



Request	Modifications to DTC Standards
Project Name	825 3rd Avenue South – SoBro Storage
Council District	19 – O’Connell
Requested by	Smith Gee Studio, LLC, applicant
Staff Recommendation	<i>Approve with conditions.</i>

APPLICANT REQUEST

Modification to the Downtown Code

A request to approve revisions and additional modifications to the previously approved design with modifications for property located at 825 3rd Avenue South, within the Lafayette Subdistrict of the DTC.

The project consists of a six story urban storage building to include one small office space (approximately 740 SF) along the 3rd Avenue South / Lindsley Avenue frontage. The remainder of the building will be used for urban mini storage. Eleven parking spaces are also proposed on the eastern portion of the site, with access from Lindsley Avenue.

Previously Approved Modifications to the DTC Standards (proposed plan does not comply with following standards):

- Ground level active use requirement along the Lafayette Street frontage.
- 14 foot streetscape improvement dimension along the Lafayette Street frontage (currently showing a 12 foot streetscape improvement).
- Minimum 25% openings for each upper level street facing floor. The revised plan does not comply with this standard.

Additional Requested Modifications to the DTC Standards (proposed plan does not comply with following standards):

- 80% lot frontage requirement along Lindsley Avenue.
- 14 foot minimum ground floor height requirement, applicant is proposing 12 feet.
- Perimeter screening standards for surface parking lots (tree requirement).
- Street tree requirement along 3rd Avenue South / Lindsley Avenue.

BACKGROUND

The project received approval with conditions for modifications to the ground level active use requirement along Lafayette Street, the minimum 25% upper level openings standard, and the 14 foot required MCSP streetscape dimension along Lafayette on May 5th, 2016 by the DTC DRC. The conditions were:

1. The applicant shall return to the DTC DRC with a final design solution for the retaining wall at the ground level and first floor along Lafayette Street for a final approval before building permits.
2. The Lafayette Street streetscape shall consist of a minimum 12 foot dimension in the public right-of-way (4 foot planting strip/tree well zone and 8 foot sidewalk), and any elements of the retaining wall must be outside of this 12 foot zone.

The applicant subsequently revised the design of the project reducing the height of the building from eight to six stories, removing a portion of the building (including one office space) along the



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3rd Avenue South / Lindsley Avenue frontage, and changing the design of the retaining wall along Lafayette Street from a lit feature wall to a lit mural wall. The revisions went before the DTC DRC on April 6th, 2017, where it was deferred indefinitely. The DTC DRC requested that the applicants come back with a better solution for the wall along Lafayette Street and a better design of the 3rd Ave South / Lindsley Avenue corner. The applicant has since revised the design to address those comments.

ANALYSIS

The site sits atop a retaining wall along Lafayette Street that ranges from approximately 6 feet to 11 feet in height. The site is also adjacent to the TDOT Interstate right-of way located to the south. Because of the severe grade difference between the street and the parcel, vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is limited to the 3rd Avenue South / Lindsley Avenue frontage, and is not conducive to street level ground floor activation (unless the building were sunk and built into the grade). The ground floor height is required to be 14 feet and the applicant is proposing 12 feet. The ground floor façade will be above the retaining wall along Lafayette Street and appear to be much taller than the 14 feet required.

For the May 5th, 2016 DTC DRC staff recommended that the applicant meet the 14 foot MCSP streetscape requirement along Lafayette Street and disapproval of the modification to permit 12 feet (4 foot tree zone and 8 foot sidewalk). While the staff position is still that 14 feet would be appropriate along Lafayette Street due to the high traffic volume and pedestrian use of the corridor, this modification has been previously approved by the DTC DRC.

In lieu of the active ground level on Lafayette Street, the previous approved design included a back-lit feature wall to help add interest to that side of the building at night. The applicant has revised the design to better integrate the retaining wall with the building by bringing building materials down to the street. In addition the applicant added a metal canopy lit with LED lights that projects one foot from the building wall at the 2nd floor level that is similar to the previously approved design.

The building footprint was revised due to the discovery of fiber optic cables on the eastern portion of the site along Lindsley Avenue. The proposed design does not comply with the 80% lot frontage requirement along Lindsley Avenue since the applicant cannot build above that portion of the site. The revised design addresses the corner of 3rd Ave South / Lindsley Avenue by adding a projection to the 3rd Avenue South frontage with more glazing and a projecting sign at the corner.

With the removal of the portion of the building along Lindsley Avenue, the revised design proposes surface parking adjacent to the public street. The perimeter screening standards for surface parking lots require that at least one tree be installed for this project, the applicant is not proposing any due to the inability to plant on the easement. The applicant is also required to provide one street tree for every 50 feet of frontage and is not proposing any due to overhead powerlines and sanitary / sewer lines below grade. Staff supports these modifications due to the hardship of the easement and underground utilities, as long as the shrubs and fence proposed sufficiently screen the parking area from the street.

Building materials are primarily a mix of metal, stucco and glass. The remainder of the building is proposed to comply with the DTC standards including for facade glazing requirements, so that it feels and looks like an active building.



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval with conditions of the modifications and revisions to the design as proposed, contingent upon the DRC finding that the applicant has satisfactorily addressed the comments from the April 6th, 2017 DTC DRC meeting.

1. All signage shall comply with DTC standards.

