

ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Staff Report

MEETING DATE: February 21, 2018

PROJECT: Elroy's Place Design Plan
[Project No. DR17-001](#)

ADDRESS: 321 North Main Street

ZONING: D2 Downtown Interface (base zoning)
Kerrytown Character (overlay zoning)
Front Yard (street designation)

DESIGN TEAM: Erik Majcher – Robert Darvas Associates
InSite Design
Washtenaw Engineering
Clark Trombley Randers
A3C
Christman Constructors

PROJECT SUMMARY: Revised plans have been submitted for a new 6-story, 32,000-square foot mixed use building on a vacant 8,225-square foot lot. The anticipated tenants include spa, yoga studios, personal fitness and similar uses on the first and second floors, open office space for Robert Darvas Associates (the developer of this project) on the third floor, and residential uses on the fourth, fifth and sixth stories. An underground parking garage for 16 cars is also part of the development, accessed from the alley at the rear of the site. The site was previously intended for a community bath building, which was not developed.



Figure 1 – Location Map

The [revised design plan](#) continues to offer a contemporary contextual building incorporating the eclectic nature of the Kerrytown district. Full depth masonry with repetitive, inset punched openings are proposed for the base of the building as well as larger, more contemporary and modern voids and setbacks. The street façade features storefront windows on the first and second floors, with balconies set back on the upper floors.



Building Rendering

In response to the Design Review Board's comments on September 20, 2017, the design plan now incorporates the following changes:

- The Main Street (east) façade is more symmetrical, its retail entrance is more prominent, and it has been refined for better pedestrian-scale.
- Vertical landscaping has been added around the entrance to the upper floors.
- The trellis has been reduced.

With regard to the proposed building mass, the design team responds that the development provides an appropriate downtown density and a mixture of uses that activate the sidewalk, both of which are important to vital downtowns. Please refer to the [revised application](#) for the applicant's full responses to the Board's [comments](#). The original application and design plan can be found [here](#).

STAFF COMMENTS:

1. Zoning – The area, height and placement regulations for this site (D2, Kerrytown character, front yard street) are provided in the chart below.

	Requirements	Proposed
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	Up to 200% normally, up to 400% with premiums (16,450 to 32,893 sq ft)	400% (32,893 sq ft) with residential premiums
Front Setback	15 ft MIN or Average (8 ft average)	8 ft
Side Setback	0 ft MIN	3 ft
Rear Setback	0 ft MIN	12 ft
Streetwall Height	Min 2 stories, Max 3 stories	2 to 3 ft
Offset at Top of Streetwall	Min Average 5 feet	Not Specified
Total Height	Maximum 60 feet	66 ft 8 in (planned project modifications to be requested)
Massing Articulation	Maximum 40 ft	Not Specified
Building Coverage	80% maximum	70%
Open Space	10% minimum	29%

2. The total floor area proposed is allowed. However, the applicant should confirm that the proposed development program provides sufficient residential use and/or green building features to earn the included premium floor area.
3. The applicant should also confirm the required offset at the top of the streetwall has been provided.
4. The proposed development includes a request for planned project modifications to exceed the maximum height limit in the Kerrytown character overlay zoning district.
5. The proposed development is significantly larger than its neighboring structures on the west side of this block. It is generally in keeping with the newer developments in the Kerrytown character overlay zoning district, particularly those on the 400 blocks of North First, North Ashley and North Main. Staff suggest it does not meet the **design guidelines for context** but its placement on the site does incorporate the majority of the applicable **site planning**.
6. The **design guidelines for building massing** generally focus on minimizing the impact of a new building and providing details, variation, and design treatments that break down scale. The proposed development provides façade setbacks,

plane variation and design treatments in keeping with those guidelines.

7. The proposed development also incorporates all of the applicable **design guidelines for building elements**. It has an appropriate street edge, a high level of ground floor transparency and entrances oriented towards the street. It appears to be a high quality development with the features of a vital downtown.

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.
 - 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.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.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.

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.4.3 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.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.5.1 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.5.3 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.5.5 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

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.

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.

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.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.3 Windows.** Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.
- 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.5 Materials.** Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context.
- 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.7 Sustainability in Building Elements.** Consider sustainability when selecting structural and façade materials and designing functional building elements.

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-19th and early-20th 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 landscape setbacks and grassy street extensions. Trees become more prevalent with way-finding signage and lighting levels diminishing.