



City of Ann Arbor

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DESIGN REVIEW BOARD COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TO: Susan Pollay, Mike Ortlieb, Carl Luckenbach – Design Team

FROM: Alexis DiLeo, City Planner on behalf of the Design Review Board

DATE: May 14, 2018

SUBJECT: Ann Ashley Public Parking Structure Addition (Project No. DR18-003)

The Design Review Board discussed the design plan for the Ann Ashley Public Parking Structure Addition on April 18, 2018. Please consider the following comments and recommendations made by the Board when preparing a future site plan petition:

1. The Board supports adding three more floors to the top of the existing parking structure footprint, redesigning the existing stair and elevator towers and adding a third stair and elevator tower. The design of those features can move forward as presented.
2. The veil of aluminum louvers must be redesigned, including removed from the design. The Board agreed the louvers, as currently designed, emphasized the extra length of the block-and-a-half long structure rather than breaking it down into smaller components for viewers on the same block or minimizing the additional floors for downtown-bound viewers on the upslope of the Allen Creek valley. The Board also agreed that, if the louvers remain as part of the design, the following changes must be considered to accomplish the intended goals:
 - o Differentiate the bay spanning Ann Street
 - o Varying the orientation of the louvers
 - o Break down the louvers into smaller bays, vary the vertical location
 - o Using darker colors for lower levels, lighter for upper

Note at least one Boardmember expressed concern that the louvers were akin to past use of aluminum “cheese graters” covering architectural features of the time which are increasingly removed at great expense. Another Boardmember indicated there is no harm in seeing the form of the parking structure and “it is what it is.” Several Boardmembers warned against creating long-term maintenance needs where they do not exist now.

3. It is important to ease the transition between the materials and style of the existing structure and those of the additional floors. Consider consistent staining of all levels of the structure, or graduated color staining from bottom to top.

4. More features and details should be provided to activate the sidewalk level, enriching the pedestrian experience and making the development more actively contribute to the vibrancy of the revitalizing neighborhood. This should be a priority over architectural embellishments. Activating the blocks could be accomplished by building-out the street level commercial spaces facing Ann and Ashley streets underneath the south end of the structure. It could also be accomplished by enhanced landscaping at the base of the structure as well as along the streetscape, by art work, and/or appropriate sidewalk lighting. Please keep in mind the blocks immediately west and north of the structure are rapidly redeveloping from converted single-family homes to midrise, industrially-inspired, urban, modern residential buildings. The Ann Ashley structure's future neighbors are likely to be unlike its current neighbors. They will accept the mass of the parking structure but may not embrace an inactive, unwelcoming deterrent to urban life.
5. The treatment for the portion over Ann Street should be worthy of its terminal view from the east and should provide intuitive wayfinding cues for the structure's entrances and Ann Street itself when approaching from Ashley Street.
6. The Board did not offer a unified recommendation for the changes proposed at the north end of the structure. Some Boardmembers indicated the existing brick architecture has contextural value, others disagreed. All Boardmembers agreed that any changes should serve to activate the street and the design should preserve the effect of a streetwall and upper story step back. Be careful to not create a dead zone whether from an unused plaza or from perpetually vacant office space.
7. More playful, surprising elements should be included in the design and color should be incorporated. The pop of color from the red frames at the entrance to the Fourth & William Public Parking Structure and the colorful wayfinding features of the Library Lot Public Parking Structure are examples of playful, surprising elements and pops of color the Board suggests.

These comments and recommendations were prepared on May 14, 2018 and approved by the Board on -----.