

June 13, 2025

Department of Planning & Inspections
City of Dover
PO BOX 475
Dover, DE 19903

The 120 S. Governors Mixed-Use Development will be a newly constructed 4-story building in the heart of Downtown Dover. The structure will be situated at 120 S. Governors Avenue, Dover, DE 19904, and may include an additional three parcels if the properties are able to be secured by the DDP which will provide additional exterior amenity space and site access. The site is located one block north of Lookerman Street, the site is bordered by S. Governors Avenue to the east, S New Street to the west, and Minor Street paper alley to the south. Currently, the site is vacant with recent demolition of the one-story Auto Parts/AutoPlus retail store and daycare center.

The proposed Mobility Center, for which planning is now fully underway, will be located directly across the street from the proposed Mixed-Use project at 120 S. Governors Ave. (the subject of this narrative) and will accommodate the parking needs for the residents, business owners and shoppers, as well as the public in the business district. This Mobility Center is prioritized in the Capital City 2030: Transforming Downtown Dover master plan because the parking and related infrastructure it will provide is crucial in supporting the transformation of the Capital City into a vibrant hub for commerce, living, and cultural activities projected through 2030 and beyond.

Further, the proposed mixed-use redevelopment project will support an additional revitalization strategy within the master plan, which is to increase the number of mixed-income residents living in downtown by +/- 300 toward an overall goal of 2,000 new residents, as well as provide access to food within downtown Dover, a “food dessert” as well as increase retail and service opportunities.

Architectural Design and Adherence to Historic District Guidelines

The architecture of the Mixed-Use residential community is crafted to creatively reflect and honor the historic district while adhering to its guidelines. The design aligns with the Historic District Zone’s standards, emphasizing that:

“...the slavish and literal copying of architectural styles and elements will trivialize and confuse the genuine historic architecture of the City of Dover... Contemporary architecture should be representative of the time in which it is created and should thus contribute to Dover’s architectural diversity for the appreciation of future generations.”¹

Although “contemporary” in style, the development’s architecture respects the historic context rather than replicating neighboring structures. The building incorporates the guideline’s principles of scale,

¹ *Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone*; John Milner Associates, 1992; 4-2

rhythm, proportion, and materiality. This approach enables the structure to harmonize with its surroundings and avoid appearing contextually foreign, while introducing additional contemporary texture and materials into the design to complement the historic landscape.

While not required for a building that is 4-stories or below, our project aims to align with the Design Standards and the new C-2 zoning regulations for larger scale buildings. The building's massing incorporates a tripartite form in key sections of the façade along S. Governors Ave, and provides a six-foot setback in 2 main sections of the façade which allows the building's corners and focal entrance in the center to stand prominent along the street edge. This setback scales the building within the urban fabric of Dover's Historic District by creating alternating vertical 'major' and 'minor' facades to provide relief along the streetscape, while creating identifiable entry points to the different retail and residential entrances along the ground floor along S. Governors Ave. It also creates opportunities to employ a mix of materials and features such as cornices, piers, framed entries, and canopies that are prevalent within the historic district.

With the core approach of respect rather than replication, the building takes cues and architectural style from the buildings downtown, rather than direct forgery. An example of which is the building's brickwork, which takes cues such as the size, shape, color variation, and uniformity of bricks prevalent downtown. The patterning of the brick, mainly running bond with accents of soldier coursing, is a common theme downtown and serves as an acknowledgement and method of folding the building into the fabric of Dover.

Site

The building is designed to adhere closely to C-2 zoning requirements, which call for a zero-foot setback, positioning the development directly along the sidewalk edge. Between entry points, the sidewalk will be expanded to enhance pedestrian experience and provide opportunities for streetscape implementations. Such implementations could include thoughtfully planned site elements such as sidewalk seating, planting beds, light poles and wall sconces that provide essential lighting while complementing and softening the architectural design.

In addition, a selection of street trees and landscaped plantings along the building's perimeter will create a comfortable, shaded environment for pedestrians, contributing to a pleasant streetscape. To the northwest of the structure on S New Street, a public greenspace area is proposed, incorporating trees, shrubs, and various plantings to enhance the aesthetic quality of the site and provide a natural respite within the urban landscape. This greenspace will serve as a "pocket park", offering a convenient and valuable amenity for residents and visitors with pets.

All site elements, including landscaping and lighting, will be carefully positioned to promote pedestrian safety at all hours of the day in addition to limiting light pollution for neighboring properties. Special

attention will be given to sightlines of building entry points, traffic calming devices, and safe street crossing between the Mobility Center at 133. S Governors Ave. to our Mixed-Use Development at 120 S. Governors Ave, promoting a safe, pedestrian-friendly environment that aligns with the broader vision of Downtown Dover as a vibrant and accessible community space.

Ground Floor Programming and Design

The ground floor of 120 S. Governors Ave. is thoughtfully programmed to serve a variety of activities, which promotes the urban experience. Key occupancies will include a grocer, a day care, a café, and up to three retail bays perfect for small businesses serving the community. The residential community will have their main entrances both from S. Governors Ave. as well as S. New Street to minimize the notion of a 'rear' entrance. These entrances, along with the community space and residential lounge, will provide views into a cozy outdoor retreat on the ground level that will serve both residents and visitors as well as create a positive entrance experience from S. New Street for customers of the grocery, and families enrolled in the daycare center.

Façade Design and Materiality of the Pedestrian zone

There are two main material palettes that complement but distinguish the primary façade along S. Governors Ave to the balance of the building's facades along S. New Street, Minor Street 'alley', and the north façade facing Reed Street.

Along S. Governors Ave., the first material palette includes a rich blend of masonry colors, feature material such as copper-brown metal panels, matte black metal trim, fiber cement panel in neutral tones, and black or dark bronze decorative metal elements and frames which will be wrapped around the building's northeast and southeast corners to maintain visual continuity from the oblique approaching view.

The second palette, while complementary to the first palette, will relate towards the neighboring residential blocks with neutral tones of plank siding and fiber cement panel, matte black metal trim, masonry, and black or dark bronze decorative metal elements and window frames.

The Development's façade will feature primarily retail frontages that alternate between masonry piers, glazing, fiber cement panel piers, and accent metal panels to create a diverse and rhythmic architectural language to enhance the pedestrian experience that matches the color and scale of surrounding buildings. Similar to our Mobility Center development across S. Governors Ave., the brickwork employs varying orientations, particularly within column bays and at the cornice or perceived cornice levels, to introduce architectural texture and provide a contemporary nod to traditional Victorian brickwork. This technique ensures a harmonious blend with Dover's historic aesthetic while expressing a modern identity.

Both street-facing elevations follow this brickwork pattern up to the varying cornice lines that step down towards a more residential scale to the north, while giving way to a more muted modern expression above. The thoughtful progression from brick to panel on the upper floors emphasizes the building's contemporary character while maintaining visual cohesion with the district's architectural language at the pedestrian zone.

Along Minor Street paper alley and the north facade, the brickwork and decorative detailing wrap the corner before switching to the second palette.

These design choices reflect a commitment to honoring previous-received public input through our design efforts for the Mobility Center Development, integrating contemporary style with historical context, and aligning with the Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Dover Historic District Zone.

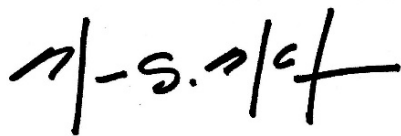
Windows, Openings, and Canopies

The windows and openings in the Development will be proportional to their function for retail and residential users, but also maintain consistency with those of neighboring buildings, creating a varied, yet unified streetscape.

Extending across the length of the ground floor, canopies with dark painted metal fascia will be installed, designed with detailing that complements the brickwork and adds an additional layer of architectural refinement. These canopies may function simultaneously to manage stormwater runoff while visually lowering the building's scale to create a more pedestrian-friendly atmosphere.

The design choices throughout the structure focus on balancing functionality, historical alignment, and pedestrian comfort, thereby reinforcing the Mixed-Use Development at 120 S. Governors Ave as a well-integrated, accessible element of downtown Dover's urban fabric.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M.S. McCloskey', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Michael S. McCloskey, AIA, LEED AP

Vice President

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