

REPORT TO THE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

DATE: September 24, 2026

SUBJECT: Resolution 2026-27 - Design Guidelines Amendment for Commercial Building Heights

INTRODUCTION:

Resolution 2026-27 (Exhibit 1) would amend Chapter III of the Historic District Design Guidelines document related to commercial building heights for new construction. The affected section applies to new buildings only. Alterations to an existing historic structure would be regulated by a different section.

BACKGROUND:

- The Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BMA) adopts amendments to the Historic District Design Guidelines by resolution after a recommendation is made by the Historic District Commission (HDC). The Town has had design guidelines for the Local Historic District since 1989. The BMA adopted the latest format of the Guidelines developed by Frazier Associates in 2002, which have been amended several times since then.
- In August 2026, the HDC held a non-voting discussion (see Exhibit 2) related to a planned five (5) story boutique hotel on the west side of North Main Street with special design techniques were used to obscure views of the upper floors. This property is zoned CB: Central Business and is within the Local Historic Overlay and the National Register District. During the discussion, it was discussed how existing language in the Guidelines would not support a five (5) story building.
- The HDC has approved in recent years three (3) and four (4) story buildings with special design techniques (i.e. recessed upper floors and traditional storefronts massing) used to maintain the historic proportions common of commercial buildings on and around the Town Square.

KEY POINTS:

1. The proposed amendment would change the measurement of commercial building height for new buildings from "feet" to "stories".

- Page 85 of the Guidelines says, "While zoning allows up to 35 feet in height in the Central Business District, commercial buildings in the historic district for the most part are only one story...New construction proportions should respect the average height and width of the majority of existing neighboring commercial buildings in the district."
- A 35-foot building typically translates into one (1) to three (3) story building heights based on the intended use of the building, the roof form, and ceiling heights. Commercial buildings with a 35-foot height limit typically do not exceed one (1) or two (2) stories in height.
- Commercial buildings in the Local Historic Overlay range from one (1) story to three (3) stories.
- Instead of listing a numerical building height of 35 feet, the Guidelines would be amended by Resolution 2026-27 to say new construction proportions would still need to respect the average height and width of the majority of existing neighborhood commercial buildings and maintain one (1) story to three (3) stories at the sidewalk.

- Additional height could be permitted only when upper stories are recessed sufficiently to remain visually subordinate to the historic facade.
- The visible street facade would still need to maintain the historic proportions common of commercial buildings on and around the Town Square. Cornice lines, parapets, and roof forms would be expected to reinforce the historic one (1) to three (3) story rhythm.
- Any portion of a building above the third story would need to be substantially set back from the front facade. The exact setback depth would be determined by a visibility test from the opposite sidewalk.
- The result of this revised standard would be the upper floors will not visible, or only minimally visible, from public sidewalks along the building's primary street frontage.
- The language would say under no circumstance could a building exceed five (5) stories, including mechanical equipment or penthouses, except for buildings directly fronting Town Square Park (i.e. Center Street, Main Street, or Mulberry Street), which should not exceed three (3) stories.

2. The Zoning Ordinance was amended in 2011 related to the measurement of commercial building height to allow for more design flexibility.

- 151.027(D) was added to the Zoning Ordinance in 2011 to help implement the Downtown Collierville Small Area Plan. This section regulates the height of nonresidential buildings in the Downtown area by the applicable Special Area and uses stories instead of a numerical expression of maximum building height (formerly 35 feet for Central Business), which allowed for more design flexibility.
- The Zoning Ordinance currently limits commercial buildings near the Town Square to three (3) stories. Blocks to the east or south of the Town Square could have four (4) story buildings. Through the Planned Development (PD) process, an applicant could request a waiver of this building height standard. The HDC would first be asked to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness (CofA) for the PD and any waivers before the Board of Mayor and Aldermen considered the request.

3. The HDC will continue to utilize the COA process to determine if a specific proposed building height and design complies with the intent of the Guidelines.

- §151.200(B) of the Zoning Ordinance says the HDC, "shall issue a Certificate of Appropriateness if...it finds...the property owner or property owner's representative has established that the proposed alteration or activity complies with the standards for review set forth by this chapter and regulated by the Commission and conforms to the purpose and intent of this chapter; and...creating, changing, demolishing, or altering the exterior architectural features of the structure, improvement or site upon which the work is to be done will not have a substantial adverse impact on the aesthetic, historic or architectural significance and value of either the property itself or of the neighboring improvements in the district."
- The amendment will clarify the HDC could require line-of-sight studies, perspectives, renderings, and 3D models as necessary to demonstrate the upper stories are recessed sufficiently.

STAFF RECCOMENDATION: Approval is recommended, as the COA process will enable the HDC to ensure the visible street facade of a new building would still maintain the historic Collierville proportions of a one (1) to three (3) story rhythm along the perimeter street. Language has been added to allow buildings taller than three (3) stories only for blocks not directly fronting on Town Square Park (i.e. Center Street, Main Street, or Mulberry Street).

ATTACHMENTS:

[Exhibit 1 - Resolution 2026-27 Design Guidelines Change 9-16-26.pdf](#)

[Exhibit 2 - 08-27-26 HDC Minutes DRAFT.pdf](#)

PROPOSED MOTION:

To recommend approval to the Board of Mayor and Aldermen (BMA) of Resolution 2026-27 (Exhibit 1).