

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of March 21, 2023

**SUBJECT: 121 Catherine Street Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval
Project No. SP22-2020**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission approves the 121 Catherine Street Site Plan and Development Agreement subject to addressing outstanding service unit comments, summarized as:

1. Clarify plan for street trees.
2. Confirm wrong-way exiting vehicle sight distance and provide bump-out at end of loading zone.
3. Revise sequence of construction regarding curbing and first course of asphalt.
4. Provide details of recycle compactor dumpster and add protection bollards for electrical equipment.
5. Propose and detail a public access easement, note the need for a temporary grading easement, clarify limits of restoration in alley, and note ownership of certain features in right-of-way.
6. Sanitary mitigation approval.
7. Note necessary compliance for green roof.
8. Adjust width of sidewalk/amenity zone, and street tree and streetlight spacing.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the **site plan be approved**, because the contemplated development will comply with all applicable state, local, and federal law, ordinances, standards and regulations; and the development limits the disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land.

LOCATION:

This site is located at the northeast corner of Catherine Street and North Fourth Avenue.

SUMMARY:

The applicant seeks site plan approval to construct a new six-story residential building providing 63 dwelling units on the upper floors. The ground floor will have some retail space as well as support services for tenants. All apartments will be affordable to

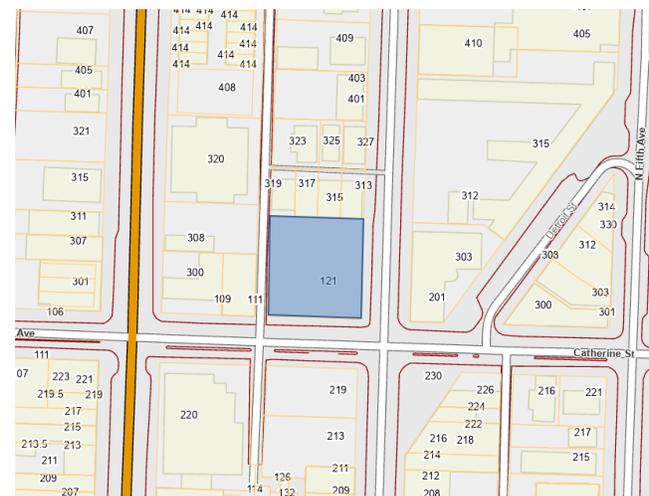


Figure 1: Location Map

lower income households, managed and supported by Avalon Housing. The development also includes 18 public parking spaces with access from North Fourth Avenue and the block alley. The 16,700-square foot site is in the D2 Downtown Interface Zoning District and Kerrytown Character overlay district, and has Secondary street frontage designations. The site plan utilizes the affordable residential unit premium option per Section 5.18.6 and the affordable housing development exception to height limits per Section 5.18.4.

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT:

Existing Conditions – The 16,698-square foot site consists of two platted lots. It is currently a 51-space public surface parking lot accessed from two driveways to North Fourth Avenue and the public alley at the rear. The site is owned by the City of Ann Arbor and the surface parking lot is managed by the Downtown Development Authority. It is zoned D2 (Downtown Interface) and Kerrytown Character overlay districts and Secondary street frontage designations.

Proposed Development – The proposed development is a 52,414-square foot, six-story residential building with retail and mixed uses on the ground floor and 18 parking spaces underneath and to the rear of the building. Vehicular access is from a driveway to North Fourth Avenue and the public alley at the rear. Solid waste and recycling services will be provided from the alley. Resident delivery accommodations are provided from North Fourth Avenue.



121 E CATHERINE ST, SOUTH-EAST STREET LEVEL VIEW

The proposed FAR is 374% and uses the affordable residential unit premium option. The proposed building height is 61 feet and uses the affordable housing development exception to height limits.

A development standards review is provided below. Other notable proposed site plan details include:

- Affordable Housing – All 63 apartments in this development will be affordable dwelling units, managed and supported by Avalon Housing.
- Ground Floor Mixed Use – The ground floor is proposed to have 2,282 square feet of commercial space and 895 square feet of community/arts space within the 3,500-square foot resident services area. Both ground floor spaces have main entrances on Catherine Street.
- Sustainability – The development is planned to be net zero ready. It features publicly available electric vehicle charging stations with capability for additional stations, rainwater capture on the roof, preparation for future solar panels, low flow water fixtures, energy efficient lighting, energy star appliances, low or no-VOC paints and sealants, direct exterior venting, local and regionally sourced materials, recycled content materials, environmentally preferred flooring, and on-going data collection and monitoring.
- Parking – Addressing a strongly-expressed concern from the Kerrytown neighborhood about the loss of public parking from construction of this building, the proposed site plan includes 18 parking spaces available to the public. These spaces will be managed by the Downtown Development Authority as part of the downtown public parking system.
- Catherine Streetscape and Alternative Parkland Contribution – The proposed building is set back five feet from the Catherine Street lot line to provide more than 14 feet between the back of the curb and face of the building. This enables a clear sidewalk zone, a “door swing” zone, and an amenity zone. Benches are proposed in the amenity zone as suggested by Parks, who waived the traditional parkland contribution request for this all-affordable housing development yet recommended publicly accessible recreational amenities still be provided to some degree.
- North Fourth Streetscape – The proposed building has no setback from the North Fourth Avenue lot line, but also no entry doors on this façade. The street travel lanes will be slightly narrowed and the curb will be relocated during construction so an eight-foot-wide sidewalk and seven-foot-wide amenity zone is provided in front of the proposed development. This aligns the curb with the rest of the North Fourth Avenue block.

DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS REVIEW:

The proposed site plan complies with all applicable development review standards of the D2 Downtown Interface zoning district, Kerrytown Character overlay district, and Secondary street designation provided in Chapter 55 Unified Development Code.

121 Catherine Street Site Plan Development Standards Review Chart		
	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Lot Area	16,698 sq ft	No minimum
FAR	374%	200% MAX normal Up to 400% MAX with premiums
Floor Area	62,414 sq ft	33,396 sq ft normal

121 Catherine Street Site Plan Development Standards Review Chart		
	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
		Up to 66,792 sq ft with premiums
Premiums	Includes 29,018 sq ft (174% FAR) of premium floor area in development from Affordable Residential Unit premium	Earn additional 200% FAR (to 400% max.) when providing minimum 20% of all residential floor area dedicated to affordable housing dwelling units.
Building Coverage	69%	80% MAX
Open Space	11%	10% MIN
Streetwall Height	2 stories	2 stories MIN 3 stories MAX
Offset at Top of Streetwall	5 ft	5 ft AVERAGE
Building Height	61 ft	60 ft MAX plus 30% (to 78 ft) with affordable housing development exception
Massing Articulation	24 ft	40 ft MAX
Setbacks Side, Rear	0 ft	No minimum
Front Setbacks	Catherine St: 5 ft N Fourth Ave: 0 ft	0 ft MIN – 10 ft. MAX
Parking – Automobiles	18 spaces with 4 EV-I and 14 EV-C	None (if, then 10% EV-1, 90% EV-C) With 18 spaces: 2 EV-1 and 16 EV-C
Parking – Bicycles	23 Class A and 2 Class C	23 Class A and 1 Class C

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD:

Design plans were seen and discussed by the Design Review Board on October 12, 2022. Application materials can be found on the Stream system at stream.a2gov.org for plan number DR22-2006 and the meeting packet materials including staff report can be found on the Legistar system at a2gov.legistar.org. The architectural drawings submitted as part of the site plan are consistent with the design plan discussed by the Design Review Board.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION:

The petitioner held a citizen/community participation meeting on Wednesday, November 2, 2022. Invitations were sent to all residents and property owners within 1,000 feet of the site. The applicant’s report of the meeting can be found on the Stream system at stream.a2gov.org for plan number SP22-2020. The meeting included a short video on the history of the site being within the historically Black business district and historically Black neighborhood and the

approach to this project, particularly on the ground floor, which is available online at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9q8DrfvVKkA>.

HISTORY:

The site was rezoned as part of the Ann Arbor Discovering Downtown (A2D2) zoning initiative. The current base and character overlay zoning districts and building frontage standards became effective in December 2009. Aerial photos in 1947 and 1960 shows the site containing a building, likely 2 or 3 stories, and a few parking spaces off the alley. A 1979 aerial photo shows the site as a surface parking lot in the same configuration as today.

SERVICE UNIT COMMENTS:

The site plan and application materials were reviewed by the staff from the Planning, Downtown Development Authority, Fire Marshal, Forestry/Natural Resources, Parks Planning, Engineering, Systems Planning, Recycling/Solid Waste, Land Development, and Transportation units.

Following the second review of the proposed site plan, some details remain outstanding and must be addressed so the application meets all applicable development standards. These items are summarized below by service unit. In general, they are minor technical issues which do not substantively affect the layout or development program of the proposed site plan. Staff comfortably recommends conditional approval subject to addressing these outstanding items:

Urban Forest/Landscape Plan – Outstanding items include:

1. Clarify whether the street trees on North Fourth Avenue are proposed to be saved or replaced. If proposed to be replaced, a canopy loss fee will be due.

Transportation – Outstanding items include:

1. Confirm there is adequate sight distance from parking lot if vehicle driver does not follow one-way restriction and exits onto North Fourth Avenue.
2. Provide a bump-out to control the end of the loading zone and prevent encroachment into clear vision area of intersection.
3. Consider replacing proposed brick with a stable paving surface.

Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control – Outstanding items include:

1. Sequence of construction must be revised to indicate curbing and first course of asphalt will be in place prior to vertical construction.

Public Works – Outstanding items include:

1. Provide cut sheets of the proposed recycle compactor dumpsters to ensure serviceability. More information is requested about compacted mixed recycling collection.
2. Add bollards to site plan to better protect electrical equipment.

Engineering – Outstanding items include:

1. An access easement must be granted to the City for walkable portions of the sidewalk on the subject site. The site plan must show the necessary easement with dimensions and labels.
2. A note must be added to the plans that a temporary grading easement is necessary for the proposed work extending west of the alley.
3. Limits of restoration in public alley must be clarified on the site plan and include the drive approach. Proposed concrete must match the existing concrete color and joint pattern.
4. Sanitary mitigation is still under review.
5. A note must be added to the plans identifying the ownership of proposed streetlights, utility poles, bench and bike hoop in the amenity zone.

Fire Marshal – Outstanding items include:

1. A note must be added to the plans acknowledging the need for the green roof (vegetation on the roof surface) to comply with fire and building codes.

Downtown Development Authority – Outstanding items include:

1. Minor adjustments are requested to the proposed width of the sidewalk/amenity zone on Catherine Street and the spacing of street trees and streetlights on North Fourth Avenue. These changes should either be made to the proposed site plan, or a note should be added indicating final dimensions and spacing shall be approved on civil construction drawings.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo on March 16, 2023.
Reviewed by Brett Lenart, Planning Manager

Attachments: Site Plan
Zoning Map
Aerial Photo
Development Agreement – March 16, 2023 Draft
[Link to all project file documents](#)

c: Applicant – Ann Arbor Housing Development Corporation (Jennifer Hall, Director)
Engineer – Macon Engineering (Kathy Keinath)
Architect – Landon Bone Baker (Ashley Wendela)
Developer – Avalon Housing (Wendy Carty-Saxon)
Project No. SP22-2020