

## PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of September 20, 2011

**SUBJECT: The Varsity Ann Arbor Planned Project Site Plan  
(425 East Washington Street)  
Project No. SP11-023**

### **PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION**

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve The Varsity Planned Project Site Plan and Development Agreement, subject to preliminary approval from the Washtenaw County Water Resources Commissioner.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the site plan be **postponed** to allow outstanding staff comments to be addressed and revised plans to be reviewed.

### **LOCATION**

This site is located between East Washington and East Huron Streets, east of Division Street, and is in the Downtown Development Authority district and the Allen Creek watershed. The northern portion of the site is adjacent is bordered by properties in the Old Fourth Ward Historic District.

### **DESCRIPTION OF PETITION**

The subject site currently contains a two-story professional office building and is zoned D1 (Downtown Core District) and East Huron 2 Character Overlay District. The petitioner is seeking approval to construct a 13-story, 177,180-square foot apartment building containing 181 dwelling units/415 bedrooms and 70 vehicle underground parking spaces. The building will also contain accessory uses, such as a fitness center and management office. Residential floor area premiums have been applied to earn an additional 395% of floor area, for a total floor area ratio of 695%. The petitioners intend to design, outfit and market the development to university students.

The site is subject to a Secondary building frontage requirement (0 feet minimum/10 feet maximum) on East Washington Street and a Front Yard building frontage requirement (15 feet minimum) on East Huron Street. The proposed building has a 15-foot setback from the north property line (abutting East Huron Street) and has a 0-foot setback for about half of its frontage on the south property line (abutting East Washington Street). The other half of its southern face is set back 25 feet, creating an entry plaza in front of the main entrance. Planned project modifications are necessary to allow this entry plaza, as it is more than 20% of the building frontage. The planned project modifications are discussed in depth later in this report. The proposed development otherwise conforms to the area, height and placement requirements set forth in the Zoning Ordinance.

A five-foot wide paved walk is proposed on the east side of the building within a variable width east side setback. The walk link will connect the sidewalk on East Huron Street with the entry

plaza and the public sidewalk on East Washington Street. It will be open to the public 364 days of each year. A striped mid-block pedestrian crossing of East Washington Street is proposed in line with the walk link and leads pedestrians to another existing link between East Washington Street and East Liberty Street, along side of the McKinley Towne Centre.

The entry plaza has been designed to provide amenities residents of the building and the general public, in keeping with the intent of a parkland contribution. Special pavers will be used in the entry plaza and public sidewalk, benches will be provided, and retaining walls surrounding landscape beds will have decorative facings. Ornamental fencing and gates will be used for the walk link as well as permeable concrete pavers laid in an artistic pattern. Pedestrian lighting is also proposed in the entry plaza and along the walk link. The petitioners have worked cooperatively with the adjacent First Baptist Church and will provide an opening in the ornamental fence and a paved connection between the walk link and the church's memorial gardens.

The second through 12<sup>th</sup> stories will have 17 apartments each. Eleven apartments are proposed on the 13<sup>th</sup> floor. Most apartments will have one or two bedrooms, although a few studio apartments and some four-bedroom apartments are proposed. Every bedroom and studio apartment has at least one window directly to the outdoors. The primary resident entrance to the building is on the south side. Entry to the building is also possible from several side doors on the east side of the building and through the parking garage on the north side of the building.

A driveway on the north side of the building, off East Huron Street, leads to the lower of two underground parking levels containing 45 vehicle parking spaces. A driveway on the south side of the building, off East Washington Street, leads to the upper underground parking level (essentially the ground level of the building) containing 25 vehicle parking spaces. The two parking levels are not connected. Two shared-use vehicle parking spaces (for use by a car sharing service) are proposed at 416 East Huron Street, adjacent to the northwest of the subject site and also owned by the petitioner. Each shared-use vehicle parking space counts as four off-street vehicle parking spaces. Easements and enforcement measures for these shared-use vehicle spaces are addressed in the draft development agreement. The 78 off-street vehicle parking spaces are two more than are required to support the premium floor area.

A total of 121 bicycle parking spaces are proposed, including 6 Class C open hoops in the entry plaza on the south side of the building, 6 Class C open hoops on the north side of the building, 37 Class B covered hoops within the vehicle parking levels, and 72 Class A spaces in a dedicated, secure storage room on the ground level of the building.

Storm water management for the site will be provided in underground tanks underneath the north driveway from East Huron Street and the north front yard. Detention for a 100-year storm volume is proposed.

There are no protected natural features on the site. On the adjacent church property to east there are two landmark trees. As the proposed development footprint is very similar to the existing development, these trees will not experience any additional impacts.

A development agreement has been drafted to address a variety of issues, including: public access for the walk link, amenities provided in lieu of a parkland contribution, required footing drain disconnections, off-site sanitary sewer capacity improvements, permanent easements and

enforcement procedures for the off-site shared-use vehicle parking, street lighting, and documentation of LEED Energy & Atmosphere points.

### DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

The petitioner presented The Varsity at Ann Arbor project to the Design Review Board on June 22, 2011 at the Board's inaugural meeting. The full report is attached.

In summary, the Board observed that the proposed design responded favorably to the Downtown Design Guidelines. Stronger aspects of its design included complementing setbacks and greenspace, the plaza at the south east corner, the walk link along the east side, the slender, offset towers reducing the building's mass, and the variety in materials. Weaker features included significant area devoted to vehicle circulation (both on site and within the building footprint), front facades disconnected from the base, lack of end treatments for the walk link, underutilized plaza, dominant east façade, and a non-contextual north streetwall.

The proposed development has been revised to address some of the Board's comments. Additional amenities are proposed within the plaza and walk link, and the north streetwall has been redesigned. The petitioner has provided the attached statement of revisions in response to the Board's report.

### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The petitioner held a meeting for interested citizens on Thursday, July 7, 2011, two weeks prior to submitting this project for approval. Invitations were sent to all residents and property owners within 1,000 feet of the site as well as all subscribers to the GovDelivery planning update service. Over 50 people attended the meeting. The full report provided by the petitioner is attached.

In general, the discussion addressed:

- Setbacks and Building Design – whether the proposed setbacks were enough and whether the design meets the *Downtown Design Guidelines*
- Parking – whether more might be needed
- Vehicular Access to the Site – one versus two curb cuts and driveways
- Details of the Units – size, number of bedrooms, anticipated rents
- Benefits to the City – what benefits this project would bring, and impacts to the tax revenues

### SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Office, Residential	D1 (Downtown Core), East Huron 1 (Character Overlay)
EAST	Institutional (Church)	D1, East Huron 2
SOUTH	Mixed Residential/Office/Commercial	D1, State Street
WEST	Mixed Residential/Office/Commercial	D1, East Huron 2

### COMPARISON CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
<b>Base Zoning</b>	<b>D1 (Downtown Core)</b>	<b>D1 (Downtown Core)</b>	<b>D1 (Downtown Core)</b>
Gross Lot Area	25,489 sq ft	25,489 sq ft	No minimum
Max. Usable Floor Area in % of Lot Area	86% (21,000 sq ft)	695% (177,180 sq ft)	400% MAX normal (101,956 sq ft MAX) Up to 700% MAX with premiums (up to 178,423 sq ft MAX)
<b>Character Overlay District</b>	<b>East Huron 2</b>	<b>East Huron 2</b>	<b>East Huron 2</b>
Streetwall Height	2 stories	2 stories	2 stories MIN 4 stories MAX
Offset at Top of Streetwall	Not applicable	5 ft Washington 5 ft Huron	Average 5 ft MIN
Building Height	2 stories	151 feet	24 ft/2 story MIN 180 ft MAX
Massing Articulation	Not applicable	Not applicable	None
Side, Rear Setbacks	5 ft (east) side 60 ft (west) side	5 ft (east) side 0 ft (west) side	None
<b>Building Frontages</b>	<b>Secondary Street, Front Yard Street</b>	<b>Secondary Street, Front Yard Street</b>	<b>Secondary Street, Front Yard Street</b>
East Huron Street	145 ft	15 ft	Front Yard Street: 15 ft MIN
East Washington Street	1 ft	Secondary Street: 0 ft at streetwall Approx. 50% exceeds for entry plaza	Secondary Street: 0 ft MIN, 10 ft MAX at streetwall 20% may exceed for entry plaza
<b>Parking</b>	<b>Special Parking District</b>	<b>Special Parking District</b>	<b>Special Parking District</b>
Parking – Automobiles	22 spaces	78 spaces (70 off-street parking spaces, 2 shared-use spaces) [70+(2x4)=78]	76 spaces MIN for premium floor area
Parking – Bicycles	None	72 Class A 37 Class B 12 Class C	71 Class A spaces MIN

### HISTORY

The site was rezoned as part of the A2D2 Zoning Initiative. The current base and character overlay zoning districts and building frontage standards became effective in December 2009.

## PLANNING BACKGROUND

The Downtown Plan is based upon several guiding values which articulate the most fundamental elements of the downtown. These values include providing a diversity of uses and accommodating a diversity of users, and providing a viable economy, a “green” and energy-efficient built environment and transportation network and social and cultural opportunities. Dense land use and development patterns which draw people downtown and foster an active street life, contribute to its function as an urban neighborhood and support a sustainable transportation system is a goal expressed in the Plan (page 22) as well as encouraging a diversity of new downtown housing opportunities and expansion of the downtown resident population to strengthen downtown’s role as an urban neighborhood, continuing to seek a range of age groups and income levels in the downtown (page 24).

The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan indicates there is an opportunity for near-term pedestrian street improvements with a minor mid-block crossing for East Washington Street between South Division Street and South State Street. No specific location on the block was identified. The Non-Motorized Transportation Plan explains that a minor mid-block crossing “will still be high visibility crosswalks, but in most cases would not have features such as a crossing island.” (Page 160).

## PLANNED PROJECT MODIFICATION

Planned project approval is requested to increase the East Washington building frontage from Secondary Street required front setback. The proposed building has a 10-foot setback for 51 feet of the building frontage; the remainder of the building is set back greater than 10 feet to provide an entry plaza. The code allows 20% (or in this case, 21 feet) of the building frontage to exceed the maximum setback for an entry courtyard or plaza. (Petitioner statements are in plain type)

### Modification Request

The setback requirement would limit an entry courtyard or plaza to only about 21 linear feet in width along the E. Washington Street frontage.

The site plan proposes an entry plaza approximately 51 feet in width. This provides about 1,600 square feet of plaza area in order to accommodate a range of pedestrian amenities, and to provide a more significant articulation of the building massing on both the south and east elevations of the building. The pedestrian amenities provided include benches, planters with seat walls and artwork on the face of the planters, pedestrian lighting, bicycle parking, and a canopy over the main pedestrian entry. The larger courtyard functions as the primary pedestrian entry to the building and is oriented to the southeast, towards the University of Michigan central campus. This larger open space also achieves the objective of working in cooperation with the adjacent First Baptist Church to soften the impact of the proposed structure on the church property by providing a significant open space, in addition to coordinating with the church to develop a mews or pedestrian connection along the east edge of the site.

The mews will include special paving, pedestrian lighting, ornamental gates and fencing, pylon markers at each end of the mews, green screens with vines on the proposed building, detailed

landscaping on the ground plane, and two points of connection to existing walks on the church parcel.

We note also that staff supports a modification to increase the percentage of the south streetwall that can exceed the maximum setback because it creates a better, more compatible transition between the subject site and the church to the east. Staff also supports the modification because there is no existing, consistent streetwall along the north side of East Washington street to continue, and thus no awkward gaps are created by the enlarged plaza.

**Based upon compliance with the following standards, the Planning Commission may recommend approval, and City Council may approve modifications of the area, height and placement regulations of the Zoning Chapter in the form of a planned project site plan:**

- 1. The lot(s) included in the planned project must meet the minimum gross lot size requirement of the zoning district in which they are located.**

There is no minimum gross lot size requirement for the D1, east Huron 2 Character District.

- 2. The proposed modifications of zoning requirements must provide one or more of the following:**

- a) Usable open space in excess of the minimum requirement for the zoning district.**

There is no minimum open space requirement. The proposed site plan provides approximately double the amount of open space that might be provided in this district.

- b) Building or parking setback(s) in excess of the minimum requirement for the zoning district.**

The proposed building setback is in excess of the minimum 0 foot setback requirement for the district.

- c) Preservation of natural features that exceeds ordinance requirements, especially for those existing features prioritized in the land development regulations as being of highest and mid-level concern.**

N/A

- d) Preservation of historical or architectural features.**

N/A

- e) Solar orientation or energy conserving design.**

N/A

- f) An arrangement of buildings which provides a public benefit, such as transit access, pedestrian orientation, or a reduced need for infrastructure or impervious surface.**

The configuration of the E. Washington elevation of the building provides the public benefit of increased pedestrian orientation, and provides space for a range of pedestrian amenities and planting areas.

- g) Affordable housing for lower income households.**

N/A

- h) Permanent open spaces of 20 percent or more in any low-density residential district.**

N/A

- 3. The planned project shall be designed in such a manner that traffic to and from the site will not be hazardous to adjacent properties.**

The planned project is designed in such a manner that traffic to and from the site will not be hazardous to adjacent properties.

- 4. The proposed modifications shall be consistent with the proper development and use of adjacent land and buildings.**

The proposed modifications are consistent with the proper development and use of adjacent land and buildings.

- 5. Required off-street parking and landscaping must be provided in accordance with the provisions of Chapters 59 and 62.**

There is no requirement for off-street parking. Interior parking is provided. Required landscaping is provided on both street frontages. Additional landscaping is provided along the mews walkway and with green screens and vine plantings on the east and west sides of the north half of the building.

- 6. The standards of density, allowable floor area and required usable open space for the zoning district(s) in which the project is located must be met.**

The standards of density and allowable floor area for the zoning district in which the proposed project is to be located are met. There is no minimum usable open space requirement.

- 7. There shall be no uses within the proposed project which are not permitted uses in the zoning district(s) in which the proposed project is to be located.**

There are no uses within the proposed project which are not permitted uses in the zoning district in which the proposed project is to be located.

### SERVICE UNIT COMMENTS

Planning – Several outstanding issues could not be addressed prior to preparing this staff report. They include issues related to:

- Corrections to the grading plan sheet as noted by Development Inspector
- Corrections to the landscape plan sheet as noted by Forester
- Inadequate drive approach on East Washington Street to access the service alley as noted by Systems Planning
- Unacceptable solid waste plan as noted by Solid Waste/Recycling Coordinator

Staff will provide a revised recommendation as part of our presentation of the petition to the Planning Commission on September 20, 2011 if these issues have been resolved.

Downtown Development Authority – The proposed development includes at least one metered parking space eliminated to accommodate a new fire hydrant and a pedestrian mid-block crossing. Current agreements between the City Council and the Downtown Development Authority include provisions to compensate the public parking system for metered parking space elimination. The recommended policy would not accept relocated metered parking spaces. A one-time fee may be required for each metered parking space eliminated.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo  
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson  
6/16/10

Attachments: Parcel and Zoning Map  
Aerial Photo  
Site Plan  
Elevations  
Citizen Participation Report  
Design Review Board Report  
Petitioner's Response to DRB Report

c: Petitioner: Potomac Holdings-CS Potomac MI  
7508 Wisconsin Ave, 2nd Floor  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Petitioner's Agents: J. Bradley Moore  
J. Bradley Moore & Associates  
4844 Jackson Road, Suite 150  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Earl Ophoff  
Midwestern Consulting LLC  
3815 Plaza Drive  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

Systems Planning  
Project No. SP11-023

# 425 E. Washington St. -Location Map-



**Map Legend**

- City Boundary
- Railroads
- Parcel Property

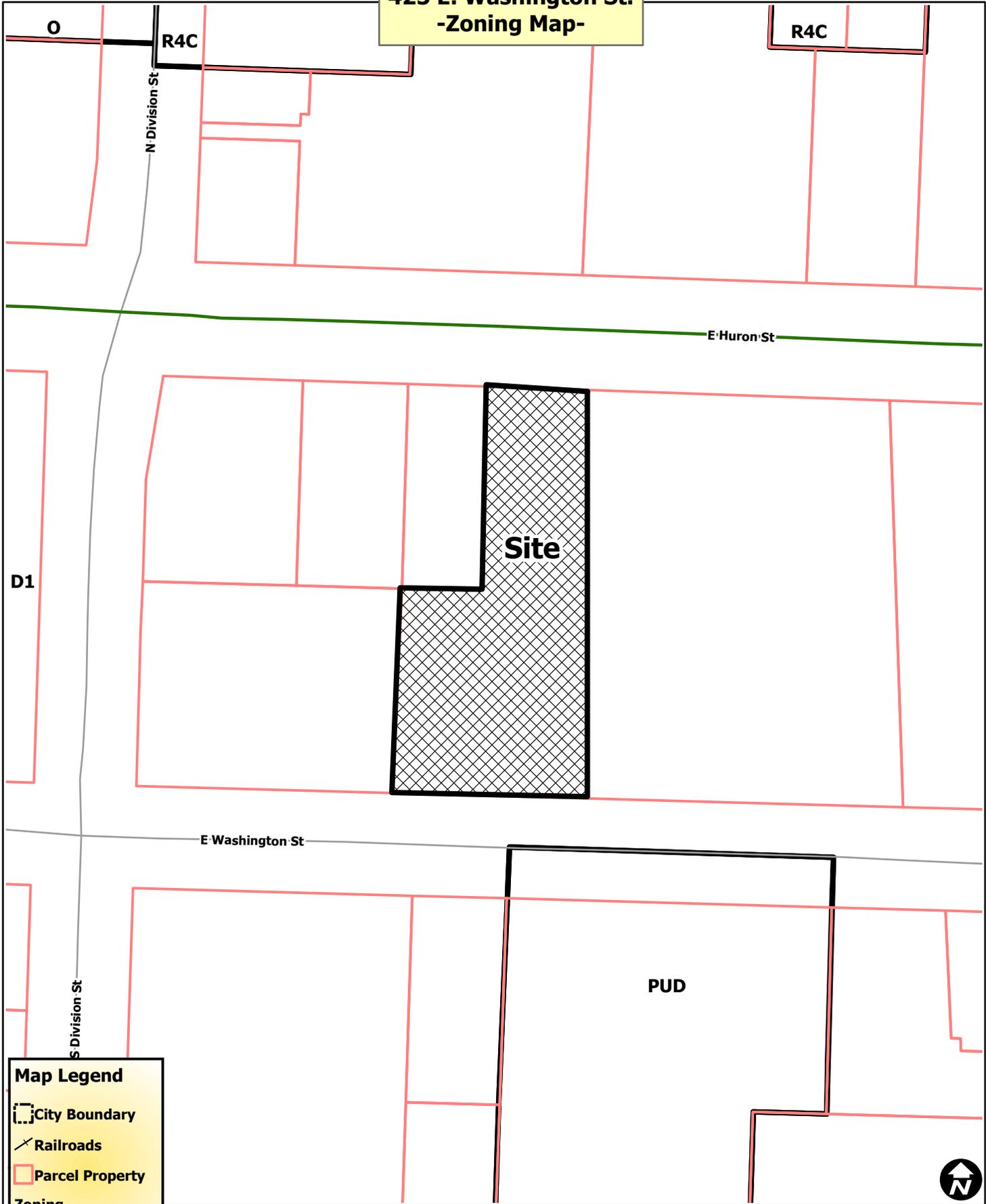


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Map Created: 8/25/2011

# 425 E. Washington St. -Zoning Map-

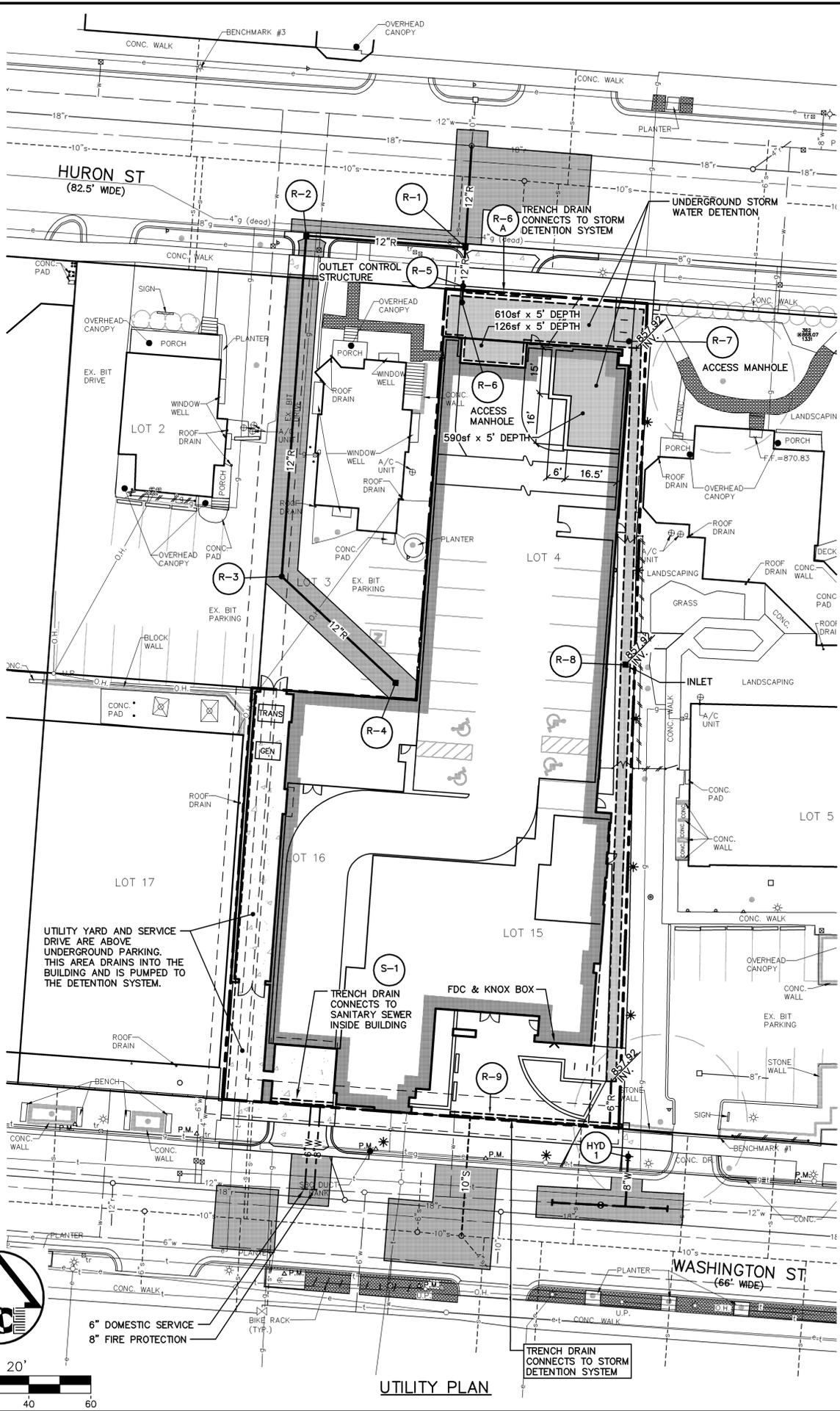
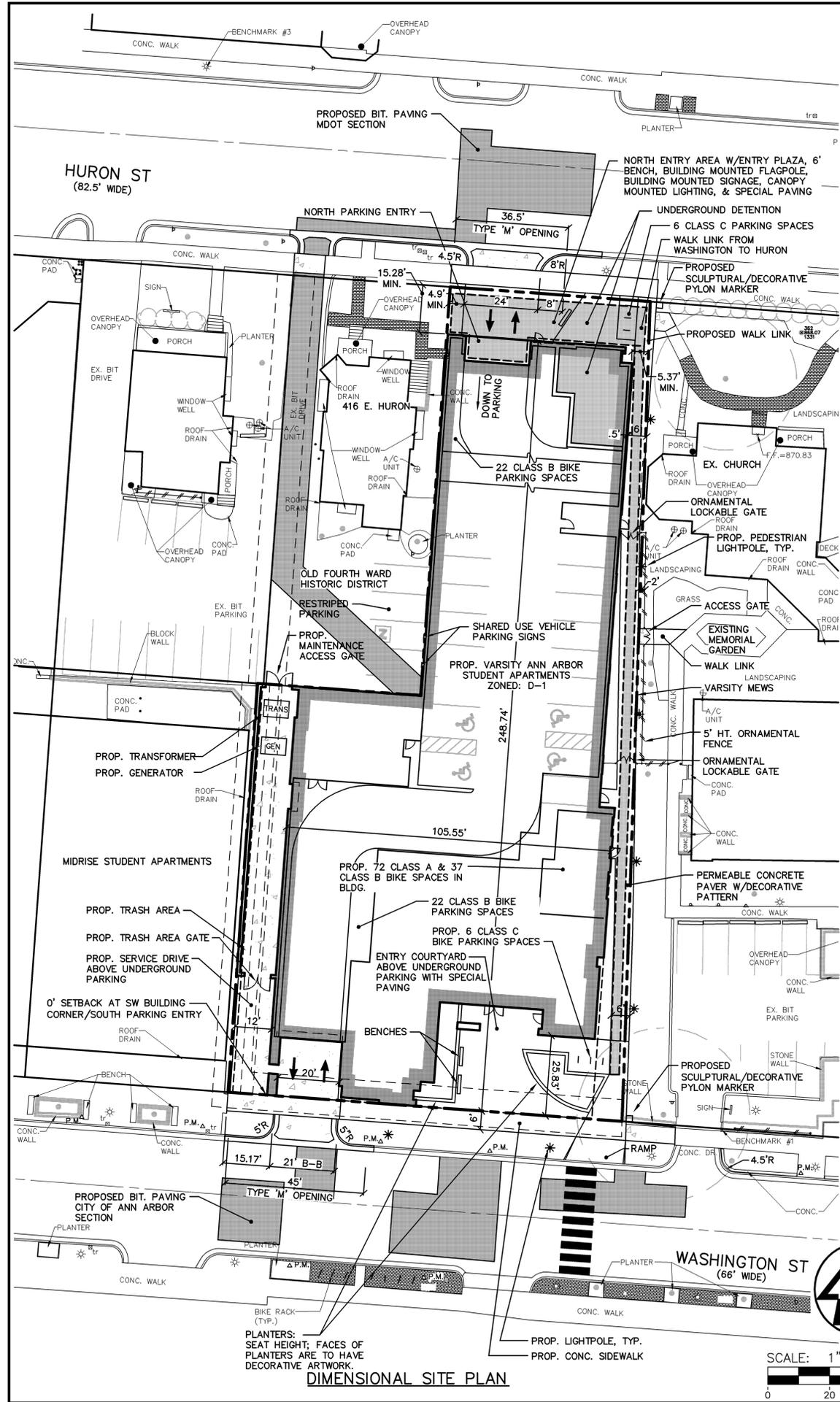


**Map Legend**

- City Boundary
- Railroads
- Parcel Property
- Zoning**
- Township
- City of Ann Arbor



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Map Created: 8/25/2011



### LEGEND

	GUY WIRE
	EXIST. UTILITY POLE
	EXIST. A/C UNIT
	ELEC. TRANSFORMER
	EXIST. OVERHEAD UTILITY LINE
	EXIST. LIGHT POLE
	EXIST. TELEPHONE LINE
	EXIST. ELECTRIC LINE
	EXIST. GAS LINE
	EXIST. GAS VALVE
	EXIST. WATER MAIN
	EXIST. HYDRANT
	EXIST. GATE VALVE IN BOX
	EXIST. GATE VALVE IN WELL
	EXIST. CURB STOP & BOX
	PROP. WATER MAIN
	PROP. GATE VALVE IN WELL
	EXIST. STORM SEWER
	EXIST. CATCH BASIN OR INLET
	EXIST. ROOF DRAIN
	PROP. STORM SEWER
	PROP. CATCH BASIN OR INLET
	EXIST. SANITARY SEWER
	EXIST. CLEANOUT
	SIGN
	P.M.
	PARKING METER
	TELEPHONE RISER
	TRAFFIC SIGNAL CONTROL BOX
	ELECTRIC METER
	WATER METER
	GAS METER
	POST
	SINGLE TREE
	FENCE
	TREE OR BRUSH LIMIT
	SECTION CORNER
	FOUND IRON PIPE
	FOUND P.K.
	FOUND IRON ROD
	CONTROL PT.
	SHARED USE VEHICLE PARKING

### SANITARY SEWER FLOW MITIGATION CALCULATIONS

**Design Population:**  
VAA will be a housing development. A multi story building will contain underground parking spaces and 181 apartments.

**Existing Flow:**  
The sanitary sewer flow produced by the existing houses and the retail (party) store to be removed will be based on the City of Ann Arbor's sanitary sewer flow evaluation Table 'A'. The computed dry weather flow rate for the existing uses will be as follows:  
14,400 sf of non-medical office space @ 0.06 gpd/sf = 864 gpd

**Design Flow:**  
Based on the City of Ann Arbor's sanitary sewer flow evaluation Table 'A', the design dry weather flow rate for the Near North development will be:  
70 parking spaces @ 27 gpd/space = 1,890 gpd  
53 apartments 600 sf or less @ 200 gpd/unit = 10,600 gpd  
96 apartments from 601 sf to 1,200 sf @ 275 gpd/unit = 26,125 gpd  
33 apartments over 1,200 sf @ 350 gpd/unit = 11,550 gpd  
Total Design average flow = 50,165 gpd

**Mitigation Flow:**  
Mitigation flow = Design average flow - Existing average flow  
Mitigation flow = 50,165 gpd - 864 gpd = 49,301 gpd  
Mitigation peak flow = 49,301 gpd x 4(peak) x 1.2 (recovery) = 236,645 gpd or 164.3 gpm

**Footing Drain Disconnect Summary:**  
Footing Drain Disconnect Factor from the City of Ann Arbor = 4 gpm/home  
Number of Footing Drain Disconnects Required = 164.3 gpm / 4 gpm / home = 41.1 homes

- A total of 41 homes will need to have their footing drains disconnected to equate to the additional peak flow produced.
- Standard sidewalk repair and maintenance note per Chapter 49, Section 4.58 of City Code. All sidewalks are to be kept and maintained in good repair by the owner of the land adjacent to and abutting the same. Prior to the issuance of the final Certificate of Occupancy for this site, all existing sidewalks in need of repair must be repaired in accordance with City standards.
  - Proposed Washington Street streetscape is similar to the streetscape to the east at the First Baptist Church, and includes a lawn extension, street trees and new street light.
  - The Huron Street streetscape is similar to the existing and adjacent streetscape, and includes a lawn extension, street tree and existing streetlight.
  - 100-year storm water detention is provided underground, under the Varsity mezzanine sidewalk, under the maintenance/storage room at the north east corner of the building, and under the E. Huron Street front yard setback. The detention system is to outlet to the existing storm sewer in E. Huron Street.
  - The utility yard and service drive are above underground parking. This area drains into the building and the runoff is pumped to the detention system. The pump is also connected to the backup generator. If the pump fails, water may pond in the level 51' parking area.
  - Sanitary, domestic water and fire suppression water services are to tap existing mains in E. Washington Street. Sanitary sewer modeling is to be done to determine any required off-site sanitary sewer improvements.
  - All roof drains are to run down through the building and are to connect to the storm detention system at the north end of the site.
  - The west service drive is above underground parking. It is drained by deck drains that run into the building. Runoff from the service drive is pumped to the north detention system.
  - The Varsity mezzanine sidewalk drains directly into the portion of the detention system that is under the walk.
  - De-watering operations during construction, if necessary, must provide sediment control and must discharge to the storm sewer in State Street, NOT into the E. Huron or E. Washington storm sewer systems that tie into the Allen Creek Drain.
  - There are no proposed firewalls in the building.
  - If temporary tie-backs are required in the right-of-way for construction purposes, a temporary licensing agreement will be provided. If the building's footings will be located in the right-of-way, the locations shall be clearly identified on the plans and a permanent licensing agreement will be provided.
  - All sidewalks constructed in the public right-of-way shall meet requirements and guidelines as set forth in the ADA Standards for Accessible Design.
  - If footing drains for the existing building are connected to the sanitary sewer system, disconnection will be required in accordance with current City specifications. Verification of existing footing drains shall be performed by the City's consultant, Camp, Dresser and McKee. The contact person is Jay Zawacki who can be reached at 734 213-5444.
  - Booster pumps will be provided for domestic and fire water services.
  - The existing streetlight on E. Washington Street is to be removed and other stored and re-installed at the proposed location, or replaced with standard D.T.E. Energy or City lighting, with final approval granted by Field Operations. Additional street lights shall match.

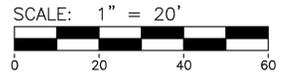
**MIDWESTERN CONSULTING**  
Civil, Environmental and Transportation Engineers  
3815 Plaza Drive  
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108  
Phone: 734.995.0200  
Fax: 734.995.0599

**CLIENT**  
WDG ARCHITECTURE  
1025 CONNOR AVENUE, NW, SUITE 300  
WASHINGTON, DC 20036  
BOB KEANE  
PH: (202) 857-8300

**VARSITY ANN ARBOR**  
SITE PLAN  
DIMENSIONAL SITE PLAN & UTILITY PLAN

**C4**

JOB NO. 11054  
REV. DATE 7/25/11  
SHEET 4 OF 10  
REV. PER CITY 9/17/11  
CADD: DAG  
ENG: EFO  
TECH: JTB  
SITE: 11054SP1.FBF



LEGEND

- Legend symbols and descriptions for utility lines, transformers, hydrants, storm sewers, signs, and trees.

LANDSCAPE LEGEND

- Landscaping symbols and descriptions for proposed canopy trees, flowering trees, shrubs, ground cover, perennial beds, lawn areas, and edging.

Varsity Plant Materials List table with columns: Quantity, Symbol, Botanical Name, Common Name, Size, Root, Remarks. Lists trees, shrubs, vines, and ground cover.

VARSITY ANN ARBOR LANDSCAPE REQUIREMENTS Revised 8.17.11, 9.7.11

5.602 VEHICULAR USE AREA LANDSCAPING AND SCREENING: none required. 5.603 CONFLICTING LAND USE BUFFERS: none required.

STREET TREE CANOPY LOSS E. Washington Street: One 5-inch golden rain tree is to be removed. One dead 22-inch honeylocust is to be removed. One dead 13-inch catalpa is to be removed. E. Huron Street: One 18-inch white mulberry (invasive) is to be removed. One dead 15-inch American Linden is to be removed. Mitigation required = 23 cal. inches. Mitigation provided = 6 @ 4-inch caliper = 24 cal. inches.

LANDMARK TREE REPLACEMENT: none required. STREET TREE ESCROW E. Washington Street frontage = 128 lf. E. Huron Street frontage = 65 lf. 193 lf x \$1.30 = \$250.90 or equivalent. Street tree escrow of \$250.90 will be provided prior to issuing building permits and will be refunded after city staff inspection shows long term survival of the proposed street trees.

- LANDSCAPE NOTES: 1. Water outlets will be provided within 150 ft of all required plantings. 2. Plant materials shall be selected and installed in accordance with standards established by the City Parks and Recreation Department. 3. All landscape panels will be planted with shrubs, permanent ground cover, annuals and perennials, or grass per plan. 4. Landscape maintenance plan: All diseased, damaged or dead material shown as proposed plantings on the site plan shall be replaced by the end of the following growing season. 5. Restore lawn areas with minimum four (4) inches topsoil then seed/fertilizer/mulch. Fertilizer for lawns shall provide not less than one (1) pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 sq ft of lawn area and shall contain not less than two percent (2%) potassium and four percent (4%) phosphoric acid. Seed shall be special park mixture 'Northrup King' (or approved equal), as follows: 30% Rugby Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Park Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Ruby Creeping Red Fescue, 10% Pennine Perennial Ryegrass, 20% Scaldis Hard Fescue. Apply at a rate of four pounds (4 lbs) per 1000 sq ft. Mulch within 24 hours with two (2) tons straw per acre, or 71 bales excelsior mulch per acre. Anchor straw mulch with spray coating of adhesive material applied at the rate of 150 gallons per acre. 6. Applications of fertilizer beyond the initial topsoil & seeding shall be w/o phosphorus.

MIDWESTERN CONSULTING Civil, Environmental and Transportation Engineers Planners, Surveyors Landscape Architects 3815 Plaza Drive Ann Arbor, Michigan 48108 Phone: 734.995.0200 Fax: 734.995.0599

CLIENT WDG ARCHITECTURE 1025 CONNECTICUT AVE., NW, SUITE 300 WASHINGTON, DC 20036 BOB KEANE PH: (202) 857-8300

VARSITY ANN ARBOR SITE PLAN LANDSCAPE PLAN

C7

Table with columns: JOB No., SHEET, OF, DATE, REV. DATE, REV. PER CITY, REV. PER OWNER, ENC., ETO, TECH., SITE, TDS, LPT, PFT.

R:\11054\ACAD\SITE\11054LP.dwg, C7, 9/7/2011 10:56:31 AM, DAG, D:\Swp-KRP.dwg







Aerial View from Southeast



Perspective from Washington Street



Perspective of Washington Street Main Entrance Plaza



Perspective from Huron Street



Perspective of Huron Street Pedestrian Walkway

**WDG**  
ARCHITECTURE

WDG Architecture, PLLC  
1025 Connecticut Avenue NW  
Suite 300  
Washington DC 20036  
tel 202 857 8300  
fax 202 463 2198  
e-mail wdg@wdgarch.com

**Civil / Landscape**  
Midwestern Consulting LLC

3815 Plaza Drive  
Ann Arbor, MI 48108

tel 734.995.0200  
fax  
e-mail

**Structural**  
SK&A Structural Engineers, PLLC

1155 Connecticut Ave NW  
Washington, DC 20036

tel 202.659.2520  
fax  
e-mail

## Varsity Ann Arbor

425 E. Washington Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Potomac Holdings

7508 Wisconsin Ave. 2nd Floor  
Bethesda, MD 20814

Planning Department Set	07/25/11
Planning Resubmission	08/17/11
Planning Resubmission	09/07/11


Professional Seal

WDG Project No:  
WA11027

Building Perspectives

A-03.20

## Varsity Ann Arbor – Citizen Participation Meeting Report

July 20, 2011

The following is a summary of the Public Participation meeting that was held to present the evolving Varsity Ann Arbor, student focused, housing project proposed to be located at 425 E Washington St. This meeting followed a formal meeting with the newly constituted Design Review Board (held June 22<sup>nd</sup>) and numerous informal meetings with neighbors and interested citizens throughout the months of May and June. The meeting was attended by 5 members of the design team and approximately ten times that amount of interested citizens.

Notices: 2016 notices were mailed to addresses provided by the city planning department as well as others who had requested notification. Some duplicate notices were sent by e-mail to interested parties.

Meeting Date, Time & Location: Thursday July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011, at 6 – 7:30pm – Michigan League in The Michigan Room.

Local design team member J Bradley Moore formally started the meeting @ 6:12pm by asking those in attendance to sign-in, outlining the meeting format and introducing the other design team members including Earl Ophoff of Midwestern Consulting, Bob Keane of WDG Architects and Wade Eller and Donnie Gross, representing Potomac Holdings. Following the introductions, design team member Bob Keane conducted a power point presentation describing the project. First he gave an overview of the project scope and history. Color slides were presented showing the location of the project, the neighborhood context as well as the proposed building & landscaping. Attendees were shown how the project had been initially presented to the Design Review Board (DRB) and how the design had been modified to respond to comments made by the DRB – including slides showing “before & after” views of the proposed project. The power point presentation concluded at approximately 6:37pm at which time color presentation boards were displayed on tables at the side of the room, including the “before & after” material presented in the power point presentation, for participants to view at their leisure.

Following the presentation, Mr. Moore & Mr. Keane opened the floor for public comment and questions.

An audience participant asked if the project would be targeted to students. A design team member indicated that marketing would be targeted to the University of Michigan Student body but that under the Fair Housing Act the owner could not discriminate against others so that they would accept non students as well.

An audience participant asked how traffic on E Huron would be affected since one parking garage accessed Huron and specifically how many cars could “stack” on the property waiting to get into the garage. It was indicated by the design team members that there was room for one car to “stack” on the property in front of the Huron side garage door between the sidewalk and the garage door. Furthermore, it was indicated that the design team does not believe that there will be negative consequences to the traffic on Huron because; A) The vast majority of the building occupants will be U of M students who, unlike working professionals, use their cars infrequently, B) the Huron garage door accesses only about two thirds of the proposed 77 project parking spaces whereas currently all of the 84 on-site parking spaces exit onto Huron, C) The Huron garage entry will be signed/designated as “right-in and right-out” only, D) the vast majority of cars coming and going to the existing professional building on the site are patients with hourly appointments which means far more vehicle trips per day. A design team member indicated a complete traffic study had been conducted and would be part of the formal site plan approval application which that would quantify the traffic issues. Further, this study would be submitted to MDOT for their review.

An audience participant asked where the other third of the parking space would be accessed. A design team member answered that those spaces would be accessed from a garage door on the E Washington St. side of the building.

An audience participant postulated that it might be better to have all the cars access 100% of the parking from the Washington side. Design team members indicated that A) Washington St. street was a far more pedestrian oriented street than Huron and that would create a maximum conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, B) The geometries of the site, given that its width on the Huron side is significantly narrower, makes an internal connection between parking levels impractical, C) The site already has accesses onto both E. Washington and E. Huron so nothing is proposed which does not already exist on the site.

An audience participant asked how this project would “serve the citizens” of the city. A design team member indicated that it would benefit the city through things like increased economic activity, jobs and increased tax base.

The same audience participant asked if all the increased tax revenue would go to the DDA and not to the general fund. A member of the design team indicated that the project developers/owners had no control over how tax revenue would be distributed and that that was more or less an internal affair of the local government and citizenry. Tom Heywood, Executive Director of the State Street Area

Association, was an audience participant and detailed for those assembled how the increased tax revenue would be allocated between the taxing authorities.

An audience participant asked what the setback of the proposed project would be on the E Huron side. A design team member answered that the set-back at the building "base" would be a minimum of 15 feet and that the tower above the base would be set-back at least an additional 5 feet as per the city zoning ordinance. Further, the existing house on the east side of the proposed building had a front set back of approximately 30 feet and that the existing house to the west had a front set back of approximately 25 feet. The design team member indicated that as a comparison the Sloan Plaza building across the street had a set-back at the building base of approximately 12 feet and a setback at the tower of 20 feet. Furthermore the team member indicated that the side of the building facing Huron was not straight but articulated in such a way that the minimum setbacks stated of 15 and 20 feet were just the minimums and that these were exceeded for part of the Huron building face.

An audience participant indicated that the rendering illustration did not, in their opinion, seem to show the differences in Huron setbacks accurately. A design team member said that no deception was intended and that it was merely the viewing angle of the perspective.

An audience participant indicated that the mid block connection proposed along the east side of the property should be less straight. A design team member said they would work with the church next door to enhance the design of the mid-block connection in the project tentatively designated as the project mews.

An audience participant indicated that the design team should consider increasing the number of one bedroom units. A design team member indicated that they would get with the owner to review unit mix.

An audience participant asked if there would be a way to free up the ground floor for retail space. A design team member indicated that the owner's market research showed weak to no demand for retail in this area of E Washington St. This was born out by the long vacancy of the retail space in the building adjacent to the west. The owners would rather have an active amenity space for the building tenants on the first floor than unused retail space. The owners are not averse to having retail spaces in their buildings and in fact incorporated 23,000 sq.ft. of retail space into another of their student focused residential projects because it made sense in that project due to retail demand in the area. The owners feel that because retail demand is low in this location this project is best suited to help support the

existing and proposed retail space in the area (such as the new market proposed to occupy some of the first floor retail space at Sterling 411 Lofts next door).

An audience participant asked what the mix of unit sizes would be and also what the on-site tenant amenities would be. A design team member indicated that 2 bedroom units represent the greatest quantity of the units representing approximately two thirds of the units, that approximately 20% of the units would be 4 bedroom units and the rest would be one bedroom and/or studio apartments.

An audience participant asked if the bedrooms would have two occupants in each bedroom. A design team member indicated that the leases would stipulate only one occupant per bedroom. Furthermore, the units come furnished with only one bed per bedroom.

An audience participant asked if each bedroom would have its own bathroom. A design team member indicated that most would have – that the bathroom to bedroom parity would be approximately 90%.

An audience participant asked what each bedroom would rent for. A design team member indicated that the anticipated rents would range from between \$900 to \$1100 per month.

An audience participant asked what the exterior building materials would be. A design team member described the full depth brick, glazing and metal panels proposed for the building.

An audience participant asked if the number of 4 bedroom units could be reduced. A design member indicated that the unit mix was part of the feasibility of the project but that they would revisit the unit mix with the owner.

An audience participant asked if the project could include any artwork for the employment of the general public. A design member indicated that they would explore such opportunities with the owner.

An audience participant asked what the size of the bedroom-bathroom suites would be. A design team member indicated that it would vary somewhat but generally would be between 185 to 235 sq. ft.

An audience participant indicated that, in his opinion, with 400+ bedrooms and only 77 parking spaces there would be a large number of tenants without on-site parking who will need to find a place to park. A design team member indicated that the parking ratio was developed based upon A) the requirements of the zoning ordinance, B) the experience of the owners and industry standards in this type of development, C) similar projects in town like Zaragon 1, Zaragon 2 and 411 Lofts. Tom Heywood, Executive Director of State Street Area Association, indicated that 400-450 monthly permit parking spots would be moved out of the "Tally Hall" parking structure to the new Library lot parking structure once the latter is completed, thus freeing up the spaces in the "Tally Hall" parking structure across from the proposed Varsity Project by the time it is completed. Furthermore, there will be 80 surface parking spaces on the library lot until the city decides what to do with the air rights above the library lot parking structure.

An audience participant asked if only tenants of the building would be able to park in the building and if the parking spaces would be rented to tenants separately from the bedroom/apartment rent. A design team member indicated that only tenants would be permitted to park in the spaces within the building, that each space is assigned by number and that the monthly rent for the parking space is in addition to the rent paid for per apartment/bedroom.

An audience participant indicated that in their experience city parking requirements are inadequate and that there should be one parking space per apartment. A design team member indicated that they would convey that suggestion to the owner.

An audience participant indicated that the building design did not, in their opinion, respond to Design Guidelines in respect to issues of context and that the building should be set-back further from Huron Street to provide more green space. A design member indicated that the proposed project has more green space than is currently found on the site which is 100% "paved over". Furthermore that Sloan Plaza across the street, which has similar setbacks and much more street frontage, has green plantings between the building and side walk as will this project.

An audience participant asked if any space in the proposed project will be office space or other uses not directly associated with the residential uses in the building. A design team member indicated that there would only be space for the use of the residential tenants.

An audience participant asked about the timing of the project. A design team member indicated that they were looking for initial occupancy in late 2013.

An audience participant asked how much bike parking there would be on-site. A design team member responded 72 spaces would be provided inside the building and approximately 10 spaces outside.

An audience participant stated that they would like to see a taller building with more parking incorporated into the design with one parking space per apartment. A design team member indicated that they would revisit that idea with the owners.

An audience participant suggested that the project offer a shuttle service for tenants to shopping areas outside the urban core. A design team member indicated that they would convey that suggestion to the owners.

The co-pastor of the Baptist church to the east of the proposed project offered thanks to the design team for the open and on-going dialog with the church that was initiated early on in the project design process.

An audience participant stated that they really liked the idea of the through-block connection and that they were happy with the design changes that were made as a result of the Design Review Board but that the local citizenry would be pushing for even more changes/improvements in the design. Further that the Huron Street side needs more work and that the building should be set back further from Huron even if it means going higher.

An audience participant stated that they feel that having the 4 bedroom units at the end of the building corridors is a bad idea.

An audience participant stated that they thought the “Varsity” name might create confusion with other enterprises in town and asked how the project name was arrived at. A design team member stated that the name was the brand name of the Owner who uses it on all of its projects throughout the country.

An audience participant asked if the owner was going to retain ownership or if they were just going to sell it. A design team member indicated that the owner is a long-term holder of its properties.

An audience participant asked how the project fits into the context of adjacent historic districts. A design team member indicated that the building would be a good fit.

An audience participant asked what if anything was going to be done to the adjacent house to the west of the project on Huron St. A design team member said that the Owner had indicated he intended to fix it up.

Mr. Moore indicated that any additional comments or concerns could be forwarded to the project website at [varsityaa@gmail.com](mailto:varsityaa@gmail.com)

The meeting formally concluded at approximately 7:32pm.

See Appendices attached

## Appendix A

The design team received several pieces of correspondence from interested parties after the Design Review Board meeting and prior to the Citizens' Participation Meeting which are chronicled herein.

### **From: Norm Tyler – June 23, 2011**

Brad,

I attended as an observer yesterday's meeting of the Design Review Board. There is one major concern I have with the design; that is the building's elevation on Huron Street. The current design assumption obviously is that this is the back of the building, with a garage door and a security office facing the street. Many neighbors consider Huron Street, because of its prominence, instead should be considered one of two fronts to the building. There should be more of an amenity to this elevation.

Perhaps the designers could consider the following:

- This street-front should be more fully landscaped.
- Move the garage entrance back further so there is at least one car length between the door and the sidewalk.
- I understand you intend this to be a right-turn-only exit. This may not be practical, since I feel many residents will make a left turn illegally nonetheless. Have you discussed this situation with MDOT, since Huron is a state road?
- I feel a setback of some kind at the northeast corner of the massing could make a better reference to the low-scale structures next door.

I look forward to seeing the response of the design team based on the comments of myself and others. The project will be an important structure for the city, and I am sure we all want to see it work successfully in every way.

Norm Tyler...

### **From: Ilene R. Tyler, FAIA, FAPT, LEED AP – June 23, 2011**

Brad, I understand you are accepting comments from the public regarding last night's Design Review presentation. I made my notes strictly tied to the Design Guidelines and they are so noted below. I have stated them in a declarative style, with the understanding that you will read them as a suggestion for you and your team to consider.

A1.5 Enhance the terminus to the alley from Liberty; soften with more green landscaping.

A1.2 Widen the Mews, and "funnel" both entrances to the Mews; possibly widen mid-block at the First Baptist garden, treating this as a pedestrian-friendly node along the Mews.

A2.6 Provide more of a green roof. Why waste all that flat roof area? Is it too high? Will there be too much rooftop mechanical equipment? Of course, I don't know the project that well, but

the tiny area (even if deepened to 40 feet) is too small to contribute to a lessening of the large impervious building footprint.

A3.5 The entry area does offer public urban space, but it needs more reason for people to be there and to be used. Enhance with a focus, furniture, etc.

A4.2 Soften and screen the entries to the parking structure. The entries need to be recessed one full car length, so cars don't sit on the public sidewalk trying to enter or exit.

A4.5 Will MDOT approve the E. Huron exit without an acceleration lane? This seems very unsafe and should be discouraged, unless there is strict control against turning left, and room to ease into traffic turning right. Vehicle exiting takes up too much of the frontage, but what there is needs to be improved over the current concept. While not the functional front door, it should not read as a back door and service entrance on our primary cross-town roadway.

A5.4 Show items and locations for public art to "enrich and enliven pedestrian walkways..."

A6.2 Provide convenient bike storage, including some for quick day use or visitors to the building.

B1.1 Reduce building mass on the Huron Street half of the building. This is adjacent to historic houses on each side, and the current massing overwhelms these buildings. Step the building down to the north.

B1.2 Vary the building massing to differentiate two building blocks occupying the full depth of the block.

B1.3 Wrap the 2-story base around the sides of the building; continue a horizontal differentiation along the east and west elevations, even if it is less developed than at the north and south ends.

B1.4 Increase the horizontal differentiation at the top floor. It is barely visible and needs more articulation to be visible from the ground.

C7.3 Make the windows operable, not just vents, but the actual windows.

General #1: Integrate into the whole site plan what is happening west of the new building, so this, too, does not feel like the back of the building adjacent to the historic houses.

General #2: Include site improvements and upgrades to the historic houses. These lose all morning solar access, and the new building should be stepped adjacent to them to mitigate this condition.

Please share my comments with the rest of the team and with the Design Review Advisory Board.

Thank you.

**From: Raymond Detter – June 23, 2011**

Brad and Associates:

I believe that most of Wednesday's criticism of the proposed "Varsity" project on Washington Street related to the design and mass of the east and north elevations of the structure. I am not going to repeat all the issues that were raised, but it is clear that significant changes must be made. On the Huron Street side, the re-design of the building must recognize that this can not be treated as "the back of the building". The final design must do more to relate to the historic context and character of East Huron Street.

I am attaching below a summary list of the "Major Points in the Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines in Relation to the Proposed Project". These were drawn up before the Design Guidelines Board met to help us clarify the design review process and to point out the most important design considerations that relate to the Varsity project. Many of these, as expected, relate to the Design Review Board comments--even though, unfortunately, the Design Review Board members did not specifically identify specific design guidelines in their discussion. Equally unfortunate was the fact the Board members failed to cover some items at all.

We know the community will have a chance to raise these again at the Public Participation meeting on July 7 at the Michigan League. Any improvement of the project between now and then will be appreciated. Public hearings before the Planning Commission and the City Council will also allow these design guidelines items to be raised again.

**From: Raymond Detter and Christine Crockett – June 25, 2011**

Chris,

Good remarks! I don't see Brad Moore among the people to whom you sent it. That is essential. Brad will, hopefully, to try to get the developers to improve this god-damn Cabrini Green look-a-like.

Ray

On Jun 25, 2011, at 11:28 AM, Christine Crockett wrote:

I'm looking forward to meeting with all of you about this project. I especially like Ilene Tyler's extensive comments on the exterior design of the building. She has communicated what all of us have been saying in language that architects understand. No one can question Ilene's extensive expertise and experience as well as her consummate good taste in these matters.

Changing the four-bedroom units to one or two bedroom apartments would be make this project much more acceptable. The larger "pod" style apartments speak to the "party central" crowd, and grouping two of them at the end of a corridor could create unpleasant living conditions for the other residents on each floor. In the end one hopes that the developer would

understand that this project will be more universally desirable to future renters if they can count on a livable arrangement of units. In the cause of long-term viability and rentability of this building I urge the developers to eliminate the four-bedroom units altogether. The mix of units is quite unworkable in terms of the clientele attracted to the larger units and would quickly make the building unattractive to many potential residents such as graduate students and professors.

I am particularly bothered by way Huron is treated as a "backdoor" to the building. Because each side of this development faces an important character area, then the Huron facade, as well as all the others, needs to respond to the work that Peter Pollock and others produced in making Huron a more pedestrian friendly street. The current blank face facade with its garage door would only serve to make the Huron Street experience more dismal. The study of Huron, Division, and other important thoroughfares in the downtown specifically addressed the need to make Huron a more walkable street. This includes both improving the existing built environment and making sure that new construction contributes to a positive pedestrian experience. We must remember how important this study is whenever addressing new development. It certainly influenced the outcome of the North Quad complex in which the UM enhanced the corner of Huron and State with a beautiful entrance to university and a distinctively designed building for this block of Huron. We must expect the same of private developers. Chris Crockett

On Fri, Jun 24, 2011 at 6:39 PM, Raymond Detter <[rdetter@umich.edu](mailto:rdetter@umich.edu)> wrote:

To All:

Check out the link to what was presented at Wednesday's Design Review Board meeting. I just want to make sure that all of us have seen it before our meeting at the Tyler's on Tuesday, at 7:00 p.m., June 28.

Ray

**From: Christine Brummer – July 1, 2011**

Brad,

We in the Old West Side have followed the design review process for The Varsity with interest and appreciation.

What follows is the gist of comments we would bring to the Citizen Participation Meeting on July 7, 2011.

Thanks for giving these matters your attention.

Regards,

Christine Brummer

President,  
Old West Side Association

If hallmarks of design are the degrees to which a new development fits within the fabric of the city and is capable of standing the test of time by remaining functional and ageless, the following comments may be of help. We all want The Varsity to be excellent.

The foremost of the design guidelines for downtown Ann Arbor is context. Keeping in mind that this project spans from a façade on Washington to one on Huron, we recommend a thoughtful review of both faces. In particular, the Huron Street side of the building appears to be an empty slate although that is the side from which most will see the building. Concerns include the “blank” face of the building and lack of street level amenities.

Further, the adjacent properties on Huron appear to have shouldered aside. Under the Guidelines, the scale and nature of the historic properties to the side must be addressed in the design of this building. We urge consideration of points raised by the Design Review Board respecting massing, shape and interesting components with an eye toward complementing the neighboring structures. As the Guidelines declaim: Identify and then reinforce the positive characteristics of adjacent sites. One of the most noticeable aspects of the existing properties is their setback from the street. This leads to another, visible difference of green space and an inviting streetscape. These components are integral.

The specific context of this site raises safety issues. The Varsity as proposed presents a problem for pedestrians, motorists and residents on the Huron side. Of necessity, the garage door will be the center of activity pitting these against one another. We recommend some of the same considerations asked of other projects in a similar situation. First, please confer with others as to the practicality of a garage door letting out on to Huron Street at that point in the block—the parking lot is already a bit of a problem. Second, if the garage door is necessary, landscaping improvements including setback are required to improve the experience at ground level. At least provide space adequate to pull a vehicle off the street so traffic of all types is not blocked. Finally, address related hazard questions with lighting and door type. (Village Green has struggled with these same matters for City Apartments at First and Washington.)

The Guidelines are meant to emphasize opportunities for contexts of sustainability. Resources are to be preserved. This includes trees in place. The project may also create resources. Among many suggestions, use of the top for solar panel installations or a “green roof” is a possibility. Likewise, some provision for bicycles would be welcome if racks could be on premises. When walkways and other areas develop in response to Design Review Board recommendations, the mews and plaza space should be enhanced. “Provide landscaping, seating, public art, lighting, interpretive markers, and water features to enrich and enliven pedestrian walkways and use areas.” A property the size and nature of The Varsity should nail these aspects on all four corners.

Being first often results in greater scrutiny. Certainly the experts and interested parties gave specific advice. Maybe here there is also greater opportunity; The Varsity is poised to take advantage of a blue-ribbon panel. Thanks to the design review process, this project has every chance of successfully identifying and answering upfront concerns.

## Appendix B

The design team received one piece of correspondence from interested parties after the Citizens' Participation Meeting which is chronicled herein.

July 8

Gentlemen

I attended the meeting at the Michigan League on Thurs. evening, July 7th, regarding your project. I had asked a question at the meeting about which I would like some further clarification. I had asked what your rent projections were. I was told \$1100. I am assuming that that means \$1100/bedroom/month.

Some additional thoughts entered my mind about your project after I left the meeting. College Park, Maryland was mentioned as a place where you have/will have a similar project. Where else do you have such projects built? or in the planning stages ?

The demographics of the Univ. of Mich. students' families, I think, are somewhat unusual for a state university. As I am sure that you know, a high percentage of Univ. of Mich. students come from very, very wealthy families. Many, many students bring automobiles with them to college. And not junky automobiles, either.

You will be "ahead of the curve" if you can find a way to provide 1 parking space/apartment. It's my understanding that you are allowed to build higher than you are currently planning to build. Not only do I think that providing 1 parking space/apartment would be GREATLY appreciated by your future tenants, I think the

Ann Arbor community will laud you for going well beyond what the City of Ann Arbor currently requires. It is very difficult for me to understand how you think that providing a bathroom for every student is a great idea ( I do think that would be desired by future tenants) yet you DO NOT think that it is important to provide the POSSIBILITY of 1 parking space for each apartment. You say that Ann Arbor has an excellent bus system. That is not suitable for grocery shopping.

This fall, my husband and I will have been in the student housing business for 40 years. Over the last 40 years, a much higher percentage of students have brought automobiles to college. I urge you to provide parking for each apartment: for your own good, for the good of your prospective tenants, and for the good of Ann Arbor.

I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Barbara Copi (734)- 665 - 2238

7/2/04

varsim cpm

contact #1 of 2

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**City of Ann Arbor Design Review Board**  
**June 22, 2011**

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The Design Review Board met on June 22, 2011 to review **The Varsity at Ann Arbor** proposal at 425 East Washington Street. The following report contains a summary of priority issues the Board would like the developer to consider in finalizing the design proposal. In addition, a summary of the meeting discussion meeting is provided for background.

**Summary of Priority Issues**

Examples of applicable guidelines are noted in parenthesis; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the East Huron Character Area guidelines also apply.

*Huron Street Frontage/Façade*

1. The pedestrian experience at street grade is not enhanced by the north building elevation, due to a large garage entrance on this façade and the lack of any active use on this portion of the building. As a result, the Huron Street façade looks like a back door on a front door street (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.1.2, A.4.1-2, C.1.1).
2. The base of the building obscures the adjacent historic buildings; the building base and tower need to better respect the low-scale residential character of these buildings and grounds (see Guidelines A.1.1, B.1.1).
3. The design of the Huron Street façade is bland in comparison to the East Washington façade and adjacent buildings (see Guideline B.1.2-4).
4. The setback is shallow in comparison with neighboring buildings and should be moved back to complement the current setback of adjacent buildings (see Guidelines A.1.1, B.1.1).

*Mews*

1. The narrow width of the proposed path will discourage public use; a wider path with focal points at both ends would be more inviting to pedestrians (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.5.1).
2. Discussion with the adjacent church about lighting, landscaping and improved visibility from Washington and Huron is necessary to ensure the Mews is a positive contribution to both properties (see Guidelines A.1.1, A.1.2, A.3.1).

*East Elevation*

1. The east face looms over the adjacent historic structures and is bland in comparison to the south façade (see Guidelines A.1.5, B.1.1, B.1.1-4)
2. The wall would benefit from variation on the longitudinal façade (see Guideline B.1.2-4)

*Driveways*

1. Driveways significantly reduce the pedestrian orientation of downtown sidewalks. The impact of the Washington Street driveway/service area on the sidewalk is of particular concern. If the parking levels could be connected, this would eliminate the need for garage access off of Washington, since the structure could be accessed by a single driveway off of Huron. (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.4.1-2, C.1.1 ).

*East Washington Plaza/Entry*

1. The East Washington plaza design would be enhanced by providing pedestrian amenities, awnings, landscaping and active uses in or adjacent to the plaza (see Guidelines A.3.1-2, A.3.6-7, C.1.1, C.3.1).

*Base treatment*

1. More attention needs to be paid to the base at the north and south facades. The “pulled-out” effect does not contribute positively to the design (see Guideline B.1.2-4).

**Referenced Sections of the City of Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines**

*Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning*

- 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.1.5 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.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.3.6 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.4.1 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.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.

*Design Guidelines for Buildings*

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.

*Design Guidelines for Building Elements*

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

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

*East Huron Character District*

...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.

### **Meeting Discussion Summary**

Members Present: Tamara Burns (chair), Geoffrey Perkins, Chester Hill, Richard Mitchell, William Kinley, Paul Fontaine.

Members Absent: Mary Jukuri

Design Team: Bob Keane, WDG Architecture; Matt Lam, WDG Architecture; Scott Patterson, WDG Architecture; Brad Moore, J. Bradley Moore & Associates; Earl Ophoff, Midwestern Consulting

#### *Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning – East Huron Character District*

The Board noted the proposed design reinforced positive characteristics on adjacent sites and helped to enrich the pedestrian experience but felt both features could be further enhanced. They mentioned the setback and streetwall offset on East Washington Street was generally consistent with the existing pattern. However, the setback on Huron Street did not align as well with the neighboring structures, particularly those to the east. It was noted that the East Huron Character District is unique in that the buildings have generous landscaped setbacks. The base of the proposed building obscures the adjacent smaller historic buildings because of its relatively shallow setback. The design team suggested that the project was still in development and they would consider the urban pattern and form guidelines more carefully.

The Board and design team discussed incorporating natural systems into the project design. The Board suggested porous pavement and other means of promoting water infiltration. The design team explained their efforts to incorporate energy efficiencies into the proposed building but noted that porous pavement for the plaza and mews would not help water infiltration because these areas are over the roof of the underground parking garage and not over earth.

A large part of the discussion focused on the plaza proposed off Washington and the mews along the east side of the site. The Board was very appreciative that these features were included in the design, addressing several of the guidelines for the Open Space and Pedestrian Connections design principles, and suggested several ways to make them more inviting and more likely to be utilized. The Board felt the mews might be mistaken for a private path and encouraged it to be wider and have focal points at either end to attract users. Lighting of the mews was discussed, which will be lamp-posts as preferred by the First Baptist Church, as well as safety in general of pedestrians using the mews. The proposed plaza was called out by the Board as potentially “cold” and probably underutilized. Additional landscaping on the west side of the plaza and having retail uses, and/or the proposed fitness center within the building, face the plaza was suggested by the Board to encourage even greater use of this space. Retail uses on the ground floor was especially emphasized by the Board as the best way to bring activity to the area and liven up the space. The design team indicated they will take all comments into consideration as they continue to refine the proposed project plans.

### *Design Guidelines for Buildings*

The Board complimented the design team on their effective use of variation in horizontal and vertical massing to break down the scale of the building. Notwithstanding their comments on the relatively shallow base setback on Huron, the Board noted the north face of the tower was offset so that it had a similar setback as the existing structures to either side. Ways in which the east façade could be further minimized were discussed by the Board and the design team, including wrapping the north and south façade base design around to the east façade base – carrying the treatment around the corner on northern and southern ends of the east side. Flipping the proposed tower/base brick colors on the northern two-thirds of the wall was also suggested by the Board, so that the tower had a darker color and the base a lighter tone on the northern segment. Another suggestion by the Board was to make an internal stairwell abutting the east wall into a glass box projecting outward.

The streetwall on the north side was called out by the Board as particularly “bland” and unattractive to pedestrians. The Board commented on the “pulled out” effect, noting it didn’t function well as a solid building base nor as a building screen. A true green screen might work better in this instance, the Board suggested.

### *Design Guidelines for Building Elements*

The Board felt the Washington and Huron street edges could be improved by having only one driveway to the site, the majority favoring Huron Street, rather than a driveway to both streets. Having two driveways is a significant obstacle to a positive pedestrian experience in the general vicinity of the site. The design team explained that just one level of underground parking, and an additional floor parking on second floor above ground, was much more economical and took advantage of the existing conditions of the site (the current building has a basement and the underground parking would take advantage of that existing excavation but no further deepening is proposed).

Awnings were specifically mentioned to enhance the street level character. Moving the leasing office within the building to free up space for potential retail uses was again brought up to increase plaza activity, as was finding a more interesting use for north side ground floor rather than a maintenance office. In general, the Board felt it would behoove the project to create a stronger presence, and a more unique identity, on Huron. The Board noted that more people will experience the project from Huron, whether pedestrian or driver/passenger, and thus the project should look like more than just a garage door and maintenance office.

### *Design Guidelines for the East Huron Character Area*

The Board expressed concerns about the north portion of the building’s incongruity of height and setback with the existing East Huron streetscape. The design does not attempt to sympathize with the existing historic structures flanking the building on East Huron and the single and two-story character of the block between North Division and the First Baptist Church.

*Summary*

In summary, the Board believed the proposed design responded favorably to the Downtown Design Guidelines. Stronger aspects of its design included complementing setbacks and greenspace, the plaza at the southeast corner, the mews along the east side, the slender, offset towers reducing the building's mass, and the variety in materials. Weaker features included significant area devoted to vehicle circulation (both on site and within the building footprint), disconnected front facades on the base, lack of end treatments for the mews, underutilized plaza, dominant east facade, and uninviting north streetwall.

AD/JST/WLR

7/1/11

## PETITIONERS' RESPONSE TO DRB REPORT

The Design Review Board met on June 22, 2011 to review **The Varsity at Ann Arbor** proposal at 425 East Washington Street. The following report contains a summary of priority issues the Board would like the developer to consider in finalizing the design proposal. In addition, a summary of the meeting discussion meeting is provided for background.

### **Summary of Priority Issues**

Examples of applicable guidelines are noted in parenthesis; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the East Huron Character Area guidelines also apply.

#### *Huron Street Frontage/Façade*

1. The pedestrian experience at street grade is not enhanced by the north building elevation, due to a large garage entrance on this façade and the lack of any active use on this portion of the building. As a result, the Huron Street façade looks like a back door on a front door street (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.1.2, A.4.1-2, C.1.1). **The following refinements were added to the Huron Street elevation: In the spirit of strengthening the building's top at the Huron Street wing and reducing the perceived height of the building, metal panels have been added to top level of the building. The industrial looking, all metal, garage door is now articulated with frosted glass and is integrated with a new residential entrance so as to not look like a garage door. The new residential entrance adds additional glass /activity to the Huron street elevation and is accented by a steel and glass canopy which spans across both the residential entrance and the vehicular entrance. Additional windows were added to the ground and second levels.**
2. The base of the building obscures the adjacent historic buildings; the building base and tower need to better respect the low-scale residential character of these buildings and grounds (see Guidelines A.1.1, B.1.1). **Footprint stayed the same due to financial feasibility parameters, building efficiency would be reduced beyond acceptable limits if the footprint was reduced in favor of additional building height resulting in an unacceptable loss of leasable FAR. The set-backs proposed meet the requirements of the zoning ordinance and are the same as other buildings in the same block of E Huron.**
3. The design of the Huron Street façade is bland in comparison to the East Washington façade and adjacent buildings (see Guideline B.1.2-4). **See refinements above at comment #1**
4. The setback is shallow in comparison with neighboring buildings and should be moved back to complement the current setback of adjacent buildings (see Guidelines A.1.1, B.1.1). **Footprint stayed the same due to financial feasibility parameters (see 2 above).**

*Mews*

1. The narrow width of the proposed path will discourage public use; a wider path with focal points at both ends would be more inviting to pedestrians (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.5.1). **We have engaged the Church representatives and are planning an agreement that will enable us to widen the Mews from 5 feet to 6 feet, and integrated an overall landscaping concept** with both properties. We will be replacing the existing chain link fence with a decorative 5 ft. tall black fence. We will be adding a small walk, possibly a few steps and a gate to connect the Church garden to the mews. **Decorative lamp posts** will be added to enhance security. We will also be adding large masonry piers, **or as urban markers**, that will announce the beginning and end of the public mews.
2. Discussion with the adjacent church about lighting, landscaping and improved visibility from Washington and Huron is necessary to ensure the Mews is a positive contribution to both properties (see Guidelines A.1.1, A.1.2, A.3.1). **See Mews #1**

### *East Elevation*

1. The east face looms over the adjacent historic structures and is bland in comparison to the south façade (see Guidelines A.1.5, B.1.1, B.1.1-4) **We enriched the texture of the base of the east and west walls by adding rustication lines into the gold/copper colored brick. We have also added large green screen panels to the east elevation that will soften the experience for pedestrians using the mews and people enjoying the churches private garden. We also ganged stacks of windows with additional metal panels. These larger vertical elements will help to break down the scale of the building and create a more pleasing pattern as seen from a distance.**
2. The wall would benefit from variation on the longitudinal façade (see Guideline B.1.2-4) **See East Elevation #1 above**

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### *Driveways*

5. Driveways significantly reduce the pedestrian orientation of downtown sidewalks. The impact of the Washington Street driveway/service area on the sidewalk is of particular concern. If the parking levels could be connected, this would eliminate the need for garage access off of Washington, since the structure could be accessed by a single driveway off of Huron. (see Guidelines A.1.2, A.4.1-2, C.1.1 ). **The garage organization has stayed the same due to financial feasibility parametrs. Also having two parking grage entries reduces the frequency of use by diffusion. Furthermore the Washington Street garage entrance serves only about one third of the parking spaces provided. The number of vehicle trips for student residential use is far less than a typical public, commercial, or office building parking garage which have people coming and going hourly.**
- 1.

### *East Washington Plaza/Entry*

1. The East Washington plaza design would be enhanced by providing pedestrian amenities, awnings, landscaping and active uses in or adjacent to the plaza (see Guidelines A.3.1-2, A.3.6-7, C.1.1, C.3.1). ~~We reduced-reduced~~ the scale of the East Washington plaza by adding another planter -at the west edge of the plaza.

### *Base treatment*

1. More attention needs to be paid to the base at the north and south facades. The “pulled-out” effect does not contribute positively to the design (see Guideline B.1.2-4). ~~We have modified the “pull out” effect at the base of the building. Instead of both ends of the wall being free standing, one side of the plane is free standing and one side turns the corner creating a more solid appearance.~~

2.

### **Referenced Sections of the City of Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines**

#### *Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning*

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.1.5 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.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.3.6 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.4.1 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.

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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.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.

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