

Project Details

1. A brief description of the design concept.

By blending simple design principles with contextual sensitivity, the architecture can become a balanced addition to the downtown landscape, offering a modern, comfortable, and sustainable living environment for residents. The proposed building varies from a 5-6 story building at Packard and 5th to a 12-13 story residential tower with retail at ground level abutting Madison with lobbies, amenities, and walk-up units at ground level. This approach to massing creates a variety of height, porosity, and uses. A subdued color palette is used throughout, inspired by the natural tones of the Michigan landscape. Incorporating earthy hues like soft browns, warm grays, and muted blues (glazing) creates an atmospheric tone that complements the minimalist design, and highlighted with subtle accents at overhangs and entry portals.

2. A brief description of the development program

The proposed 228 Packard building is located in the heart of Ann Arbor on the block between Packard and Madison on the north and south and 4th and 5th Avenues on the west and east. The site is located in close proximity to both the University of Michigan to the East and downtown Ann Arbor to the north. The proposed building is a 1500-1550 beds / 450–475-unit residential tower with above-ground parking and a 16,000 square foot active use retail space in the southwest corner on Madison and 4th Ave. The project also includes an internal multi-level above-ground parking garage with 320 parking stalls serving the residents. This parking garage is bounded on the street-facing sides with residential units and amenity spaces. Below this garage is a separate parking facility with 110 parking stalls for retail customers, accessed from the south. Service and loading spaces are consolidated into a private alley created between the building and parking garage accessed on the west side of the site, while resident parking access, pickup, and drop-off are consolidated along the east side of the site, tucked under the building. An amenity deck with an outdoor pool is located on top of the parking garage, adjacent to indoor amenity spaces where residents can access views of the surrounding landscape.

Project Design

1. Describe the context of the site.

Incorporating earthy hues like soft browns, warm grays, and muted blues (glazing) creates an atmospheric tone that complements the minimalist design, and highlighted with subtle accents at overhangs and entry portals.

2. Is there an inspiration or theme for the design concept? Describe.

By blending simple design principles with contextual sensitivity, the architecture can become a balanced addition to the downtown landscape, offering a modern, comfortable, and sustainable living environment for residents. The proposed building varies from a 5-6 story building to a 12-13 story residential tower with retail, lobbies, amenities, and walk-up units at ground level. This approach to massing creates a variety of height, porosity, and uses. A subdued color palette is used throughout, inspired by the natural tones of the Michigan landscape. Incorporating earthy hues like soft browns, warm grays, and muted blues (glazing) creates an atmospheric tone that complements the minimalist design, and highlighted with subtle accents at overhangs and entry portals.

A. Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning

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

The project will adhere to the downtown street section standards of an 8' 0" Amenity zone, comprised of street trees, bike racks, and other site furnishings. Followed by an 8' 0" sidewalk zone for pedestrians. Lastly, a 3' 0" frontage zone will be utilized for awnings, unit entries, and other elements related to building elements.

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

To better hold the corner and reinforce the importance of the urban streetwall at the corner, an architectural brow is envisioned as an element that not only highlights the primary amenity zones, but also reinforces the corners hierarchy. This is expressed with a ribbon that extends along the entry conditions and frames the outside corner.

A.2.2 Site designs should accommodate solar access and minimize shading of adjacent properties and neighborhoods.

The orientation of the massing is such that the taller 12-13 story structure is pushed furthest South on the site, adjacent to the Madison frontage. This orientation assures that primary southern sun exposure would cast shadows onto our own development to the north, instead of effecting neighbors on Packard. Bulk and height steps down as it moves further north to assure southern sun shadows are minimized when abutting other parcels.

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.

The first floor along most of the street frontage is comprised of active uses like retail, amenities, and residential lobbies. The fenestration along these elevations is focused on porosity, and more glazing is utilized to frame the active uses. There is also a pocket of open space adjacent to the retail/grocer on the South, this will be developed as an outdoor seating area for patrons of that establishment (activating the ground plane).

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.

All primary BOH services and infrastructure are located within or off the alleyway constructed between the parking structure and residential building. This is intended to reduce on-street congestion and lessen the sight and sounds of trash pickup, loading, and building services from pedestrians and neighbors. A porte cochere drop off is provided along 5th Ave to bring ride share, food delivery, and similar activities off street and away from sidewalks.

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.

The three street facing elevations of the parking structure will be lined with units with no visual presence to the public right-of-way and the internal facing elevation of the parking structure will be screened with a green wall trellis.

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.

To keep with the existing infrastructure pedestrian pathways, a similar approach will be taken to both boulevard width

and amenity zone. Sidewalks will be widened to allow larger amounts of foot traffic while keeping pedestrians safe.

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. Bicycle parking will be available at all primary building entries to promote multimodal transportation. These areas will be setback from street curbs for safety and convenience. The pedestrian realm will be well lit, and visibility integrated to the adjacent active uses within, creating a safe environment for users and pedestrians.

B. Design Guidelines for Buildings

B.1 Building Massing

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

The project minimizes its impact on adjacent lower-scale structures and areas by locating its tallest mass along Madison Ave, which faces primarily University-owned properties. The portions of the building that face East and West toward primarily single-family structures are stepped down to a midrise neighborhood scale.

B.1.2 When a new building is larger than surrounding structures, visually divide it into smaller building modules that provide a sense of scale.

The project provides a sense of scale by breaking the building into smaller modules using in-and-out steps in the façade, changes in building height and in cornice lines along the façade, and by changes in materials and fenestration.

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.

The project provides a clear differentiation between the base of the building, the main mass, and the top of the building. This differentiation of the base is achieved by locating active uses along the street front. Full height glazing is used in public-facing spaces as much as possible. A colored band outlines and defines these public-facing spaces. Where residential uses are located along the street, walk-up units are provided as much as possible. The upper floors of the building use repetition and variation of materials and fenestration to establish a rhythm that forms the backdrop for the accenting and highlighting of specific portions of the façade.

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

The top of the building is defined by a varied cornice line, changes in materiality, and step-backs that create roof terraces in some locations. In some locations an accent band outlines where portions of the building terminate at the roof line.

C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements

C.1 Street Edge

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

Changes in opacity and transparency create zones of pedestrian activity along the street edge, while guiding users of and visitors to the building to appropriate building entrances, depending on use.

C.2 Entries

C2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street.

Entries to retail lobbies are provided at several locations in the building, to account for changes in terrain and the variety of uses for each entry. The primary residential entry is provided on the east side near the corner of Packard and 5th, directly adjacent to amenities, and near to a separate vehicular pick-up and drop-off zone. Smaller entries are provided at major street corners. Vehicular entrances and loading areas are separated from areas where pedestrians will be entering.

C3. Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.

A high level of transparency is provided on the ground floor of the project where public-facing uses are present. A highly transparent main entry is provided to clearly mark where people should enter the building. The main mass of the building utilizes repetition and variation of standard windows to create visual interest.

C4. 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.

Overhangs are provided at building entrances to shelter and welcome pedestrians into the building.

C5. Materials

A subdued material palette is used in the building as to not visually overwhelm. Fields of materials are accented and punctuated with complementary materials to provide visual interest and variation. Materials are used throughout to provide a sense of scale and proportion as the building changes in height and steps in and out along the street façade. Accent materials are used to bring attention to features, public spaces, and entries in the building.

C.6 Building Operational Systems

Waste management processes have been carefully considered in this project. An alley has been provided specifically for access by waste management vehicles, and ample storage has been provided for the waste that the building will produce. Mechanical and back-of-house uses are placed away from the street.

C.7 Sustainability in Building Elements

Geothermal and solar systems will be integrated into the project to minimize the environmental impact of the building and maximize the energy performance of the building systems. The building will be designed to meet LEED Silver standards and will utilize material choices, mechanical systems, and fixture selections to meet these requirements.

Chapter 2: Design Guidelines for Character Districts

First Street Character District

The proposed building at 228 Packard is located within the Allen Creek Valley, directly adjacent to the First Street Character District. The project site is in close proximity to the historic Ann Arbor railroad track and the route of the future Allen Creek Greenway urban trail just a block to the southwest. Downtown and the University of Michigan are also located within a few blocks of the site. Situated at the confluence of such varied historic and contextual forces, the building at 228 Packard is perfectly located to help anchor the southern edge of the First Street Character District and serve as a landmark and center of activity in the area.