



## ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD STAFF REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** November 13, 2024

**PROJECT:** DR24-0005; 601 South Main Street

**ADDRESS:** 601 South Main Street

**ZONING:** D2 Downtown Interface (base)  
First Street Character (overlay)  
Secondary Street (street type designation)

**DESIGN TEAM:** GreenTech Engineering (applicant), ALCO Construction & Development LLC (applicant)

**LOCATION:** This site is located on the east side of South Main Street at the southeast corner of East Madison Street. It is bordered on the east by the Ann Arbor Railroad Tracks.

**BACKGROUND:** This site has been home to factories and filling stations since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. By 1892 this corner was occupied by the two-story Michigan Table Company furniture factory, which added a second two-story factory building on the lot by 1899. These buildings are shown as vacant on Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from 1908 and 1916, and in 1925 the original two-story building was being used as a contractor's supply warehouse. A filling station and auto repair with above-ground fuel storage tanks and a new railroad spur, presumably for delivering gasoline, was present by 1931. That building appears on 1947 aerial photos but was replaced by the current building by 1960.

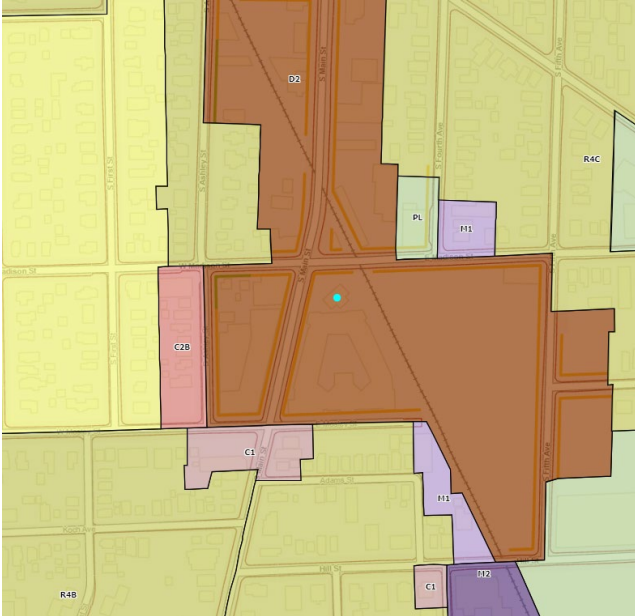
The site is 100% impervious and there is no landscaping or street trees. More than half of the site is in the Allen Creek floodplain.

**APPLICATION:** The applicant seeks to construct an 822 square foot addition on the rear of an existing 2,400 square foot, single story retail building and add two overhead canopies that would cover three existing fuel pumps. The addition would be constructed of concrete masonry units (CMU) with pre-finished metal coping. On the new east elevation, the only addition wall that will be visible, the CMU will be finished with insulated panels to match the walls that are currently painted blue with maize trim.

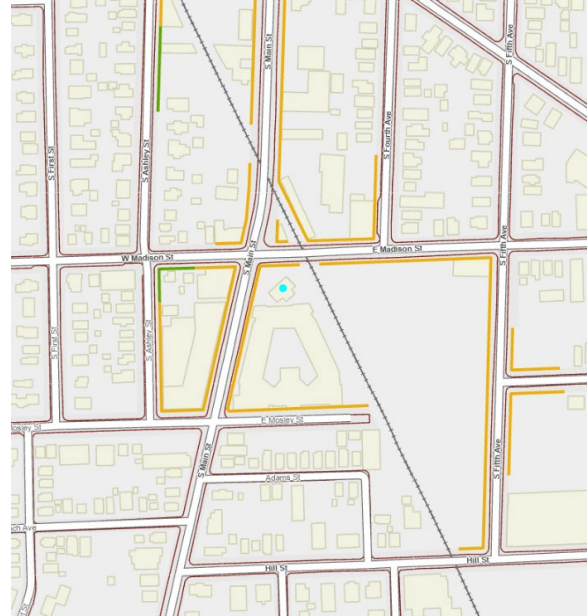
The site is 0.34 acres and is located in the D2 (Downtown Interface) base and First Street character overlay districts with Secondary Street Frontage designations on both

South Main and East Madison Streets.

**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



Street Type Overlay

Zoning Designations – D1 Downtown Core (base district), South University Character (overlay district), First Street and Secondary Street type.

Dimension	Standard	Review
Lot Area	No minimum	Complies (0.34 acres or approx. 13,000 sq ft)
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	No maximum	Complies (20.5%)
Front Setback	Secondary: 0 ft min, 10 ft max	New canopies comply
Side and Rear Setback	None	Complies (~1 FT)
Streetwall Height	Min 2 stories, max 3 stories	Does not Comply (1 story)
Average Offset at Top of Streetwall	5 ft min	Does not comply (no second floor)
Height	2 stories min 150 ft max (+30% exception = 195 ft)	Does not comply (1 story, approximately 21 feet)
Building Module Length (Articulation)	66 ft max	Complies (approximately 60 ft)
Tower Diagonal	N/A	N/A

Dimension	Standard	Review
Building Coverage	80% Max	Complies (approximately 35%, including canopies)
Open Space	10% MIN	Complies (292 sq ft per table; not noted on drawings)

**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**

#### ***General Design Guidelines***

#### **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.

The project team's assessment should seek to define opportunities to enrich the design excellence of that project.

**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.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.4.2** Provide a pedestrian-friendly street edge at street level adjacent to surface parking areas and enclosed parking structures. Provide a landscape buffer appropriate for urban conditions at the edges of surface parking areas.

#### **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.

### **Design Guidelines for Building Elements**

**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.

### ***Design Guidelines for Character Districts***

***First Street Character District.*** This district lies to the west of the Main Street and Kerrytown districts and forms the eastern edge of the Old West Side Historic District. It follows Allen Creek and the Ann Arbor Railroad and contains a mixture of historic and non-historic residential and industrial architecture. The Allen Creek Greenway should be given design consideration as a potential element of all First Street Character District proposals.



*2023 Aerial Photograph*

## STAFF REPORT:

1. The urban pattern and form of this block of South Main Street south of Madison, in the First Street Character area, has significantly changed in the past decade. The subject site is the only one on this block that has not been redeveloped with a residential mid-rise building.
2. The current convenience store/gas station building has been extant for 65+ years. The addition proposed behind this building will have essentially no impact, positive or negative, on the current building configuration. Formalized parking spaces will be an improvement to the site. Cars have been parking in the railroad right of way since this gas station was built. The two proposed canopies will have a visual impact from the street and sidewalk and be the dominant architectural feature of this corner lot. No landscaping is proposed, nor are improvements to the pedestrian experience.
3. The single-story building massing does not conform to the two-story minimum of the First Street Character overlay district; this project is much more minor than adding a second floor (which may not even be structurally possible without a total rebuild). The open space requirement is shown as being met in the comparison table on the first page of the plan set, but is not noted on the drawings so staff is unclear where the required open space is located.
4. Multiple city staff that review plans met with the previous project engineer from GreenTech on March 12, 2024 and provided feedback as a courtesy (though it was not an official presubmission meeting, the meeting notes may be found under PRESUB24-0019 in STREAM). Some of the items noted at that time have been addressed; many have not and must be included on the plan set submitted for the project's future pre-submission meeting.

Attachments:      Design Narrative  
                         Site Plan Set dated 9/27/2024

Prepared by Jill Thacher, City Planner  
November 5, 2024