

METROPOLITAN HISTORIC ZONING COMMISSION
Sunnyside in Sevier Park, 1113 Kirkwood Avenue Nashville, TN 37204
615-862-7970, historicalcommission@nashville.gov

STAFF RECOMMENDATION
Downtown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay
July 19, 2023

Application: Expansion of Downtown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay

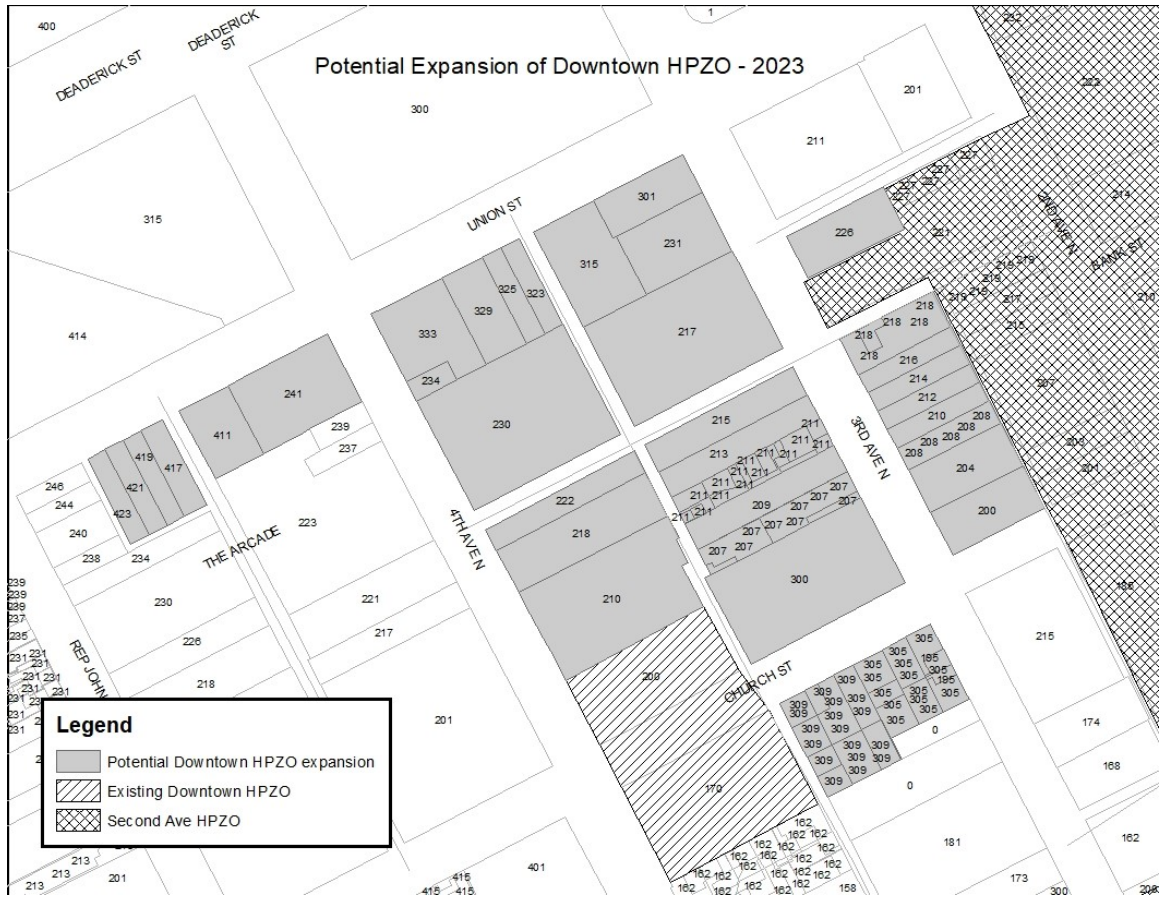
Council Districts: 06

Applicant: Multiple property owners

Project Lead: Robin Zeigler, robin.zeigler@nashville.gov, 615-862-7970

<p>Description of Project: Councilmember O’Connell requests an expansion of the Downtown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay with a revision to the existing design guidelines.</p> <p>Recommendation Summary: Staff suggests that the Commission recommend approval of the expansion of the overlay for these eligible properties to the Council, finding that the properties meet 17.36.120(A)(5); and to adopt the existing design guidelines, finding that they meet the Secretary of Interior Standards.</p>	<p>Attachments A: Photographs</p>
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Map



Background:

Councilmember O'Connell hosted two community meetings. The most recent was on June 16, held at the Assembly Room at the Historic Metro Courthouse. There was also a virtual meeting held on March 23, 2022.

The current Downtown Historic Preservation Zoning Overlay currently includes two buildings, the J.C. Bradford Building at 170 4th Avenue North, now the Courtyard by Marriott, and the U.S. Bank Building at 208 4th Avenue North, now the Noelle Hotel, which are a part of the Printer's Alley National Register District.

Applicable Ordinances:

17.36.110 Historic overlay districts established.

The following classifications of historic overlay districts are made a part of this title, each classification having separate and unique regulations and guidelines established according to the provisions of Chapter 17.40, Article IX.

A.Historic Preservation (HP) District. The boundaries shall be shown on the zoning map or on special overlays thereto which are made a part of this zoning code and noted by name on such maps, in which no structure shall be constructed, altered, repaired, relocated or demolished in whole or in part in this district unless the action complies with the requirements set forth in this title.

17.36.120 Historic Districts Defined.

A.Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Conservation Districts. These districts are defined as geographical areas which possess a significant concentration, linkage or continuity of sites, buildings, structures or objects which are united by past events or aesthetically by plan or physical development, and that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- 1.The district is associated with an event that has made a significant contribution to local, state or national history; or
- 2.It includes structures associated with the lives of persons significant in local, state or national history; or
- 3.It contains structures or groups of structures that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- 4.It has yielded or may be likely to yield archaeological information important in history or prehistory; or
- 5.It is listed or is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

A.Creation of Historic Overlay Districts. The historic zoning commission shall review applications calling for the designation of historic overlay districts according to the

standards contained in Chapter 17.36, Article III, referring written recommendations to the metropolitan council. Establishment of an historic overlay district on the official zoning map shall be in accordance with Section 18.02 of the Metropolitan Charter and Article III of this chapter.

17.40.410 Powers and duties.

B.Establishment of Design Review Guidelines. The historic zoning commission shall adopt design guidelines for each historic overlay district and apply those guidelines when considering preservation permit applications. Design guidelines relating to the construction, alteration, addition and repair to, and relocation and demolition of structures and other improvements shall be consistent with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended. A public hearing following the applicable public notice requirements of Article XV of this chapter shall precede the adoption of all design review guidelines by the historic zoning commission. Testimony and evidence material to the type of historic overlay under consideration may be considered by the commission in its deliberations.

Analysis and Findings:

The area recommended for the expansion is a portion of Nashville’s historic Central Business District, which includes the Printers Alley National Register of Historic Places district (listed in 1982), the Nashville Financial National Register of Historic Places district (listed in 2002), a portion of the Fifth Avenue National Register of Historic Places district (listed in 1983) and the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta (listed individually in 1984 and as part of a district 2002), as well as additional National Register eligible historic buildings around these three districts.

Printers Alley between Third and Fourth Avenue North and stretching from Church and Union Streets, derives its significance from four areas: industry, commerce, entertainment, and architecture. The printing industry began shortly after the founding of Nashville and was thriving by the middle of the nineteenth century with an abundance of newspapers, periodicals, and religious materials. Many of those businesses were located on Printers Alley. The Men’s Quarter on Cherry Street (now Fourth Avenue North) developed during the Victorian years as a block devoted almost exclusively to saloons and other entertainment businesses for men. The Printers Alley Historic District contains 15 buildings which form an excellent collection of the rich architectural styles of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Together they illustrate the transition from Victorian to modern architecture in Nashville and the technological advances that made this possible.

The 400 block of Union Street and 210-222 4th Avenues North are in the Fifth Avenue National Register District. The Fifth Avenue Historic District is significant in Nashville’s commercial history and architectural development. This area has traditionally been the retail center of the city and its architecture is reflective of a period of prosperity from 1870 to the 1930s. All of the buildings in the district pre-date 1935

and the majority retain their original architectural character. The district represents an important concentration of historic architecture in downtown Nashville, most being designed in the Italianate, Romanesque or Chicago commercial styles.

The Nashville Financial Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion C for architecture as a notable collection of Classical Revival designs and as some of the city's oldest extant examples of tall office building construction. It is further eligible under Criterion A for its association with the business history of the city and its role as a major regional center for the banking and securities industries.

The architects who designed the buildings in the Nashville Financial Historic District represent skilled architects practicing in the city during the decades preceding World War II, when formal architectural training became widespread. The classical vocabulary in the district is characteristic of financial institutions before World War II, which sought to convey their stability through the timeless qualities of classical architecture. The district, as a whole, comprises Nashville's best collection of classically styled commercial buildings. It derives its architectural importance from the consistency with which the classical idiom and three-part Sullivanese form was used for financial buildings in this quarter, and from the association that classical styles have historically had with the banking industry nationwide.

The Nashville Financial Historic District built a reputation as the "Wall Street of the South" with the founding and consolidation of several banks that grew to influence and participate in business matters on a regional scale. The municipal bond industry also found a home in Nashville in the early twentieth century, as did other securities businesses. Banks and financial businesses in Nashville centered their offices around the intersections of Third and Fourth Avenues and Union Street. No other section of downtown had ever established such a high concentration of financial businesses as this area. These five buildings reflect the period of growth and expansion that raised the profile of banking in Nashville during the early twentieth century. The industry extended its influence into a variety of other sectors and played a major role in shaping various types of businesses, such as the insurance industry, that made Nashville a regional hub during the New South period and throughout the last century.

The proposed overlay includes buildings listed in the National Register and buildings eligible for listing in the National Register and therefore meets 17.36.120(A)(5).

Three projects that are requesting additional height for infill and additions have been in the works for several years. Those projects will be considered the same as if they have a building permit, in terms of the additional height and conceptual design, because they are well into the approval process. They are:

1. Additional height for a rooftop addition at 226 Third Avenue North (2020DTC-018-001, application incomplete but agreed upon)
2. Additional height for a rooftop addition at 231 Third Avenue North (2019DTC-018-001, application incomplete but agreed upon)

3. New construction at 215-217 Third Avenue North, “Printers and Bakers Alley” project (2022DTC-022-001, application incomplete but agreed upon)



Figures 1, 2 and 3: 226 3rd Ave N-rooftop addition, 231 3rd Ave N-rooftop addition and 215-217 3rd Ave N-infill construction.

Recommendation:

Staff suggests that the Commission recommend approval of the expansion of the overlay for these eligible properties to the Council, finding that the properties meet 17.36.120(A)(5); and to adopt the existing design guidelines, finding that they meet the Secretary of Interior Standards.

ATTACHMENT A: EXAMPLE BUILDINGS IN THE PROPOSED EXPANSION



American Trust Building, 235
Union Street, 1926



Federal Reserve, 226 3rd Ave N,
1922



Nashville Trust Company, 231 3rd Ave N, 1902



Southern Turf Saloon, 222 4th Ave N,
1895 (prior to recent rehab)



327 Union Street



329 Union Street



234 4th Avenue N



200 Block of 3rd Ave N