

## ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

### Staff Report

**MEETING DATE:** November 18, 2015

**PROJECT:** New Development at 603 East Huron  
Project No. DR15-006

**ADDRESS:** 513 and 603 East Huron Street

**ZONING DISTRICTS:** D1 (Downtown Core) Base, East Huron 1 Character Overlay

**DESIGN TEAM:** Brian Wagner, Myefski Architects, Inc.

**PROPOSED PROJECT:** A new 12-story, 131,000-square foot residential building is designed for a 25,832-square foot site on the north side of East Huron Street, between Division and North State streets. The site is currently used for surface parking for the adjacent Campus Inn hotel at 615 East Huron.

The contemplated building has a two-story base and a cross-shaped tower with a maximum diagonal dimension of 130 feet and a maximum height of 120 feet. A front setback ranging from 8 to 10 feet is provided for the base, but the central portion of the tower cantilevers over it and extends to the front lot line. The farthest extents of the tower are set back 12 feet from the west side lot line and 10 feet from the east side lot line.

The designers have met with neighbors of the site to formulate the conceptual design of the development and are seeking Design Review Board comments on the massing and scale at this time. They will continue the design discussion at a future meeting to focus on building elements and materials.

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

1. The height and placement regulations for this site (D1 base, East Huron 1 character overlay) are:

Front Setback	Minimum 0 feet, Maximum 10 feet
Side Setback	Minimum 0 feet
Rear Setback	Minimum 30 feet
Streetwall Height	Minimum 2 stories, Maximum 3 stories
Offset at Top of Streetwall	None
Total Height	Maximum 120 feet
Tower Diagonal	Maximum 130 feet

2. The proposed building's tower cantilevers over its base. This creates a negative offset at the top of the streetwall which does not meet the zoning regulations. The tower must be revised have at least same setback as the base (an offset of none) or a positive offset.
3. The Zoning Ordinance's intent section for the East Huron character overlay districts has recently been amended to provide separate statements for East Huron 1 and East Huron 2. The East Huron 1 intent statement (see Chapter 55, Section 5:10.2(1)(d)) states:

*The East Huron 1 character district is located on the north side of East Huron Street including North Fifth Avenue and South State Street, on a major transportation corridor through downtown and the address of many civic buildings, institutions and well-known landmarks of the downtown skyline. Most of its properties have free-standing buildings surrounded by open space, or have front courtyards or plazas, several of which are open to the public. There is a significant contrast between the massing and scale of the structures within this character district and the residential scale of the adjacent historic neighborhoods which surround the district on the north, east and west sides. East Huron 1 lies between the Old Fourth Ward, Division Street and Ann Street historic districts and a business loop. This context is its defining feature and, therefore, calls for a higher degree of sensitivity in design and massing to strike a balance between the downtown core and adjacent historic residential neighborhoods.*

4. The proposed design has a massing and scale in keeping with the four existing developments on its block. It is consistent with the Guideline's recommendations for urban pattern and form (A.1).

5. More information should be provided by the applicant regarding the projects site planning and natural systems (A.2). Not enough has yet been provided to determine how the proposed design responds to those guidelines.
6. Vehicular access to the site is proposed from the adjacent hotel's rear parking lot and existing driveway on North State Street, greatly benefiting the urban experience and consistent with the guidelines for parking, driveways and service areas (A.4).
7. Staff will comment about the proposed design's building elements (Section C) when those details have been provided.

**APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: From the Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines**

Staff has identified the following Guidelines as applicable to the proposed project. These include Guidelines both with which the proposed project is, and is not, consistent. The Design Review Board may find other Guidelines are also applicable.

**Chapter 1: General Design Guidelines**

**A. 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 the 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.2 Site Planning and Natural Systems.** An urban setting can be a challenging environment in which to respond to natural systems. Consider natural systems such as sun and wind patterns, climates and seasonality, rainwater harvesting, and significant individual features such as street tree patterns and landmark trees on public and private sites.

- A.2.1 Orient the building location to best accommodate climate, rainfall and area drainage patterns. The use of pervious versus impervious surfaces should be determined for each project based on beneficial environmental results.
  - A.2.2 Site designs should accommodate solar access and minimize shading of adjacent properties and neighborhoods.
  - A.2.3 Where location and site features allow, use deciduous trees, which provide shade in the summer and sun in winter months.
  - A.2.4 Orient plant groups to provide wind protection of plazas and entries in wintertime and allow cooling breezes into outdoor spaces.
  - A.2.5 Plant native and non-invasive species, especially those that require low levels of water and are tolerant of urban conditions.
  - A.2.6 Where location and site size allow, consider use of a rain garden or vegetated roof to retain rainwater and serve as a site amenity, and employ rainwater harvesting methods for use in landscape irrigation systems.
  - A.2.7 Use porous materials in drainage and detention areas to promote rainwater percolation into the parent soil.
- 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.3.1 Design an urban open space to maximize activity and usability for a diverse population of different abilities.
  - A.3.2 Locate an urban open space where there is a high level of existing or potential pedestrian activity.
  - A.3.4 Place an urban open space in a location that serves as a focal point on a site.
  - A.3.5 Orient an urban open space to the street or to cultural, historic or natural resources.

A.3.7 Enrich the space using special paving, plants, trellises and site structures.

**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.

**A.5 Pedestrian Connections.** Pedestrian connections include sidewalks, alleys and arcades that provide pedestrian access within, through and among properties. Such connections provide access to buildings, courtyards, plazas and other site elements.

A.5.5 Link on-site open spaces, such as courtyards and plazas, directly to a public sidewalk.

**A.6 Cycling and Transit.** Walking, cycling, transit and other multi-modal means of transportation are to be considered in the design of streetscapes.

A.6.2 Consider use of convenient bicycle racks, including proximity to building entries, weather protection and security when selecting a location for bicycle parking and storage.

## **B. Design Guidelines for Buildings**

*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:*

- *Maximum floor area ratio (FAR)*
- *Maximum building height*
- *Maximum and minimum streetwall height*
- *Average offset at the maximum streetwall height*
- *Maximum building module length*

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

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.

B.1.3 Provide a clear definition between the base (the lower floor or floors) and upper floors to maintain a sense of scale at the street level.

- B.1.4 If appropriate to the context, establish a design treatment that includes a differentiated building top.

### **East Huron Character Districts**

The East Huron Character Districts are located along the eastern portion of the Huron Street civic corridor. Buildings in these districts vary in type, from a major hotel, to high-rise housing, to church properties. Significant buildings in these two districts are freestanding structures with clearly defined front entrances facing the street. Huron Street is a heavy traffic corridor that forms the central feature of this district. Traffic along Huron Street needs to accommodate automobile entrances to on-site parking for major structures.

Generally, structures are set back from the sidewalks, with landscaping in the foreground, either in the form of a lawn or a landscaped plaza or planter. A landscaped buffer strip is also found between the sidewalk and street, with grass, pavers, trees, or similar elements.

The East Huron Character Districts are integrated with or adjacent to three designated historic districts—Division Street Historic District, Ann Street Historic District, and the Old Fourth Ward Historic District. There is a significant contrast between the massing and scale of the structures within the character districts and the residential scale of the adjacent historic neighborhoods.