



Request	Modifications to DTC Standards
Project Name	Metro Criminal Justice Center
Council District	19 – O’Connell
Requested by	Bell & Associates, HOK, Moody Nolan, applicants; Metro Government of Nashville and Davidson County, owner
Staff Recommendation	<i>Approve with conditions.</i>

APPLICANT REQUEST

Modification to the Downtown Code

A request to approve modifications for property located at 415 2nd Avenue North, within the James Robertson subdistrict of the DTC.

The property is located at 415 2nd Avenue North (approximately 3.58 acres) and encompasses an entire city block bound by 2nd Avenue North to the east, 3rd Avenue North to the west, Gay Street to the north, and James Robertson Parkway to the south. The site slopes away from James Robertson Parkway and consists of a grade change of approximately 27ft from the southeast corner of the site down to the northwest corner of the site.

The proposed civic building consists of new construction for a five story criminal justice center (totaling approximately 400,000 SF) to include a correctional facility and sheriff’s office with intake and transfer sally port (a controlled gateway for prisoners), a mental health unit, and a combined private and public underground parking structure. The proposed building ties in to an existing sky bridge connecting to an adjacent building across 2nd Avenue North. The main entry to the building is marked by a prominent plaza along James Robertson Parkway, with additional entries along 3rd Avenue North and Gay Street.

Civic Buildings require review via modification, per the DTC

Standards that differ from the DTC standards (proposed plan does not comply with following standards):

- Build-to zone along James Robertson Parkway
- Stepback requirement between the 4th and 8th stories along all street frontages.
- Ground level active use requirement along 2nd Avenue North and 3rd Avenue North.
- Facade glazing/openings requirements along all street frontages.
- Street tree / planting strip requirement along James Robertson Parkway.

ANALYSIS

The DTC requires civic buildings to be reviewed by modification and offers general guidance as follows:

A civic building shall be oriented to streets and public spaces and follow the intent of the particular subdistrict in which it is located with regard to pedestrian orientation, massing, and articulation.

The DTC also calls for civic buildings to be designed with prominence and monumentality.

The proposed building offers a prominent main entry fronting onto an open plaza along James Robertson Parkway. The proposed massing is split into a base and upper portion. Specifically, the bottom portion of the building transitions from a plaza at street level along James Robertson



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Parkway to a one story building along Gay Street forming a plinth to the overall building. The upper portion of the building integrates façade components including glazing and architectural treatment of all levels into one solid form and is recessed significantly from the street giving unique presence that contributes to the civic character of the James Robertson subdistrict.

Build-to and stepback requirements

Along James Robertson Parkway, the project proposes a plaza area increasing the distance of the building facade to approximately 100ft from the right-of-way. The building then steps back approximately 20ft after the ground floor level. The building also steps back after the 1st floor along all other street frontages. The DTC standard is to stepback between the 4th and 8th stories.

The public plaza and corresponding facade location are in keeping with the intent of the DTC as it creates a new gathering area from the community's use. The DTC requires step-backs to occur between the 4th and 8 stories. However, given the nature of the building's use, flexibility to this standard is warranted to minimize security concerns.

Active use requirement

The DTC requires an active ground floor use for all primary and secondary streets. The proposed project provides no active use along 2nd Avenue North (secondary street), and only for a portion of the frontage along 3rd Avenue North (secondary street). The loading dock and sally port driveways occur along 2nd and 3rd Avenues for an extended portion of the block, as well as the portions of the parking structure, and are necessary for the function of the Criminal Justice Center. The condition does result in portions of blank wall along the sidewalk that provides no visual relief for pedestrians.

Facade glazing / openings requirement

The DTC requires that Civic Building frontages be reviewed by modification. No specific percentages for glazing or openings are outlined. The security and sensitive nature of the CJC necessitates flexibility to the typical glazing standards. The proposed glazing and openings are in line, or are somewhat below those for typical commercial buildings (depending upon the extent that the back of house / mechanical areas are excluded from the facade calculation). Generally speaking the facades have been designed to balance the functionality of the building while providing some amount of visual interest.

However, there are extended portions along 2nd and 3rd Avenue ground levels that result in a blank wall. These areas offer little visual relief for pedestrians and design alternatives should be considered to improve the pedestrian experience: articulated elements, wall openings, change in material, texture, and spacing of elements.

Street Tree / Planting Strip requirement

The DTC requires street trees within the right-of-way, 1 tree for every 50 feet of frontage (in this case 5 trees would be the min. required). A 15 foot total streetscape width, including a 4 foot planting area and 11 foot sidewalk is also required. The project proposes to maintain the existing 15 foot sidewalk condition, without street trees or a planting strip. While the project is creating the newly designed landscaped plaza along James Robertson Parkway, the intent of the DTC is to create a buffer between traffic along the street and pedestrians on the sidewalk with a planting strip/street trees.



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The proposed Metro Criminal Justice Center meets the intent of the DTC for prominence and monumentality for new civic buildings. Given the nature of the use of the building, modifications to standards are warranted. Staff recommends approval of the modifications with conditions:

1. Further articulate the ground level facade wall along 2nd and 3rd Avenues so that a blank wall is avoided and more visual interest is created at the pedestrian level.
2. Provide the required 4 foot planting strip or street trees along James Robertson Parkway frontage.