

Braun Court DRB Narrative

313-327 Braun Ct,
Ann Arbor, MI

06/11/2024

1. A brief description of the design concept (what the project/structure looks like).

The design concept was developed to celebrate context, form, and ecology. Context – Connect with the form and material palette of the adjacent buildings to ensure contextual harmony. Form – Reduce the scale and visual weight of the building through terracing and stepping. Ecology - Provide each unit multiple exterior faces to leverage passive ventilation and daylighting. The resulting design is a collection of terraced volumes that hold the street wall and gradually step backwards at each level above.

2. A brief description of the development program (the intended uses, known or possible tenants, etc.).

The project is a multifamily residential development hosting 37 total units, including 25 2-bedroom units and 12 3-bedroom units. The units are generously sized, providing large, light-filled living spaces, private terraces, and views onto Kerrytown and downtown Ann Arbor. Residents will have access to building amenities including a double-height entry lobby and an outdoor recreation equipment room. 55 on-site provide each unit with 1-2 dedicated parking spaces.

3. Describe the context of the site.

Located near the heart of Kerrytown, the site is in a transitional block between the density of downtown's high-rises and the green avenues of single family neighborhoods. Steps outside of the front door, brick paved streets lead to the Ann Arbor Farmers Market and other walkable community amenities. To the south of the site, a 6 level mixed-use building is planned to replace an existing parking lot. To the north, there is a 4 level row of townhomes and large open air parking lot. The site slopes from 4th street down to an alley at the rear where current trash collection and utility access are located.

4. Is there an inspiration or a theme for the design concept? Describe.

The building concept is inspired by the blending of downtown density with single family yards. At the hinge point between downtown Ann Arbor and residential Kerrytown, the building design merges the efficiency of a high rise with the rhythm and greenery of stand alone homes.

5. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level A, starting on page 6 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

We've endeavored to make this infill project a good neighbor that also provides needed housing for Ann Arbor. The building has been considered from all sides, including the alley, so that it will be an attractive addition to the streetscape from all angles and allow for views out for residents. The crenelated footprint of the floor plans also maximize the most light & air. And while the scale of the project is larger than the existing structures, it will complement the new building at the corner of Catherine & 4th as well as buildings across the street. We've also attempted to make the façade an appropriate scale for pedestrians with a large open space at the entry and concealed parking under and behind the ground floor.

6. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Buildings. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level B, starting on page 13 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

We've carefully shaped this building to make its scale fit downtown. To start, the building façade has been broken down into a narrower module that's more consistent with the scale of historic structures in the area. Across the façade these modules often step back or to the side, sometime significantly to move much of the mass both away from the street and away from the neighbors. This also allows for varied heights for many modules. For the upper floors, only three modules come out towards the street, reflecting the three units across the building and giving this long façade a finer, more appropriate scale.

7. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Building Elements. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level C, starting on page 15 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The building has been designed to provide a sense of scale towards the street. Particularly notable are the ground floor walk-up townhomes, which will all have front doors facing the sidewalk. Adjacent to the townhomes, a clearly defined main entrance is recessed into the ground floor and covered by a bridge of private outdoor space on the third floor. Parking will be concealed from N 4th Ave, aside from a garage entrance. The façade above will be defined by large operable windows, with significant terracing on the upper levels breaks down the massing and animating the building for the street life below.

The project will also seek a LEED silver rating and place a priority on sustainability initiatives, three of which will be highlighted here. First, the design of the floor plan naturally allows for cross ventilation for passive cooling. Second, the façade will feature a durable, low-maintenance exterior material palette. And last, roof top solar panels will be provided, which along with mechanical equipment, are intended to be invisible from the street.

8. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for its Character District. Please refer to Chapter 2, starting on page 20 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

Kerrytown is notable for being a transition from the denser downtown commercial core to residential neighborhoods, and we think this residential infill project is an appropriate addition to that connective tissue. We also intend to honor the significant presence of brick in Kerrytown, in buildings, sidewalks and streets, and use it as a primary material on the façade.