

ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Staff Report

MEETING DATE: December 8, 2015

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

ADDRESS: 513 and 603 East Huron Street

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

DESIGN TEAM: Brian Wagner, Myefski Architects, Inc.

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

The contemplated building has a cross-shaped tower atop a two-story base. The Design Review Board began a discussion of the proposed development at its November 18, 2015, focusing on massing and context, which was postponed to December 16, 2015 so that building elements may be discussed.

The proposed building elements include a two-story podium structure along East Huron Street and a steel and glass canopy to define the primary entrance. The applicants suggest, “using a combination of materials, including steel, metal panel, brick veneer, ipe wood, and glass, gives the project a unique urban feel and helps break down the mass of the building. The windows has been designed as a mix of store front and residential windows, and will utilize clear glass at the street. Window depths are appropriate to the building design concept, which is a clean, modern building.”

STAFF COMMENTS:

1. Staff previously commented the proposed design has a massing and scale in keeping with the four existing developments on its block and is consistent with the Guideline's recommendations for urban pattern and form. Staff also previously noted the vehicular access to the site from North State Street benefits the urban experience and is consistent with the guidelines for parking, driveways and service areas.
2. Staff previously recommended more information be provided by the applicant regarding the projects site planning and natural systems. The revised materials do not seem to address these items; staff repeats our previous recommendation.
3. Staff will comment about the proposed design's building elements (Section C) when those details have been provided.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: From the Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines

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

Chapter 1: General Design Guidelines

C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements

C.1 Street Edge. Building elements and architectural details used at the street front have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and should be combined to create an active and interesting street front. Creative use of materials, textures and architectural details is especially important where there are few windows at the street front of a building.

C.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity. Suggestions include first floor canopies; architectural details that provide a sense of scale; wall surfaces with visually interesting detailing, textures and colors; art features including sculptures, friezes and murals.

C.2 Entries. The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. Building entries should be located to enhance the street level experience and help give a sense of scale. Entries should be clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front. Although traditional building entry designs may be appropriate, creative and contemporary interpretations are also

encouraged.

C.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street.

C.3 Windows. Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.

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

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

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

C.5 Materials. Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context.

C.5.1 Apply materials to provide a sense of scale in proportion to the scale and mass of the building.

C. 6 Building Operational Systems. Building operational systems such as waste management, utility services, heating and cooling systems, must be carefully integrated into the design of a building and not detract from the architectural concept.

C.6.1 Integrate solar or wind systems into the design of the top of the building.

C.6.2 Locate and sufficiently screen mechanical systems to minimize or eliminate noise impacts on adjacent sites and buildings.

C.7 Sustainability in Building Elements. Consider sustainability when selecting structural and façade materials and designing functional building elements.

C.7.1 Use sustainable building materials whenever possible.

C.7.2 Select and apply building elements to maximize the building's environmental performance.

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

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

East Huron Character Districts

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

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

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