development of adjacent properties.

In the spirit of the Downtown Code to promote the notion of form over use, Planning staff finds it reasonable to consider a modification to allow a non-active use if the design of the building were to provide a public benefit or demonstrated a thoughtful and/or exceptional efforts to exceeds the goals and objectives of the DTC.

Planning staff has coordinated with the applicant to provide recommendations for a building design that considers the following:

- Frames the corner with a pedestrian-friendly presence by means of pedestrian entrance, window openings, or use of architectural features.
- Uses durable, high-quality finish materials.

Such design elements would strive to meet the following goals and objectives of the Downtown Code:

- Promote a walkable and attractive streetscape environment.
- Create a frontage condition that is comfortable, safe, and interesting for pedestrians.
- Ensure sustainability of buildings that can be adapted for new uses over time.



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 2/6/20

Until a design is submitted that demonstrates a thoughtful and/or exceptional effort to exceed the goals and objectives of DTC, Planning staff finds it unreasonable to recommend approval of the submitted plans at this time.

### Vehicular Access

The DTC uses Street Types as an urban design and organizing tool to prioritize the location of vehicular access points. All streets are classified on the Regulating Plan as Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Other, or Alley. Where alleys exist, or where new alleys can be created, the DTC prioritizes alleys for access and loading. The location of vehicular access from all other streets shall be determined on a case by case basis.

The map below illustrates the location of the site within the DTC street hierarchy. Lafayette Street is considered a Primary Street and 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South is considered a Secondary Street.



**Lafayette Subdistrict Street Hierarchy Map**

Planning staff has coordinated with Public Works and the Multimodal Transportation Division and to determine optimal design solutions. The following design considerations factor into the recommendation.

Given the complicated and challenging condition of the intersection at Lafayette Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Ewing Avenue, and Lea Avenue, Public Works prefers access to occur on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South at the signalized intersection. The frequent turning of slow-moving vehicles onto Lafayette Street, which is a 6 lane state road, is not ideal and would presents a challenge for traffic flow.

The Downtown Code emphasizes the need to mitigate conflicts between pedestrians and vehicular traffic by reducing the number of curb cuts where possible and encourages access points to not occur along primary streets (Lafayette).



## Downtown Code DRC Meeting of 2/6/20

Further, bike infrastructure should be accounted for in the proposed site layout. Walk-N-Bike Nashville calls for a minor protected bikeway to be planned along 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue South. Although several options may be available to accommodate such infrastructure, further coordination needs to occur to account for the bike lanes.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff maintains the definition of active use as defined by the Downtown Code. The project has not demonstrated efforts to align with the goals and objectives of the Downtown Code and requires further coordination and discussion to receive consideration of approval to allow a modification at this time.

Staff recommends disapproval without all conditions, and deferral with the following conditions in order to revisit with the DRC with anticipated changes:

1. Continue to work with Planning staff on a building design that considers the following:
  - Framing the corner intersection in a manner that is pedestrian-friendly by means of pedestrian entrance, window openings, or use of architectural features.
  - Using durable, high-quality finish materials, such as brick, brick veneer, fiber cement board, and metal panel systems.
2. Remove access point along Lafayette Street.
3. Sidewalk corridor shall be designed with street trees in tree grates versus a planting strip.