

ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Staff Report

MEETING DATE: September 20, 2017

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

ADDRESS: 321 North Main Street

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

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

PROPOSED PROJECT: A new 5-story, 31,000-square foot flexible mixed use building is proposed on a vacant 8,000-square foot lot. The initially proposed uses include spa, yoga studios, personal fitness and similar uses on the first and second floors, open office space for this developer Robert Darvas Associates on the third floor, and residential uses on the fourth and fifth stories. The site was previously intended for a community bath building, which was not developed.

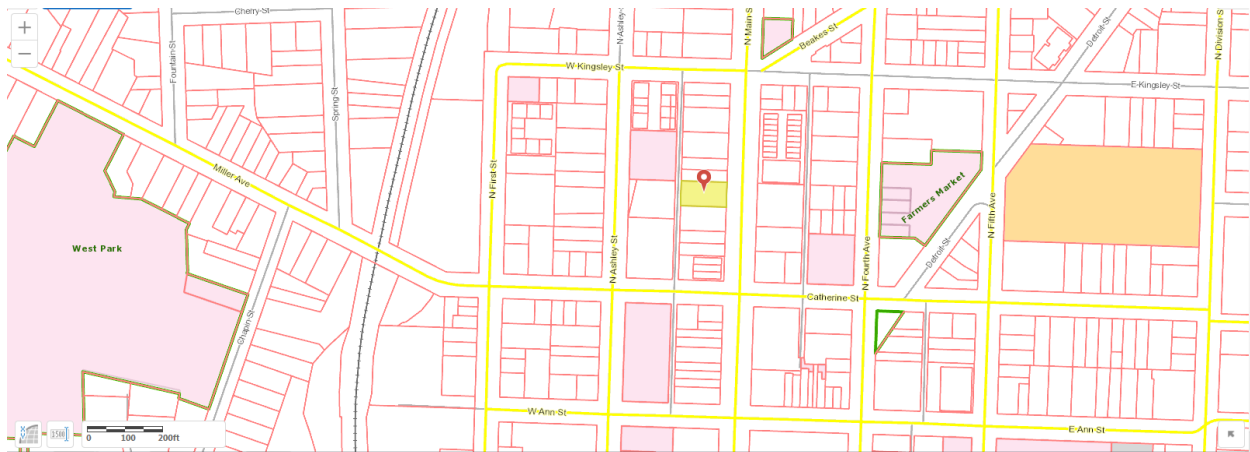


Figure 1 – Location Map

In the [submitted design plan](#), the applicant states the design of the massing and façade is intended to be a contemporary contextual building incorporating the eclectic nature of

the Kerrytown district. Full depth masonry with repetitive, inset punched openings are proposed for the base of the building as well as larger, more contemporary and modern voids and setbacks. The street façade features storefront windows on the first and second floors, with balconies set back on the upper floors.



Birds Eye View

STAFF COMMENTS:

1. The area, height and placement regulations for this site (D2, Kerrytown character, front yard street) are provided in the chart below. A cursory review of the proposed development indicates may not meet all applicable zoning regulations.

	Requirements	Proposed
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	Up to 200% normally, up to 400% with premiums (16,394 – 32,788 sq ft)	378% (31,000 sq ft) Appears residential premiums used
Front Setback	15 ft MIN	Approximately 15 ft
Side Setback	10 ft MIN	Approximately 10 ft each
Rear Setback	20 ft MIN	Approximately 20 ft
Streetwall Height	Min 2 stories, Max 3 stories	4 stories
Offset at Top of Streetwall	Min Average 5 feet	9 ft
Total Height	Maximum 60 feet	60 ft
Massing Articulation	Maximum 40 ft	Estimated 20 ft
Building Coverage	80% maximum	Estimated 80%
Open Space	10% minimum	Estimated 10%

2. The applicant should confirm that the proposed development program provides sufficient residential use and/or green building features to earn the included premium floor area. As presented, the development program requires approximately 14,500 square feet of premium floor area to be earned.
3. The applicant should also confirm the required front, side and rear setbacks have been provided as well as the streetwall height.
4. If the proposed setbacks and/or streetwall height do not conform to the zoning ordinance requirements, the applicant may consider requesting planned project modifications as part of the site plan petition. Should this option be necessary to achieve the submitted design plan, staff encourage the applicant and the Design Review Board to discuss specifically whether such planned project modifications would be more, or less, in keeping with the recommendations of the Downtown Design Guidelines. The Planning Commission and City Council will undoubtedly value the Design Review Board's opinion if and when a planned project modification petition is presented to them.
5. The proposed development is significantly larger than previous plans for this site while still providing a similar feeling of scale and proportion. Its placement on the site and overall building envelope incorporates the majority of the applicable **design guidelines for context and site planning**.
6. The **design guidelines for building massing** generally focus on minimizing the impact of a new building and providing details, variation, and design treatments that break down scale. The proposed development provides significant façade setbacks, plane variation and design treatments. It is important to note that the provided renderings appear to include a taller streetwall than normally allowed in the Kerrytown district. However, as proposed, the streetwall has so much interest and variation in height and depth that lowering it to a uniform two or three stories may be contrary to the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines and the character district overlay district.
7. The proposed development also incorporates all of the applicable **design guidelines for building elements**. It has an appropriate street edge, a high level of ground floor transparency and entrances oriented towards the street. Overall it is a fine example of a high quality development that is compatible with its surrounding context and the features of a vital downtown.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: From the Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines

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

Chapter 1: General Design Guidelines

A. Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning

A.1 Urban Pattern and Form. When considering urban pattern and form, the petitioner should assess the character of the adjacent streetscape, open spaces, and buildings to determine how they function as places and facilities supporting human use.

A.1.1 Identify and then reinforce the positive characteristics of adjacent sites.

A.1.2 Design sidewalk level features and facilities to provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience.

A.1.4 For mid-block sites, identify adjacent site and building design qualities, noting that a design may be appropriate for a mid-block site that best serves the area in a secondary role.

A.1.6 Where adjacent properties are underdeveloped and/or the block lacks inviting and interesting characteristics, consider a building, site and streetscape design that helps to create a vibrant pedestrian setting.

A.1.7 On sites that abut an alley, design the alley entry connection to the street to minimize pedestrian/bike/vehicle conflicts while taking advantage of the alley as an open space from which to see and access the new/proposed site and buildings.

A.2 Site Planning and Natural Systems. An urban setting can be a challenging environment in which to respond to natural systems. Consider natural systems such as sun and wind patterns, climates and seasonality, rainwater harvesting, and significant individual features such as street tree patterns and landmark trees on public and private sites.

A.3 Open Space. Open spaces can include public and private courtyards, plazas, patios, terraces, alleys, and gardens. Throughout downtown, site features and elements that invite use should be provided.

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

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

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

A.5 Pedestrian Connections. Pedestrian connections include sidewalks, alleys and arcades that provide pedestrian access within, through and among properties. Such connections provide access to buildings, courtyards, plazas and other site elements.

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

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

A.5.5 Link on-site open spaces, such as courtyards and plazas, directly to a public sidewalk.

A.6 Cycling and Transit. Walking, cycling, transit and other multi-modal means of transportation are to be considered in the design of streetscapes.

A.6.2 Consider use of convenient bicycle racks, including proximity to building entries, weather protection and security when selecting a location for bicycle parking and storage.

B. Design Guidelines for Buildings

B.1 Building Massing. Building massing principles address the overall height, size and shape of a building. Although these guidelines refer to the visual aspects of structures, it is important to note that downtown zoning districts address key building massing considerations including floor area ratio, building height, streetwall height, offset and module length.

B.1.1 Design a building to minimize its impact on adjacent lower-scale areas. Suggested strategies include:

- a) Step taller building elements away from adjacent lower-scale buildings and/or neighborhoods
- b) Locate taller building elements at the intersection of streets
- c) Provide variation in building massing to reflect the underlying pattern of established lot widths

- B.1.2 When a new building will be larger than surrounding structures, visually divide it into smaller building modules that provide a sense of scale. Suggested strategies include:
- a) Vary the height of individual building modules.
 - b) Vary the height of cornice lines and other roof finish elements.
 - c) Change wall surface materials, colors or texture.
 - d) Use vertical moldings to express different building modules.
 - e) Align projecting features, such as balconies or sun screens, to express different building modules.
 - f) Use underlying established lot widths to help determine the width of building modules at the street level.
- B.1.3 Provide a clear definition between the base (the lower floor or floors) and upper floors to maintain a sense of scale at the street level.
- B.1.4 If appropriate to the context, establish a design treatment that includes a differentiated building top.

C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements

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

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

- C.1 Street Edge.** Building elements and architectural details used at the street front have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and should be combined to create an active and interesting street front. Creative use of materials, textures and architectural details is especially important where there are few windows at the street front of a building.
- C.2 Entries.** The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. Building entries should be located to enhance the street level experience and help give a sense of scale. Entries should be clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front. Although traditional building entry designs may be appropriate, creative and contemporary interpretations are also encouraged.
- C.3 Windows.** Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale

and provide visual interest.

- C.4 Awnings.** The use of awnings is encouraged at the sidewalk level to provide shelter from the rain, to modulate natural light, and to indicate entry and provide transition from the outdoor to the indoor environment.
- C.5 Materials.** Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context.
- C.6 Building Operational Systems.** Building operational systems such as waste management, utility services, heating and cooling systems, must be carefully integrated into the design of a building and not detract from the architectural concept.
- C.7 Sustainability in Building Elements.** Consider sustainability when selecting structural and façade materials and designing functional building elements.

Kerrytown Character District

Kerrytown defines the downtown's northern edge and is the transition from commercial to residential as one moves to the east, north and west – away from the downtown. Two and three story Italianate masonry multi-use buildings with zero lot lines give way to late-19th and early-20th century wood-framed housing.

Many think of Kerrytown as home to several Ann Arbor “institutions” in the form of eateries, markets and entertainment venues. It is a lively district by day anchored by a stable retail presence, ample pedestrian elbow room and a variety of vehicular parking options. Kerrytown is a place locals like to frequent.

In the evening Kerrytown becomes more quiet. While Community High School and the Ann Arbor Farmer's Market provide vitality by day the use of each site recedes to parking at night. Evening activity in Kerrytown is limited to a number of well-spaced dining and entertainment venues in the core area between Detroit Street and Main Street, north of Miller Avenue.

Moving from the core of the Kerrytown Character District, with its brick-paved streets, into the surrounding neighborhoods the pedestrian amenities change. The sidewalks transition from continuous hardscape between building facades and the street curb into ribbons of walkway bordered by landscape setbacks and grassy street extensions. Trees become more prevalent with way-finding signage and lighting levels diminishing.