

PLANNING SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of May 20, 2025

**SUBJECT: SP24-0017 (625 Church St)
Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission approves Site Plan SP24-0017 (625 Church St) dated April 21, 2025, subject to entering into and satisfying all terms of a Development Agreement, with the following conditions:

Revised plans are submitted which satisfactorily:

1. Remove the controlled access gates on the east side of the building, and
2. Addresses the comments and notations of the Engineering and Public Works reviews.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the petition be conditionally approved because, with the conditions satisfied, the contemplated development complies with all applicable law, ordinances, standards and regulations and limits the disturbance of natural features the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land, meeting the criteria for site plan approval provided in the Unified Development Code.

LOCATION: The site is located at the northeast corner of Church Street and Willard Street. It is generally located between South University Avenue, Hill Street and Washtenaw Avenue near the University of Michigan Central Campus.

Location Map: 625 Church Site with air rights area shown by dashed line.



SUMMARY:

The proposed project is a site plan to redevelop a 16,000-square foot site on Church Street with a 20-story apartment building. The site includes 621, 625, and 633 Church Street and 1207 Willard Street, plus an area extending over 616 S Forest Ave.

EXISTING CONDITIONS:

The site includes four lots (621, 625, 633 Church St and 1207 Willard St) that will be combined to create a 16,000-square foot site plus a three-dimensional area with a footprint of 4,000 square feet extending over the parcel immediately north of the site with main address 616 S Forest Avenue.

- D1 (Downtown Core) base zoning district
- South University Character overlay zoning district
- Secondary street frontage designations
- Generally surrounded by mixed-use developments with ground floor retail and multi-family residential on upper floors and a public parking structure.

City Council passed Resolution 25-123 on April 7, 2025 to approve an agreement for sale of air rights over a portion of 616 S. Forest Ave to the developer. 616 S. Forest Ave is a City-owned property that includes the Forest Avenue Parking Structure, jointly owned by the City of Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan, and a service drive between Church Street and South Forest Avenue. The purchased air rights cover the west end of the service drive, due north of the service drive (an area with a footprint of 4,000 square feet) between 25 and 206 feet above the ground surface. (The City retains ownership of the entire 616 S Forest parcel and all development rights between the ground surface up to 25 feet in elevation.)

SITE PLAN DESCRIPTION:

The site plan proposes a 20-story building with commercial space in the basement level, residential amenities on the first and 20th floors, and apartments on floors 1 through 19. The building has a two-story base and slightly stepped-back U-shaped tower above. The north side of the tower cantilevers 16 ½ feet on the west side and 63 ½ feet on the east side over the base, above the City service drive (as permitted by the sale of air rights).

The residential entrance to the building is in the middle of the building facing Church Street. Commercial entrances are located at the northwest and northeast corners, along the service drive.



View of proposed 625 Church St building from corner of Church & Willard, looking northeast. Building in foreground left is existing ArborBlu, building in foreground right is under-construction 701 Church (approved as 711 Church St PUD Site Plan).

Notable site plan details include:

- The proposed development has an FAR of 1857% relative to its site (16,000 square feet) and an FAR of 1490% relative to its footprint (20,000 square feet). [There is no maximum FAR standard in the D1 district.]
- The proposed development utilizes the increase in height limit provided in Section 5.18.4 Exceptions to Height Limits. The building meets the definition of Sustainable Development and so may increase the normal 150-foot height limit in the South University Character district by 30% to 195 feet. It provides 8,459 square feet of solar collector surface area on the roof, being 60% of the building's footprint, and is powered entirely by electricity (with a natural gas-fueled emergency power generator).
- Bicycle parking is provided on the first floor in a dedicated room for 90 bikes including 2 cargo stalls.
- The service drive adjacent to the site will be restored following construction in a design prepared and approved by the Downtown Development Authority.



ALLEY ART WALL PERSPECTIVE

 © DLR Group					 CHURCH STREET ANN ARBOR CORE SPACES, LLC	
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View of proposed 625 Church St building from “service drive” looking southeast, showing cantilever of upper tower over service drive.

APPLICABLE PROCEDURES AND STANDARDS:

The applicable procedures for this petition, which have been satisfied, include:

- Citizen participation meeting – June 4, 2024
- Design Review Board – May 15, 2024 (DR24-001; 611 Church St)
- Submittal – August 15, 2024
- Application fees
- Site Plan for Planning Commission Approval – new buildings in mixed-use development (UDC Section 5.29.6, Table 5.29-1)
- City Council R-25-123 Resolution to Approve Sale of Air Rights over 616 S. Forest Ave – April 7, 2025
- Public notices – published, mailed, posted

The applicable standards and regulations for this petition are provided in the Unified Development Code, the Public Services Standard Specifications, the Solid Waste Standard Specifications, the International Fire Code and the Rules of the Washtenaw County Water Resources commissioner.

PLANNING AND ZONING REVIEW 625 CHURCH SITE PLAN	
STANDARD	REVIEW RESULTS
Article IV Development Standards	
Zoning District Dimensional Standards [Section 5.17]	
FAR, Floor Area	Not applicable – 1857% FAR (or 1490% FAR with air rights parcel) 298,088 sq. ft.
Min Lot Area/Dwelling Unit	Not applicable – 198 dwelling units
Min Open Space, Active Open Space	Not applicable
Required Setbacks	Complies – 0' ft front provided, 5' rear provided
Max Height	Complies with Exception to Height Limit (Sustainability) – 195' provided
Lot Dimensions (Area, Width)	Complies – 16,052 sq. ft. (increases to 10,000 sq. ft. with air rights)
Streetwall height	Complies – 2 stories provided
Offset at top of streetwall	Complies – offset provided
Building module	Complies – 11'4" to 24'10" provided
Diagonal	Not applicable
Design	Complies – permitted materials, 15' first story, +60% transparency provided
Special Dimensional and Site Layout Standards [Section 5.18]	
Setback Line and Yard Alternatives	Not applicable
Exceptions to Height Limits	Complies, utilizing exceptions (Sustainability Component) – add'l 30%
Parking [Section 5.19]	
Vehicle Spaces	Not applicable – no vehicle parking required or provided
Bicycle Spaces	Complies – 90 Class A spaces required and provided
Parking Design, Placement	Complies – bicycle storage room within building including typical mounts and space saving mounts, and cargo stalls
Natural Features [Section 5.23]	
Identification, Protection, Mitigation	Not applicable
Outdoor Lighting [Section 5.25]	
Color Spectrum Management	Complies – minimum 70 CRI, maximum 300K CCT provided
Luminaire Design and Installation	Complies

SERVICE UNIT COMMENTS:

The proposed site plan has been reviewed by 13 units for compliance with applicable codes, ordinance and policies as follows.

Reviews recommending approval

- Building Review [notification only]
- Downtown Review
- Franchise Utility Services Notification
- GIS Review [notification only]
- Park Planning Review
- Planner Review
- SESC (Soil Erosion and Sedimentation Control) Review
- Stormwater Review
- Urban Forest Natural Resources Review

Reviews recommending approval with conditions or resubmittal

- Engineering Review – requires resubmittal to address the corrections and clarifications noted on the site plan and the controlled access gate on the east side of the building is removed.
- Fire Review – recommended for approval with condition that controlled access gate on east side of building is removed.
- Public Works Review – recommended for approval with condition that leader marks identifying transformer locations on the site plan are corrected.
- Transportation Engineer Review – recommended for approval with condition that reconstruction of alley is consistent with design approved by DDA and City, and bump outs at alley entrance are proposed to extent feasible on civil construction drawings.

Original review memos are available as attachments to plan file. Files are public records that can be found online at <https://stream.a2gov.org> using keywords: SP24-0017 and 625 Church St.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo, Principal Planner
Reviewed by Brett Lenart, Planning Manager

References: [STREAM](#) Plan SP24-0017 (625 Church St) Site Plan for Planning
Commission Approval
[STREAM](#) Project MIX-PROJ24-0013 (625 Church St) Project
[STREAM](#) Plan DR24-0001 (611 Church St Unit:B) Design Review
[Legistar File 25-0715](#) Resolution to Approve Sale of Air Rights over 616 S.
Forest Ave

Attachments: Zoning Map
Aerial Photo
Site Plan (v5)
Architectural Plan (v5)
Resolution R-25-123 to Approve Sale of Air Rights over 616 S. Forest Ave
Air Rights Purchase Agreement
Draft 625 Church Development Agreement

c: Applicant/Developer – Core Spaces (Andrew Savoy)
Engineer – Midwestern Consulting (Scott Betzoldt)
Architect – DLR Group (Jon Hoffman)
Architect – J Bradley Moore & Associates (Brad Moore)