ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: July 10, 2024

PROJECT: DR24-0002 – 1209 S University Ave

ADDRESS: 1209 South University Avenue [main address]
Includes 1201 and 1213 S University Ave

ZONING: D1 Downtown Core (base)
South University Character (overlay)
Primary (street type designation)

DESIGN TEAM: Midwestern Consulting, Inc (civil engineer); DLR Group (architect); Core Spaces (developer); J Bradley Moore & Associates (consultant)

LOCATION: This site is located at the northeast corner of South University Avenue and Church Street and includes 1201, 1209 and 1213 South University Avenue.

Figure 1: Location Map

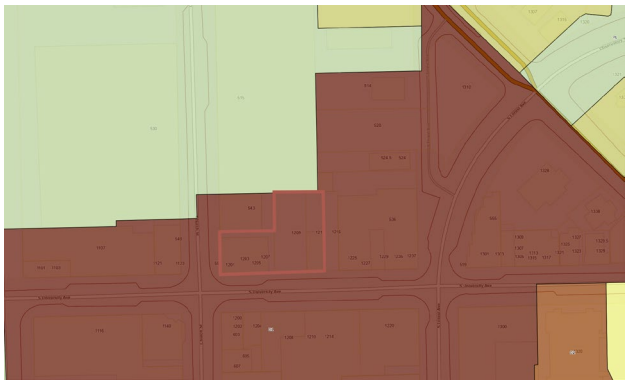
BACKGROUND: The applicant has created a site consisting of three existing lots (1201, 1209 and 1213 S University) and intends to redevelop it with a 19-story apartment building designed as a modern version of a loft-style tower.

APPLICATION: A proposed design for a 19-story apartment building to redevelop 1201, 1209 and 1213 S University described by the applicant as "a complementary combination of two elements. First, grounding the project is a detailed masonry retail base intended to have the appearance of exiting on the site for many years. Metal accents, retail

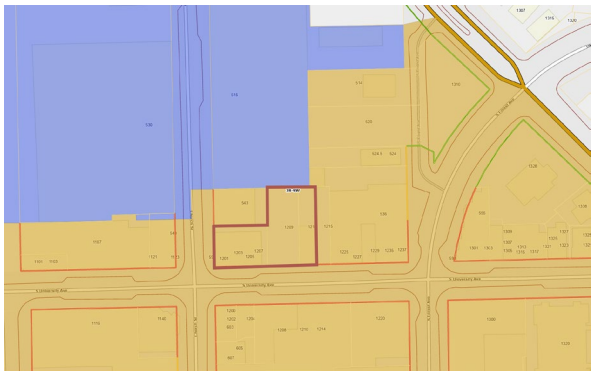
canopies, architectural proportions, and window muntin patterns evoke a historic aesthetic and provide a welcoming presence to the vibrant retail street. Secondly, a masonry residential loft-style tower rises from the base with a similar but lighter masonry palette. The brick detailing and metal accents provide a traditional but fresh complement to the retail base, with dark metal and glass top floor providing an airy, detailed crown to the project."

The combined site has approximately 16,800 square feet and is located in the D1 (Downtown Core) base and South University Character overlay districts with Primary Street type designation.

ZONING REVIEW: The following provides a cursory review of the proposed project for compliance with the applicable dimensional standards for the zoning designation in which it is located to help assure that the future site plan associated with the project can be approved substantially as presented.



Base Zoning Map



Overlay Zoning Map with Street Types

Zoning Designations – D1 Downtown Core (base district), South University Character (overlay district), Primary type.

Dimension	Standard	Review
Lot Area	No minimum	Complies (approx. 16,800 sq ft)
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	No maximum	Complies (1470%)
Front Setback	Primary: 0 ft min, 1 ft max	Unclear, appears compliant
Side and Rear Setback	None	Unclear but compliant
Streetwall Height	Min 2 stories, max 3 stories	Complies (2 stories)
Average Offset at Top of Streetwall	5 ft min	Complies
Height	Min 2 stories Max 150 ft max (+30% exception = 195 ft)	Complies (195 ft.)
Massing Articulation	45 ft max	Appears compliant (see figure 2 below)

Dimension	Standard	Review
Tower Diagonal	N/A	N/A
Building Coverage	None	N/A
Open Space	None	N/A

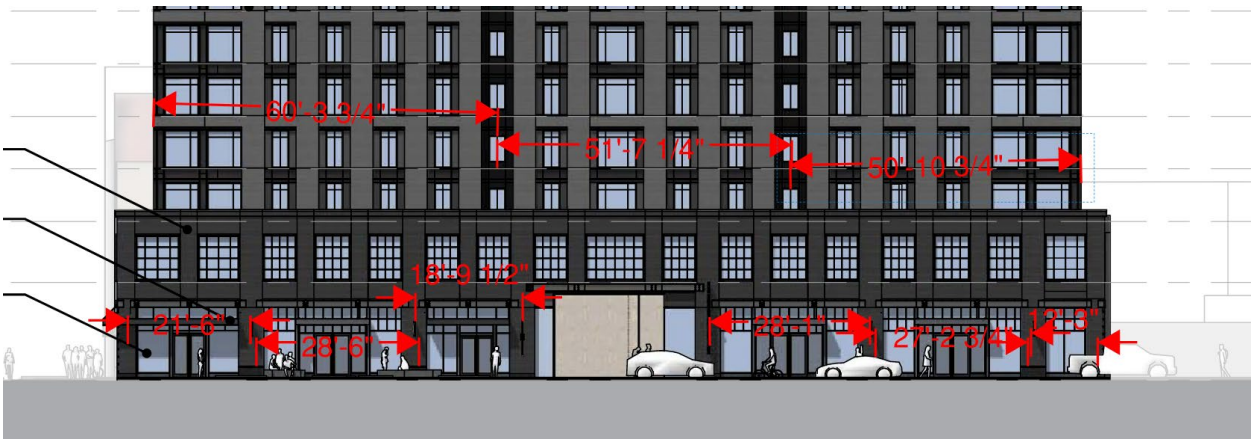


Figure 2: Massing Articulation – building length module (horizontal dimension)

DESIGN GUIDELINES REVIEW: Staff have identified the following design guidelines from the Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines as being particularly relevant to the proposed project.

DOWNTOWN ANN ARBOR DESIGN GUIDELINES

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

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.3 Open Space. Open spaces can include public and private courtyards, plazas, patios, terraces, alleys, and gardens. Throughout downtown, site features and elements that invite use should be provided. In commercial areas, open spaces should have an urban quality and character that enliven the street and enhance the pedestrian experience. Outside the commercial core and in civic areas, open spaces may be more park-like settings for human activity. Private property open spaces should be sized relative to the intended use and level of anticipated adjacent pedestrian activity.

A.3.1 Design an urban open space to maximize activity and usability for a diverse population of different abilities.

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

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

A.4 Parking, Driveways and Service Areas. Parking, driveways, and service areas are necessary functions, which should be designed to benefit the urban experience.

A.4.1 Locate and size driveways, access points, service entries, alleys, loading docks, and trash receptacles to minimize impact on pedestrians and maintain pedestrian safety, circulation, and comfort.

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. Suggested strategies include:

a) Use a distinct horizontal molding to define the base

b) Provide variation in the façade plane of the upper floors

c) Provide a distinct change in the ratio of solid to void (wall to window percentage) to distinguish the base from the upper floors

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

Suggested strategies include:

a) Use a distinctive cornice line or roof form

b) Change wall surface materials, colors or texture of the building top

C. DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING ELEMENTS

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

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

Suggested street edge elements include:

a) First floor canopies that complement the design character of the building and its street front

b) Architectural details that provide a sense of scale

c) Wall surfaces with visually interesting detailing, textures and colors

d) Art features including sculptures, friezes, and murals

C.2 Entries. The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. Building entries should be located to enhance the street level experience and help give a sense of scale. Entries should be

clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front. Although traditional building entry designs may be appropriate, creative and contemporary interpretations are also encouraged.

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

Appropriate strategies include:

a) Create a recessed area that signifies a break in the building wall line

b) Use a canopy or awning positioned over the entry

c) Design a change in wall materials, textures, or colors that frames the entry

d) Include distinctive paving pattern leading to the entry

e) Use accent lighting to define the entry way

f) Locate the entry at the street level

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

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

a) Design a building to incorporate ground floor storefronts wherever possible.

b) Do not use dark or tinted glass in ground floor windows facing the street or an open space.

c) Use exterior awnings or sun screens mounted above ground floor windows to shade interior spaces. Permanent, non-moveable interior shades and privacy screens are discouraged.

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

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

C.4 Awnings. The use of awnings is encouraged at the sidewalk level to provide shelter from the rain, to modulate natural light, and to indicate entry and provide transition from the outdoor to the indoor environment.

C.4.1 Operable awnings could be considered at storefront and window locations.

C.4.2 Each awning should be sized to fit within individual storefronts, windows, or door openings.

C.4.3 The proportions of awnings should relate to the overall proportions of the building facade

C.4.4 Color selections should be compatible with the overall color scheme of the facade. Solid colors or simple, muted-stripe patterns are appropriate.

C.4.5 Simple shed shapes with open ends are preferred.

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

C.4.7 External illumination of awnings is appropriate.

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

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

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

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

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

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

C.7.1 Use sustainable building materials whenever possible. Suggested materials include:

a) Locally manufactured materials

b) Low maintenance materials

c) Materials with long life spans

d) Such materials do not include toxic or otherwise hazardous materials.

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

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

Suggested strategies include:

a) Operable windows for natural ventilation

b) Rotating doors or wind locks at high volume entries

c) Interior or exterior light shelves/solar screens above south facing windows

Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Character Districts

South University Character District

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

frame houses to flat roofed contemporary expressions at various building heights and façade expressions.

This area is a mixed-use district, largely consisting today of university population-focused restaurant and commercial services, and student housing. This district is busy and vibrant with automobile and pedestrian activity. Sidewalk level doorways provide access to upper floor offices and apartments. The urban landscape includes sidewalk extensions (bump-outs) with circular tree sized planters; a well-developed tree canopy over some sidewalks; and outdoor dining spaces at sidewalk and rooftop levels. First floor facades are more transparent with clear, large display windows, allowing inside first floor retail activities to be visible from, and contribute to, the district's active street life.

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

Figure 3: Perspective rendering – street level

Figure 4: Perspective rendering

STAFF REPORT:

1. The urban pattern and form in the South University Character area has significantly changed in the past decade. The proposed project is consistent with the emerging character.

2. Open space of sorts for the development is provided by a pedestrian alley along the north side from Church Street and a service drive through the middle of the ground floor from South University. Specific design treatment for the north pedestrian alley is unclear, but the renderings provided appear to indicate the opening on South University maximizes multi-function activity and does not detract from the sidewalk experience.

3. Notwithstanding the well-designed open space of the South University service drive, Guideline A.4.1 recommends locating driveways and service areas to minimize impact on pedestrians. The service drive would better meet the guidelines if it was relocated to Church Street.

4. The proposed building massing appears to conform to the dimensional standards of the South University Character overlay district and the applicable guidelines in Section B (Design Guidelines for Buildings). The design has a particularly strong base and the tower has a distinct change in the ratio of solid to void.

5. The design also appears to respond particularly well to the applicable guidelines in Section C (Design Guidelines for Building Elements). Its street edge is rich; entries are appropriate; windows have a high level of transparency and establish a both horizontal and vertical patterns; awnings are proposed and are proportional to the overall proportions of the façade; and building materials reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and character of the building and its context.

Attachments: Zoning Maps
Design Plans
Design Narrative

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo, City Planner
June 26, 2024