

ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

November 14, 2023

ANN ARBOR GALLERIA

Section 2: Project Details

1. Brief description of design concept (what the project/structure looks like).

The proposed development at 1208 South University Avenue consists of a 17-story mixed use residential and retail tower. The building's three-story brick base is capped by a band at the 4th floor to articulate the remaining 13 stories that form the tower. The uppermost level is subtly detailed with pilaster features to articulate the top of the building.

At the ground floor, storefront windows transition vertically to punched windows as the façade extends upward. Above the 4th floor, the tower is comprised of contemporary materials intermixed with punched openings and balconies. These features are accentuated by a curtain wall on the northwest corner that reappears on the south façade rooftop level.

2. Brief description of development program (intended uses, known or possible tenants, etc.).

The proposed development consists of 211 rental apartment units and 2,000 sf of ground-level commercial tenant space. The ground floor also incorporates a residential lobby and leasing area as well as storage for 120 bikes and 34 garage parking spaces. Parking and loading have been concealed off the south side city-owned driveway.

Residential units begin on the 2nd floor and extend up to the 17th floor where interior and exterior amenity spaces offer a resident lounge, fitness center, and a roof deck lounge with pool. The development's residential tenants are anticipated to be young professionals and college students.

Section 3: Project Design

1. Describe the context of the site.

The property at 1208 South University Avenue is an urban area within Ann Arbor's downtown core. Neighboring mixed-used and residential developments reach up to 17 stories and at street level they meet the property line along the pedestrian sidewalk. The site is adjacent to the University of Michigan campus.

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

Building off the scale and character of neighboring structures, the design concept emphasizes urban planning strategies with a contemporary aesthetic that utilizes timeless materials. The design and massing are placemaking and distinct, but also relatable and responsive to the cultural and environmental demands of the community and region.

3. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level A, starting on page 6 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

Continuity with the urban pattern and adjacent streetscape is achieved by considering the pedestrian experience and configuring the building form and functions to coalesce with the surrounding context. For instance, the inclusion of expansive storefront windows not only complements the established street-level aesthetic but also fosters community engagement through retail prospects and a vibrant residential lobby. Moreover, thoughtful planning places vehicle-related functions like parking, trash, and service areas discreetly off the alley, while strategically situating bicycle parking directly off University Avenue, reducing potential conflicts between bikes and vehicles within the site.



4. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Buildings. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level B, starting on page 13 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The massing of the proposed development respects the established heights, proportions, and character of neighboring structures and fosters a sense of connection with the district's urban fabric. For instance, the three-story base is topped by a fourth-floor setback band demarcating a clear transition to the tower above. Additionally, the northwest corner's glass curtain wall serves as a visual separator, enhanced by a series of balconies that add dimension to the facade. The building culminates at its highest level with subtle pilaster features providing a distinctive identity to the roofline.

5. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Building Elements. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level C, starting on page 15 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The proposed development merges traditional and contemporary building elements to enrich the pedestrian experience and further elevate the allure of the surrounding cityscape. Notably, canopies and framed openings at ground-level storefronts serve as welcoming cues, guiding and clearly delineating building entrances within the vibrant streetscape. Furthermore, the exterior materials deliberately celebrate the diversity found within the district, carefully chosen not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their environmentally conscious qualities, contributing to a sustainable and visually engaging urban environment.

6. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for its Character District. Please refer to Chapter 2, starting on page 20 of the Downtown Design Guidelines

Aligned with the qualities of the South University Character District, the project reflects the district's architectural character, materiality, and massing. The mixed-use residential and retail tower is a natural evolution befitting this vibrant community and its active street life. The progressive design uses contemporary materials and traditional approaches to achieve placemaking, distinctive architecture that relates to the vitality of the district.

7. If desired, note any other important elements, features, or design concepts not covered above that will help the Design Review Board understand how the project fosters excellence in the design of the built environment of downtown Ann Arbor, the overarching goal of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The development considers the overarching goal of the Downtown Design Guidelines by balancing contextual integration, human-centric design, sustainable practices, innovation, functionality, and community engagement. The contemporary design concept respects the architectural vernacular and scale, fostering a livable downtown environment that adheres to the Downtown Design Guidelines.