

# DOWNTOWN ANN ARBOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

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# Introduction

The role of the Design Guidelines:

The overarching goal of the design guidelines—and the Design Review Program—is to foster excellence in the design of the built environment in the downtown. One measure of design excellence is the degree to which new development fits comfortably within the existing fabric of the city. Another measure is the ability of a project to stand the test of time by remaining functional and ageless over a period of many years.

Design guidelines by themselves do not create good design, nor do they ensure it. What design guidelines do address are the qualities of architecture, urban design, and public space that make for successful projects and communities. The chief value and purpose of the Ann Arbor Design Guidelines is in providing clarity and focus on what is important to consider in the design of downtown projects.

The guidelines make it possible for the dialogue that occurs in Design Review Board meetings to be as productive and efficient as possible and provide a common language with which to discuss the best ways to ensure an attractive, vibrant, sustainable city, project by project.

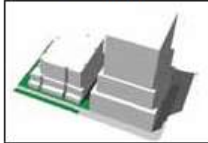

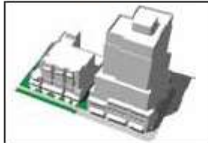


New development should be sensitive to Ann Arbor's downtown design context. Although a development may be larger or taller than that seen historically, or incorporate contemporary design elements and materials, it should also reflect the design context and traditions of its Character Districts, blocks and streets on which it is located.

# Using the Design Guidelines

The Design Guidelines are part of a system of tools, including zoning and historic design guidelines, that help shape downtown development. The downtown zoning districts, D1 and D2, establish the general use and basic area, height and placement standards for development, while design guidelines provide more detailed criteria to shape project design. Design guidelines complement and build upon the zoning requirements. Where any conflict may exist between zoning requirements and the design guidelines, the zoning requirements will prevail.

In historic districts, development must also comply with the city’s historic preservation ordinance and historic district design guidelines. In those areas not within a designated historic district, development is encouraged to comply with the intent of the Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines.

	<b>Applies To</b>	<b>Addresses</b>
<p><b>Zoning</b></p> 	<p>All properties and projects in downtown Ann Arbor must comply with zoning standards</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use</li> <li>• Height</li> <li>• Floor Area</li> <li>• Setbacks</li> <li>• Basic Massing</li> <li>• Required Parking</li> </ul>
<p><b>Historic District Design Guidelines</b></p> 	<p>Properties and projects in downtown Ann Arbor that are within a designated historic district must comply with the Historic District Design Guidelines</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site Design</li> <li>• Building Articulation</li> <li>• Street Level Design</li> <li>• Parking Design</li> <li>• Windows</li> <li>• Maintenance of Historic Materials</li> <li>• Replacement of Historic Building Elements</li> <li>• Rehabilitation of Historic Structures</li> </ul>
<p><b>Downtown Design Guidelines</b></p> 	<p>Properties and projects in downtown Ann Arbor that are not within a designated historic district are encouraged to comply with the Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site Design</li> <li>• Building Articulation</li> <li>• Street Level Design</li> <li>• Parking Design</li> <li>• Windows</li> <li>• Materials</li> </ul>

When considering a project in the downtown, property owners, developers and architects shall refer to the downtown design guidelines and design review process. Projects will be reviewed by a Design Review Board, whose members shall comment on the proposed design in relation to the Design Guidelines. Such review is mandatory as part of the city's normal site plan review process; compliance with the Review Board's recommendations is voluntary, but encouraged.

# Chapter 1: General Design Guidelines

This chapter presents general design guidelines for new construction projects in downtown Ann Arbor outside historic districts. Additional design guidelines specific to each Character District are provided in Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Character Districts. For development in historic districts, refer to the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines document.

General design guidelines promote high quality development that is compatible with its surrounding context and the features of a vital downtown. Particular attention is given to the street-level pedestrian experience, the perceived scale and massing of buildings, and the translation of zoning requirements into effective visual and functional conclusions.

The design guidelines are arranged into three levels reflecting the typical design development process:

- A. Context and Site Planning
- B. Buildings
- C. Building Elements

At each level, general design principles are followed by a series of specific design guidelines.



Courtesy of Neumann Smith Architecture

## A. Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning

This section addresses the arrangement of buildings and other features on a site as well as how that site relates to its neighbors. It suggests preferred ways to express and articulate some of the minimum and maximum area, height and placement standards of the D1 and D2 zoning districts, and other development-related ordinances.

### 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.1.3 Corner sites are an opportunity to express an architectural gateway or focal point and a dominant architectural feature.

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.1.5 If the street geometries are such that the mid-block is the termination of a perpendicular street view, consider a design with enough presence and detail to make that view noteworthy.



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.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.3.3 Locate urban open space that serves the general public at sidewalk level. Semi-private or private open space and activity areas may be appropriate if placed above or below the public sidewalk level.



- 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.3.6 Provide dining opportunities, movable tables and chairs, public art, lighting, interpretive materials, historic markers, water features, and architectural details such as windows and storefront walls, to frame urban open space.



- 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.4.2 Provide a pedestrian-friendly street edge at street level adjacent to surface parking areas and enclosed parking structures. Provide a landscape buffer appropriate for urban conditions at the edges of surface parking areas.

A.4.3 Locate a parking structure or a surface parking lot behind or to the side of a building, minimizing the visual presence of parking on adjacent public right-of-way.

A.4.4 Parking structures should incorporate architectural screens, public art, seating, lighting, kiosks, vending booths, and other ground level service shops adjacent to the street and sidewalk.



## 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.

Appropriate strategies for effective pedestrian connections include:

- A.5.1 Pedestrian walkways should be well integrated with the existing infrastructure in a way that supports pedestrian connections within and outside the areas of the proposed project.



- A.5.2 In order to enliven the experience within pedestrian connections, avoid interior linkages between buildings and their parking areas.

- A.5.3 Provide engaging spatial opportunities for window shopping while also maintaining a zone for efficient circulation, especially in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian use.

- A.5.4 Provide landscaping, seating, public art, lighting, interpretive markers, and water features to enrich and enliven pedestrian walkways and use areas.

- 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.

Appropriate strategies include:

- A.6.1 Provide a comfortable environment for transit patrons if the site in question includes or is adjacent to a transit stop. Consider adequate waiting space, trash receptacles, and seating or leaning walls.
- 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 Building Massing

*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.



*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.*

Suggested strategies include:

- a) Use a distinct horizontal molding to define the base
- b) Provide variation in the façade plane of the upper floors
- c) Provide a distinct change in the ratio of solid to void (wall to window percentage) to distinguish the base from the upper floors

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

Suggested strategies include:

- a) Use a distinctive cornice line or roof form
- b) Change wall surface materials, colors or texture of the building top

## C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements

Building elements include specific design features that give character and detail to a building. They are not generally addressed by the requirements of the downtown zoning districts. Entries, windows, materials, and other building elements influence the degree to which a new building contributes to the urban fabric. Quality and creativity are most clearly expressed and experienced at this level of design.

The design of building elements should be compatible with its surrounding context. However, a wide range of styles or design themes are appropriate including creative, contemporary, and environmentally-oriented design solutions. Surfaces that have variations in depth with substantial shadow lines add interest.

### 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.3 Windows

Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.

*C.3.1 A high level of ground floor transparency is encouraged throughout downtown.*

- a) Design a building to incorporate ground floor storefronts wherever possible.
- b) Do not use dark or tinted glass in ground floor windows facing the street or an open space.
- c) Use exterior awnings or sun screens mounted above ground floor windows to shade interior spaces. Permanent, non-moveable interior shades and privacy screens are discouraged.

- C.3.2 If contextually appropriate, upper floor windows should reference established patterns of adjacent and nearby buildings in size, shape, and spacing by aligning sills and headers and using similar window proportions.



- C.3.3 Window depths should be appropriate to the building design concept. For example, windows flush to the wall surface are often appropriate for modern designs, but traditional concepts should have punched or recessed windows.

#### *C.4 Awnings*

The use of awnings is encouraged at the sidewalk level to provide shelter from the rain, to modulate natural light, and to indicate entry and provide transition from the outdoor to the indoor environment.

- C.4.1 Operable awnings could be considered at storefront and window locations.
- C.4.2 Each awning should be sized to fit within individual storefronts, windows, or door openings.
- C.4.3 The proportions of awnings should relate to the overall proportions of the building facade
- C.4.4 Color selections should be compatible with the overall color scheme of the facade. Solid colors or simple, muted-stripe patterns are appropriate.
- C.4.5 Simple shed shapes with open ends are preferred.

C.4.6 Opaque, water repellent, non-reflective fabrics should be considered.

C.4.7 External illumination of awnings is appropriate.

*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:

1. Locally manufactured materials
2. Low maintenance materials
3. Materials with long life spans

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.



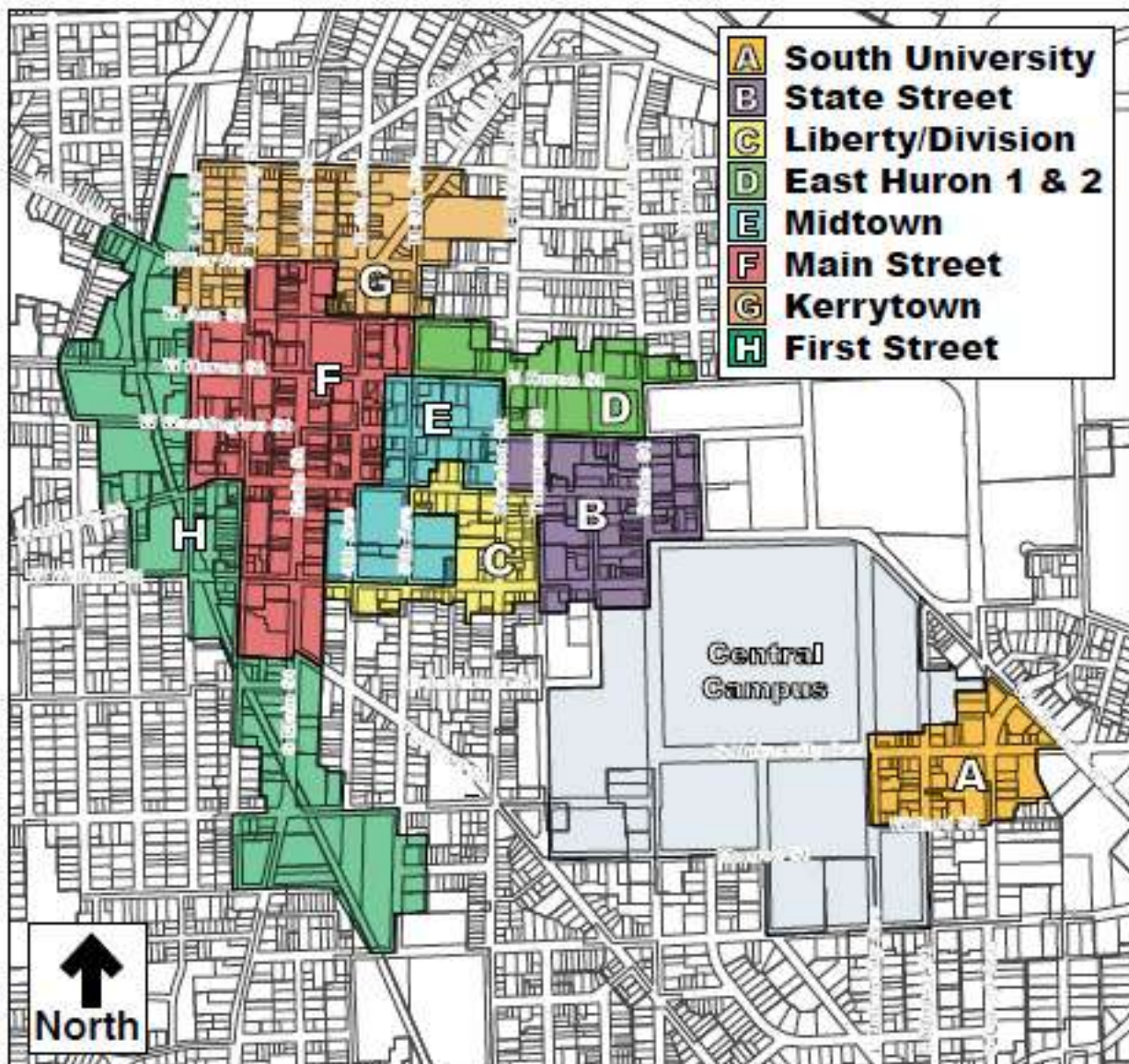
C.7.3 Incorporate building elements that allow for natural environmental control.

Suggested strategies include:

1. Operable windows for natural ventilation
2. Rotating doors or wind locks at high volume entries
3. Interior or exterior light shelves/solar screens above south facing window

## Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Character Districts

The zoning regulations for downtown Ann Arbor define a series of Character Overlay Zoning Districts to reflect the diversity of historical and built environments within the downtown. This chapter describes these character districts and their existing features.



## South University Character District

This district is located on the southern and eastern edges of central campus (refer to the map for boundaries). Current architectural character includes diverse styles ranging from older eclectic forms to new/contemporary ones, expressed through a wide variety of architectural materials including wood siding, brick, limestone, precast concrete, and various metals. Building heights range from one and two floor/low-rise to mid and hi-rise. Rooflines vary from two and three story frame houses to flat roofed contemporary expressions at various building heights and façade expressions.

This area is a mixed use district, largely consisting today of university population-focused restaurant and commercial services, and student housing. This district is busy and vibrant with automobile and pedestrian activity. Sidewalk level doorways provide access to upper floor offices and apartments.

The urban landscape includes sidewalk extensions (bump-outs) with circular tree sized planters; a well developed tree canopy over some sidewalks; and outdoor dining spaces at sidewalk and rooftop levels. First floor facades are more transparent with clear, large display windows, allowing inside first floor retail activities to be visible from, and contribute to, the district's active street life.

The cumulative character can be described as a busy and vibrant urban setting that encourages and accommodates a diverse range of downtown activities.





## State Street Character District

This district is located on the northwestern edges of central campus (refer to map for boundaries) and includes the State Street Historic District. Existing architectural character includes diverse styles, a rich variety of materials fitted to the diversity of architectural expressions (wood siding, brick, terracotta tile, limestone, precast concrete, natural stone, etc), in buildings ranging from one and two story/low-rise to mid- and high-rise. Roof lines include peaked residential forms (2 and 3 story frame houses) to flat roofed contemporary expressions at various heights and building elevations. A local historic district can be found on the district boundary map. It includes the Nichols Arcade, the State and Michigan theater marquees, and Burton Bell tower on campus. State Street includes an entire block's retail-facing façade east, which can be seen from a single point, an unusual sight in downtown.

The area is a mixed use district, largely consisting today of university population-focused restaurant and commercial services, and some housing. This district is busy and feels active and vibrant during both day and evening hours. Streets are heavily used by cars, busses, bicycles, and the sidewalks are quite crowded with pedestrians and outside dining in appropriate seasons. Sidewalk level doorways provide access to upper floor offices and apartments.

The urban landscape includes some widened sidewalk (to 16 feet on the north and east side of the street), with tree scaled planters; a well developed tree canopy over many sidewalks; and outdoor dining on both public and private properties. First floor facades are more transparent with clear, large display windows compared to upper floors with 'punched' windows, allowing views from the public sidewalk into street level retail and restaurant activity.

The cumulative character can be described as a busy and vibrant urban setting that encourages and accommodates a diverse range of downtown activities.









## **Liberty/Division Character District**

The Liberty/Division Character District is located in the core of downtown, yet retains a small-scale residential character. This character includes fronts of buildings set back from the street, some landscaped areas, and porches or similar one-story elements to define primary entrances. Buildings are 2-3 story frame houses with peaked roofs and 2-4 story commercial brick structures with flat roofs. A significant portion of this district coincides with the East William Historic District and the east Liberty Historic District.

Individual street corridors within this character district are relatively distinct from one another. Thompson Street has the greatest integrity of the character district featuring an uninterrupted block of houses bounded by an apartment building at the south end and has a quieter pedestrian pace. Liberty Street, from Thompson Street to Fifth Avenue, is part of a primary connection between the Main Street and State Street Character Districts includes many shops and restaurants, and has heavy pedestrian activity.

Individual street corridors have different urban landscapes as well. Thompson Street generally has a residential scale with narrower sidewalks, pedestrian scale, a well developed tree canopy and landscaped areas adjacent to the sidewalks. Liberty Street is wider and busier with wider sidewalks and trees in planters. Along Liberty, Burton Tower serves as a focal point to the east.

The cumulative character can be described as quieter with a residential feel, and strong visual and aural connections with the more active adjacent areas.



## East Huron Character Districts

The East Huron Character Districts are located along the eastern portion of the Huron Street civic corridor. (Refer to map for boundaries.) 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.



## Midtown Character District

Architectural styles in Midtown include some 19<sup>th</sup> century wood-framed residential (mostly converted to office use), but stylistically, the district is dominated by an array of late 20<sup>th</sup> century mid-rise office and governmental facilities.

The primary north-to-south street in Midtown is Fifth Avenue. It can be considered Ann Arbor's "civic corridor," anchored to the south by the Ann Arbor District Library's Main Branch, the Blake Transit Center and the Federal Building. To the north, directly across E. Huron Street from Midtown, are the Ann Arbor Municipal Center and the old and new fire stations and Hands-On Museum.

With the exception of the Library, the buildings in Midtown have limited hours and are used primarily during the business day. Since Midtown is surrounded by character districts with evening-use venues, it often serves as a passage, in particular the west-to-east blocks between Main Street and State Street. Pedestrians seem to be focused on getting from point A to point B and would benefit from more opportunities to linger.

Future development should find opportunities to establish an identity for Midtown, increasing its vitality and expanding its offerings. Primary pedestrian access to buildings along the civic corridor should be from the corridor street.









# Main Street Character District

The Main Street Character District, once the traditional heart of downtown, has evolved into a regional entertainment, business, and retail destination. The center of the district contains the Main Street Historic District. The 1929 First National Building (at Main and Washington) is a prominent landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

First and second floor heights are similar among traditional buildings, which helps establish a continuity of scale. Architectural details also provide interest and convey a sense of scale in Main Street. While there is a range of building heights and architectural styles, most are of durable materials and high quality execution. This district has the strongest streetwall definition in the city, which is enhanced by the fine-grained texture of narrow storefronts that reflect traditional lot widths.

Being a regional dining attraction, this district is one of the more heavily trafficked visitor areas at night. Curb extensions have encouraged outdoor dining areas, which flourish seasonally. A large number of street trees and pedestrian-scaled lights complement the already pedestrian-oriented nature of the restaurant and retail destinations.







## **Kerrytown Character District**

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-19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century wood-framed housing.

Many think of Kerrytown as home to 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, with 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 diminishing.









## **First Street Character District**

The First Street character area lies to the west of the Main Street and Kerrytown districts, and forms the eastern edge of the Old West Side Historic District. The topography forming the Allen Creek Valley with its flood plain, the buried/piped Allen Creek, the Ann Arbor Rail Road track with its historic, turn-of-the-century industrial architecture, and the proposed future Allen Creek Greenway, are distinct aspects of this district needing recognition during any First Street District proposed project design. The mixture of historic and non-historic residential and industrial architecture, and the valley land form, gives this area a distinct difference from other downtown character districts.

The area is a mixed use linear district (north to south) that follows the railroad tracks' older industrial railroad buildings, some of which have been converted into occupied industrial, construction, and other office uses, occasional art and dance studio activities, bars and nightclubs. The district also includes residential frame two and three story structures. The relatively quiet mixed-use neighborhood streets are highlighted by elevated train tracks with trestle bridges above east-west crossing streets from Washington Street north to Miller, and with wooden warehouse-like structures along the tracks, some of which are currently empty. The presence of the Allen Creek Flood Plain and the railroad track and its trestles are unique attributes worthy of design consideration.

The district's urban landscape largely consists of tree lined streets with relatively consistent lot spacing, and an occasionally vacant parcel. At times, a triangular shaped parcel caused by the orientation/alignment of the tracks is in contrast with the local streets. The future Allen Creek Greenway should be given design consideration as a potential element of all First Street Character District proposals.





# Appendix: Glossary of Terms

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**Building Module:** A sub-part of a larger building that appears as a single facade plane. One large building can incorporate several modules.

**Fenestration:** The placement of windows on a building's exterior. Also see Transparency.

**Floor Area Ratio (FAR):** The total floor area of all buildings on a lot divided by the total area of the lot.

**Horizontal Alignment:** Design elements such as moldings and cornices or changes in material and color that produce horizontal lines along a building facade.

**Offset:** The distance that a tower or upper part of a building is set back from the streetwall or lower portion of the building

**Scale:** The spatial relationship among structures along a street or block front, including height, bulk and yard relationships. Proportional relationship of the size of parts to one another and to the human figure.

**Setback:** The distance a building is located from the front, side or rear property line.

**Streetwall:** The wall formed by buildings along the setback line or the base portion of a taller building or tower. Streetwall height is the exterior face of a building that fronts a public street between the street grade and the minimum or maximum specified height.

**Tower:** Any portion of a building that rises above the streetwall that is usually narrower than the streetwall or base portion of a building. Towers often include a lower/middle tower section and an upper tower section.

**Transparency:** The relationship of solid building wall to open or glass areas.

# Credits

There has been broad community participation and involvement in developing the Ann Arbor Design Guidelines.

## **Downtown (A2D2) Steering Committee**

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Roger Hewitt, Downtown Development Authority

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