



## Cover Memorandum/Staff Report

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**File #:** 25-663

**Agenda Date:** 6/3/2025

**Item #:** 7.B.

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**TO:** Mayor and Commissioners  
**FROM:** Anthea Gianniotis, Development Services Director  
**THROUGH:** Terrence Moore, ICMA-CM  
**DATE:** June 3rd, 2025

RESOLUTION NO. 93-25: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF DELRAY BEACH, FLORIDA, APPROVING A REQUEST TO UTILIZE THE CONTEMPORARY FUNCTIONALISM ARCHITECTURAL STYLE FOR THE PROJECT LOCATED AT 109 SE 5TH AVENUE, AS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES. (QUASI-JUDICIAL HEARING)

### **Recommended Action**

Review and consider Resolution No. 93-25, approval of the use of the Contemporary Functionalism Architectural Style in the Central Business District for the property located at 109 SE 5th Avenue.

### **Background:**

The site was developed in 2002 with a two-story commercial building. The building was originally occupied by a financial institution and has most recently functioned as an office building.

A Level 3 Site Plan application has been submitted to demolish the existing building and construct a four-story, 26-unit multi-family residential development. When evaluating the site plan application, it was determined that the proposed design does not conform to the requirements of any of the seven styles identified in the CBD Architectural Design Guidelines. Development in the downtown area is required to conform to one of the seven identified styles. The CBD Architectural Design Guidelines state, "These guidelines are intended to provide a framework for the successful execution of quality urban architecture in the downtown area of Delray Beach." Pursuant to LDR Section 4.4.13(F)(3), appropriate architectural styles for downtown Delray Beach are based on "historical precedent, climate, and building scale." It is important to note, the downtown design guidelines were adopted following a high degree of public input to determine the architecture that aligned with the community's consensus vision for future development.

To provide flexibility for exceptional architectural proposals, LDR Section 4.4.13(F)(3) allows for the use of a "documented and substantiated Florida vernacular style" not included among the seven approved CBD architectural styles, subject to City Commission approval following a recommendation from the Planning and Zoning Board. As part of this request, the applicant proposes to implement a style referred to as "**Contemporary Functionalism**." This is the only component under consideration at this time; the full site plan and building design will be reviewed separately, pending a determination on the proposed style.

Per LDR Section 4.4.13(F)(3)(c), new architectural styles may be approved by the City Commission upon recommendation by PZB, provided the applicant submits:

1. *A description including images (similar to those in these guidelines) of a documented and substantiated Florida vernacular architecture;*
2. *A justification of the appropriateness of the style for downtown Delray Beach; and*
3. *An explanation of how the building design follows the proposed style.*

The CBD Architectural Design Guidelines note that departures from the approved styles are not encouraged but may be considered if supported by the documentation outlined above.

There is no coherently defined or widely accepted vernacular category of Architecture known as "Contemporary Functionalism." Instead, "Contemporary" is an adjective that establishes time - contemporary works are products of current time - while "Functionalism" is an adjective that defines a characteristic of design that may be implemented across numerous styles of architecture. Namely, functionalist architecture is minimal, lacks decorative ornamentation, and allows the function of the building to dictate form. Neither term, individually or combined, constitutes a distinct architectural style. Rather, they present characteristics that may be embodied within the umbrella of a more specific, established style. Staff have significant concerns over the introduction of a broadly generic and ill-defined style within the CBD. The lack of contextual clarity and stylistic specificity poses a risk to the integrity of the built environment, potentially encouraging future proposals that conflict with the intent and purpose of the CBD Architectural Design Guidelines.

On April 21, 2025, the Planning and Zoning Board (PZB) reviewed the request and recommended approval of the architectural style on a vote of 4-2.

#### Considerations for the Board:

- Whether the Contemporary Functionalist style is an established Florida vernacular architecture, given that the description is a fundamentally broad and vaguely defined. The application does not include diagrams in form of the current guidebook to clearly articulate the defining characteristics of the "style" proposed. Other requests ("Tropical Modernism" by the Ray Hotel and "MiMo" at 314 NE 3rd Avenue) provided more documentation.
- If the style has been demonstrated to be appropriate for the specific integration into the local context of downtown Delray Beach. Is allowing this departure moving the city towards its vision for the Village by the Sea, or not?
- Whether the proposed design is "exceptional" and a well-executed example of Contemporary Functionalism, as defined in the report.
- Given Commission direction for the consideration of the removal of the Masonry Modern style from the CBD Design Guidelines entirely and community perception that the style is too prolific, negatively impacting the historical architectural context of Delray Beach, it may not be appropriate to deem Contemporary Functionalism as a contextually appropriate style. It appears to be similar to Masonry Modern, with more glass.

The specific concern is that, by determining that a much more broadly defined and vague category of architecture than Masonry Modern is contextually appropriate, it may result in more generic iterations of "Contemporary Functionalism" that are starkly incompatible with the

urban context of Delray Beach, regardless of whether this particular version is deemed well-executed. Future applications utilizing Contemporary Functionalism may look substantially different from this proposal, given the lack of specific defining characteristics of the style category. Whereas generic and trend-based architecture was previously categorized, as Masonry Modern, would it now have fewer guiding characteristics and instead be categorized as "Contemporary Functionalism"?

Please note, the item before the City Commission is final action on the use of the general architectural style only. This decision is made prior to the Site Plan considerations so that changes to the building can be made during the TAC review process.

The attached Staff Report provides a thorough analysis of the project and the findings.

**City Attorney Review:**

Approved as to form and legal sufficiency.

**Funding Source/Financial Impact:**

N/A

**Timing of Request:**

Approval of the architectural style is required prior to the overall site plan application progressing through the technical review process.