



ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

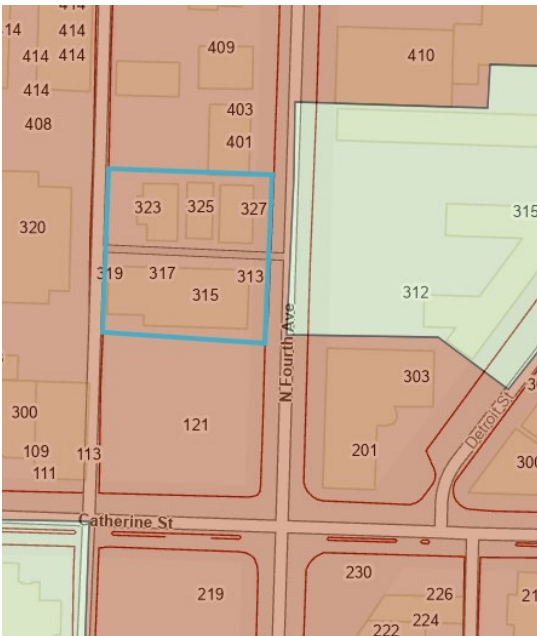
MEETING DATE:	July 15, 2024
PROJECT:	DR24-0003 – 313-327 Braun Court
ADDRESS:	313 Braun Court [main address] Includes 313, 315, 317, 319, 323, 325, and 327 Braun Court
ZONING:	D2 Downtown Interface District (base) Kerrytown Character (overlay) Secondary (street type designation)
DESIGN TEAM:	Midwestern Consulting, Inc (civil engineer); LOHA (architect); Greyfort Development (developer); Wickfield Capital LLC (owner)

ramps between some building to accommodate restaurants, bars, shops, and office space. The paver courtyard was installed in 1984.

From the mid-1990s to 2020, Braun Court was the center of the LGBTQ community in Ann Arbor, home to the Jim Toy Community Center, Aut Bar, and Common Language Bookstore. In 2015, the local plaintiffs in the U.S. Supreme Court case *Obergefell v. Hodges*, which required states to recognize marriages between same-sex couples, celebrated in Braun Court and attracted national media. The most recent businesses in the buildings were The Bar at 327 Braun Court and Trillium Real Estate at 323 Braun Court.

APPLICATION: The application includes a proposed design for a 7-story multi-family residential building to redevelop the seven houses around Braun Court. The individual parcels will be combined into one site measuring approximately 16,120 square feet. The brick building will have 37 total units, a mix of two- and three-bedroom units; amenities for residents; and 55 on-site parking spaces under the structure. The design features a crenellated footprint, a two- and three-story streetwall, and stepbacks to allow for varied heights and incorporate light and air into units. The pedestrian entrance will be on North Fourth Avenue and vehicles will enter through the alley behind the building.

ZONING REVIEW: The following provides a cursory review of the proposed project for compliance with the applicable dimensional standards for the zoning designation in which it is located. This review helps assure that the future site plan associated with the project can be approved substantially as presented.



Base Zoning Map, showing the parcels (outlined in blue) and the D2 zoning (red overlay)



Overlay Zoning Map with Street Types, showing the parcels (outlined in blue) the Kerrytown Character District (orange overlay), and the secondary street type designation (orange line)

Dimension	Standard	Review
Lot Area	No minimum	Complies (approx. 16,120 sq ft)
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	No maximum	Complies (exact information not provided)
Front Setback	0 ft min, 10 ft max at the streetwall	Varies, 0 ft min (more information needed for max)
Front Setback Exceptions (Secondary Street)	Up to 20% of the building frontage may exceed the maximum front setback at the streetwall for entry court or plaza area	Complies (26 ft break in street wall for entry court – 20% of 130 ft frontage)
Side and Rear Setback	None	Complies (Varies, 0 ft min)
Streetwall Height	2 stories min, 3 stories max	Complies (2 and 3 stories)
Average Offset at Top of Streetwall	5 ft min	More information needed
Height	2 stories min 60 ft max (+30% exception = 78 ft)	Complies (78 ft)
Building Module Length (Massing Articulation)	40 ft max	Complies (20 ft typical)

Dimension	Standard	Review
Tower Diagonal	N/A	N/A
Building Coverage	80%	79% (12,943.5 sq ft)
Open Space	10%	12% (1996.4 sq ft)

DESIGN GUIDELINES REVIEW: Staff have identified the following design guidelines from the [Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines](#) as being particularly relevant to the proposed project.

Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines

General Design Guidelines

Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning

A.1 Urban Pattern and Form. When considering urban pattern and form, the petitioner should assess the character of the adjacent streetscape, open spaces, and buildings to determine how they function as places and facilities supporting human use.

The project team's assessment should seek to define opportunities to enrich the design excellence of that project.

A.1.1 Identify and then reinforce the positive characteristics of adjacent sites.

A.1.2 Design sidewalk level features and facilities to provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience

A.1.4 For mid-block sites, identify adjacent site and building design qualities, noting that a design may be appropriate for a mid-block site that best serves the area in a secondary role.

A.1.6 Where adjacent properties are underdeveloped and/or the block lacks inviting and interesting characteristics, consider a building, site and streetscape design that helps to create a vibrant pedestrian setting.

A.1.7 On sites that abut an alley, design the alley entry connection to the street to minimize pedestrian/bike/vehicle conflicts while taking advantage of the alley as an open space from which to see and access the new/proposed site and buildings.

A.3 Open Space. Open spaces can include public and private courtyards, plazas, patios, terraces, alleys, and gardens. Throughout downtown, site features and elements that invite use should be provided. In commercial areas, open spaces should have an urban quality and character that enliven the street and enhance the pedestrian experience. Outside the commercial core and in civic areas, open spaces may be more park-like settings for human activity. Private property open

spaces should be sized relative to the intended use and level of anticipated adjacent pedestrian activity.

A.4 Parking, Driveways and Service Areas. Parking, driveways, and service areas are necessary functions, which should be designed to benefit the urban experience.

A.4.1 Locate and size driveways, access points, service entries, alleys, loading docks, and trash receptacles to minimize impact on pedestrians and maintain pedestrian safety, circulation, and comfort.

Design Guidelines for Buildings

B. 1 Building Massing. Building massing principles address the overall height, size and shape of a building. Although these guidelines refer to the visual aspects of structures, it is important to note that downtown zoning districts address key building massing considerations including floor area ratio, building height, streetwall height, offset and module length.

B.1.1 Design a building to minimize its impact on adjacent lower-scale areas.

Suggested strategies include:

- a) Step taller building elements away from adjacent lower-scale buildings and/or neighborhoods
- b) Locate taller building elements at the intersection of streets
- c) Provide variation in building massing to reflect the underlying pattern of established lot widths

B.1.2 When a new building will be larger than surrounding structures, visually divide it into smaller building modules that provide a sense of scale.

Suggested strategies include:

- a) Vary the height of individual building modules.
- b) Vary the height of cornice lines and other roof finish elements.
- c) Change wall surface materials, colors or texture.
- d) Use vertical moldings to express different building modules.
- e) Align projecting features, such as balconies or sun screens, to express different building modules.
- f) Use underlying established lot widths to help determine the width of building modules at the street level.

Design Guidelines for Building Elements

C.1 Street Edge. Building elements and architectural details used at the street front have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and should

be combined to create an active and interesting street front. Creative use of materials, textures and architectural details is especially important where there are few windows at the street front of a building.

C.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity.

Suggested street edge elements include:

- a) First floor canopies that complement the design character of the building and its street front
- b) Architectural details that provide a sense of scale
- c) Wall surfaces with visually interesting detailing, textures and colors
- d) Art features including sculptures, friezes, and murals

C.2 Entries. The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. Building entries should be located to enhance the street level experience and help give a sense of scale. Entries should be clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front. Although traditional building entry designs may be appropriate, creative and contemporary interpretations are also encouraged.

C.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street.

Appropriate strategies include:

- a) Create a recessed area that signifies a break in the building wall line
- b) Use a canopy or awning positioned over the entry
- c) Design a change in wall materials, textures, or colors that frames the entry
- d) Include distinctive paving pattern leading to the entry
- e) Use accent lighting to define the entry way
- f) Locate the entry at the street level

C.5 Materials. Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context.

C.5.1 Apply materials to provide a sense of scale in proportion to the scale and mass of the building.

C.6 Building Operational Systems. Building operational systems such as waste management, utility services, heating and cooling systems, must be carefully integrated into the design of a building and not detract from the architectural concept.

C.6.1 Integrate solar or wind systems into the design of the top of the building.

C.6.2 Locate and sufficiently screen mechanical systems to minimize or

eliminate noise impacts on adjacent sites and buildings.

C.7 Sustainability in Building Elements. Consider sustainability when selecting structural and façade materials and designing functional building elements.

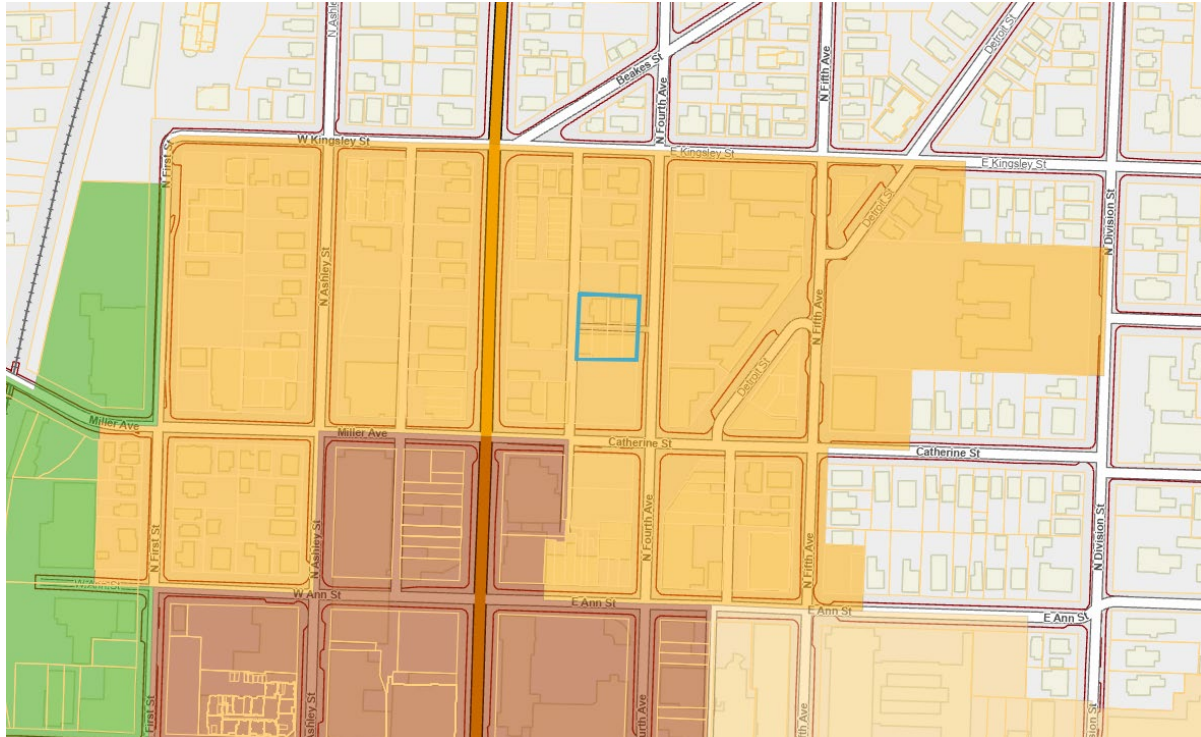
C.7.1 Use sustainable building materials whenever possible. Suggested materials include:

- a) Locally manufactured materials
- b) Low maintenance materials
- c) Materials with long life spans
- d) Such materials do not include toxic or otherwise hazardous materials.

C.7.2 Select and apply building elements to maximize the building's environmental performance.

The Kerrytown Character District

The Kerrytown overlay district frames the north end of downtown and is characterized by a mix of small-scale commercial buildings and houses that have been adapted to different uses. The eastern part of the district is part of the Old Fourth Ward Historic District, while the southeast corner of the district is located in the Fourth/Ann Historic District. The intent for this district is retaining traditional existing building patterns, with lower-scale building modules and residential shapes.



Map showing the Kerrytown Character District in orange and 313-327 Braun Court outlined in blue

Design Guidelines for Character Districts

Kerrytown defines the downtown's northern edge and is the transition from commercial to residential as one moves to the east, north and west – away from the downtown. Two and three story Italianate masonry multi-use buildings with zero lot lines give way to late-19th and early-20th century wood-framed housing.

Many consider Kerrytown the home of several Ann Arbor “institutions” in the form of eateries, markets and entertainment venues. It is a lively district by day anchored by a stable retail presence, ample pedestrian elbow room and a variety of vehicular parking options. Kerrytown is a place locals like to frequent.

In the evening Kerrytown becomes more quiet. While Community High School and the Ann Arbor Farmer's Market provide vitality by day the use of each site recedes to parking at night. Evening activity in Kerrytown is limited to a number of well-spaced dining and entertainment venues in the core area between Detroit Street and Main Street, north of Miller Avenue.

Moving from the core of the Kerrytown Character District and its brick-paved streets into the surrounding neighborhoods, the pedestrian amenities change. The sidewalks transition from continuous hardscape between building facades and the street curb into ribbons of walkway bordered by landscaped setbacks and grassy street extensions. Trees become more prevalent with way-finding signage and lighting levels diminish.



Street Edge Rendering, looking southwest along North Fourth Ave at the proposed building

STAFF ANALYSIS:

1. As a transition space between downtown and residential areas of Ann Arbor, Kerrytown primarily contains two- to four-story residential buildings and commercial buildings, including a number of single-family historic homes. While the proposed 78-foot height of the new building follows guidelines, it gives staff pause because of the proximity to two- and three-story single-family homes. However, as shown in the drawings, the height may not be out of context soon given the ongoing new construction in the area, particularly at the corner of North Fourth Avenue and Catherine Street.
2. The design follows the Downtown Design Guidelines for buildings that will be larger than surrounding structures. The façade is broken up into smaller building modules with varying heights and setbacks. Staff has made the design team aware that the setbacks will have to be reworked to meet the five-foot average offset at the top of the streetwall because there cannot be portions of the façade that are stepped forward of the streetwall. Along North Fourth Avenue, staff finds the two- and three-story streetwall to be an appropriate scale for pedestrians.
3. The project includes open space, but it is primarily private and semi-private plazas and balconies. When designing and enlivening the open plaza along North Fourth Avenue, staff encourages the design team to consider not only future residents of the building, but also pedestrians. Kerrytown, particularly this

area directly across the street from the Kerrytown Shops and the Ann Arbor Farmers Market, is very popular with locals and tourists alike. In addition, the courtyard of Braun Court has historically been a publicly accessible gathering space.

4. The proposed building has a brick exterior. Staff finds this to be appropriate given the material context of the neighborhood and the prevalence of brick both on buildings and the street. The design team may also consider incorporating other architectural elements from the surroundings to help the building act as a visual transition between the historic and modern buildings of Kerrytown.
5. The 78-foot height is approvable due to the Exceptions to Height Limits for sustainability. The project will seek a LEED silver rating and will include sustainability initiatives such as cross ventilation and passive cooling, low-maintenance materials, and rooftop solar panels.

Attachments: Zoning Maps
 Design Narrative
 Applicant Presentation

Prepared by Mariana Melin-Corcoran, Associate Planner
July 3, 2024