ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Staff Report

MEETING DATE: April 18, 2018

PROJECT: Ann Ashley Public Parking Structure Addition
Project No. DR18-003

ADDRESS: 120 West Ann Street

ZONING: D1 Downtown Core (base zoning)
Main Street Character (overlay zoning)
Secondary (street designation)

DESIGN TEAM: Carl Walker – Michael Ortlieb (Prime Consultant)
Fusco, Shaffer, & Pappas, Inc. – Dan Mooney, Blake Hatterman (Architect of Record)
Luckenbach|Ziegelman Architects – Carl Luckenbach (Design Consultant)
Zeimet Wozniak and Assoc. – Julian Wargo (Civil Engineer)
Ann Arbor DDA – Susan Pollay (Owner)

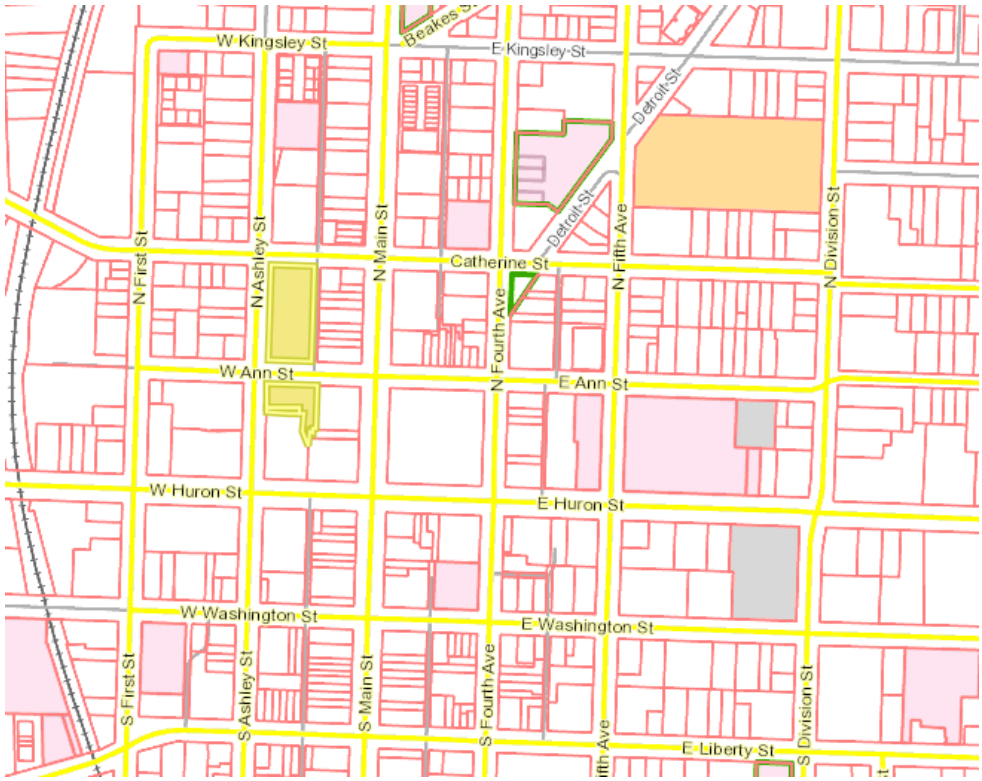

Figure 1 – Location Map

PROPOSED PROJECT: The Ann Ashley Public Parking Structure is proposed to be expanded with an additional three levels of parking and another stair/elevator tower. Other improvements and enhancements are also proposed or contemplated to lessen the visual impact of the entire, expanded structure – including adding glass to the existing stair and elevator towers, horizontal louvers over the first five levels, and landscaping at the ground floor. Proposed materials include metal and glass to complement the existing brick and concrete, which may be stained.

The application describes the design concept and how the project responds to each section of the Downtown Design Guidelines. The goal of the project is "to mitigate the negative impact of adding three additional stories onto an already one and one-half block long, six story structure that visually dominates its neighborhood." This will principally be accomplished by a veil of aluminum louvers wrapping around the lower half of the building.

The design plan provides site context information, floor plans, perspective renderings, exterior elevations and context photos.

Figure 2 - Perspective Rendering Southeast

Figure 3 - Perspective Rendering West

Figure 4 – N. Ashley & Miller Streetview

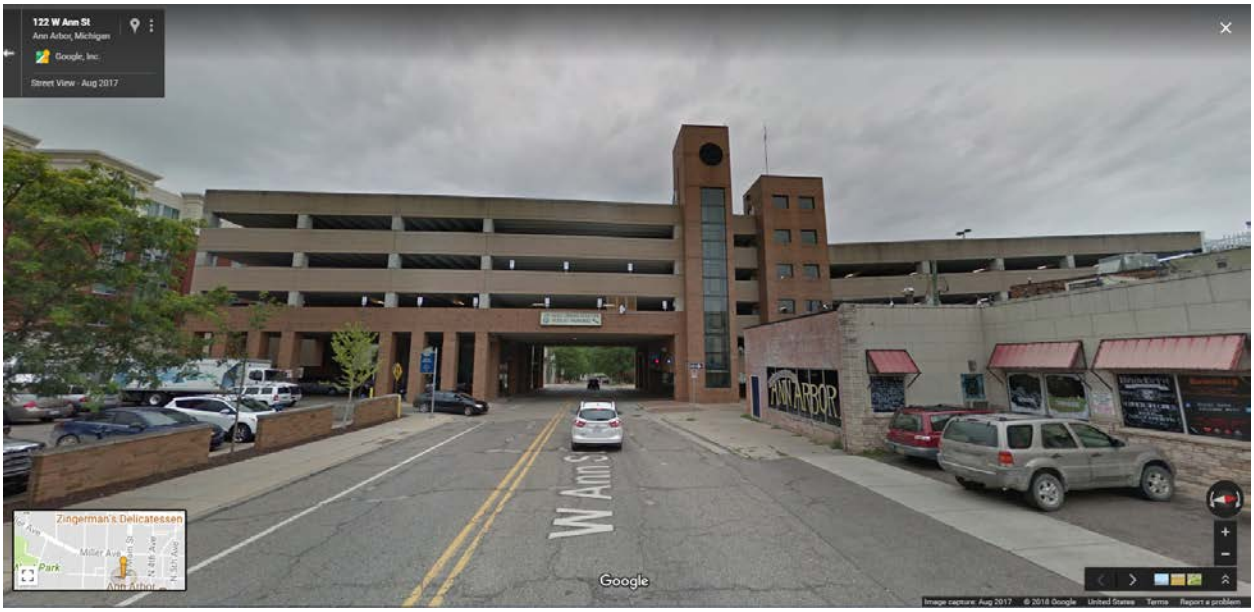

Figure 5 - W. Ann Streetview

STAFF COMMENTS:

1. The area, height and placement regulations for this site (D1, Main Street character, secondary streets) are provided in the chart below. A cursory review of the proposed development indicates it does not comply with all requirements and standards of the Zoning Ordinance. However, it must be noted that the City of Ann Arbor is not subject to the Zoning Ordinance. City Council may approve public projects that do not comply with City Codes. The data chart below is provided to help understand the scope and scale of the proposed project.

	Requirements	**Proposed**
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	400% normal MAX, up to 700% MAX with premiums	946%
Front Setback	Ashley – 0' min, 10' max Miller – 0' min, 10' max Ann – 0' min, 10' max	Ashley – 0' Miller – 0' Ann – 0'
Side Setback	0'	0'
Rear Setback	0'	0'
Streetwall Height	Min 2 stories, Max 4 stories	No streetwall
Offset at Top of Streetwall	5 ft MIN Average	No offset
Total Height	2 stories/24 ft MIN 180 ft MAX	86'

Massing Articulation	None	None
Building Coverage	None	97.5%
Open Space	None	1,100 square feet

2. In the application, the applicant contends the Downtown Design Guidelines were not intended for modifications or additions to existing buildings. Staff disagree. The Guidelines are equally applicable to modifications and additions as well as new construction and redevelopments. From the Introduction statement:

> *The overarching goal of the design guidelines – and the Design Review Program – is to foster excellence in the design of the built environment in the downtown. One measure of design excellence is the degree to which new development fits comfortably within the existing fabric of the city. Another measure is the ability of a project to stand the test of time by remaining functional and ageless over a period of many years.*
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> *Design guidelines by themselves do not create good design, nor do they ensure it. What design guidelines do address are the qualities of architecture, urban design, and public space that make for successful projects and communities. The chief value and purpose of the Ann Arbor Design Guidelines is in providing clarity and focus on what is important to consider in the design of downtown projects.*
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> *The guidelines make it possible for the dialogue that occurs in Design Review Board meetings to be as productive and efficient as possible and provide a common language with which to discuss the best ways to ensure an attractive, vibrant, sustainable city, project by project.*

3. The proposed design only incorporates some of the applicable **design guidelines for context and site planning**. Aspects that staff feel fall short include how the structure would best serve the area in a secondary role, the lack of natural systems incorporated into the project, and a pedestrian-friendly street edge at the street level adjacent to enclosed parking structures of features and facilities to provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience. However, the structure is also the termination of a perpendicular street view so a design with enough presence and detail to make that view noteworthy is appropriate.

4. The **design guidelines for building massing** generally focus on minimizing the impact of a new building and providing details, variation, and design treatments that break down scale. Again, staff the proposed design only incorporates some

of the applicable massing guidelines. The aluminum veil emphasizes the horizontal bulk and mass of the building, particularly calling attention to the fact that the structure spans one and one-half blocks. No break or distinction is proposed at the West Ann Street lot lines for either the east or west facades. Providing a different treatment for the portion bridging over Ann seems like a natural point to break down the mass of the structure into smaller components reflecting the underlying block and lot patterns. The Guidelines stress vertical treatments to visually represent smaller modules.

The proposal to remove one bay of the existing structure does provide the benefit of creating space for a new plaza. However, it comes at the cost of eliminating the only parts of the existing structure that provide a lower-scale streetwall and upper story setbacks, and the new plaza is on the north side of the building. Open spaces that are shaded for most of the day throughout the year are not generally inviting, lively places that encourage lingering or steady use.

5. The proposed development also incorporates few of the applicable **design guidelines for building elements**. Entrances are proposed to be better identified, oriented toward the street, and are significantly more inviting to passers-by as well as users. But the new materials do not reinforce the massing and architectural concepts to minimize the structure's impacts and are not in character with a secondary or background structure, nor do the materials seem to have been selected to promote operational systems or sustainability.

APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: From the Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines

Staff has identified the following Guidelines as applicable to the proposed project. These include Guidelines both with which the proposed project is and is not consistent. The Design Review Board may find other Guidelines are also applicable.

Chapter 1: General Design Guidelines

A. 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.

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

A.1.4 For mid-block sites, identify adjacent site and building design qualities, noting that a design may be appropriate for a mid-block site that best serves the area in a secondary role.

A.1.5 If the street geometries are such that the mid-block is the termination of a perpendicular street view, consider a design with enough presence and detail to make that view noteworthy.

A.1.7 On sites that abut an alley, design the alley entry connection to the street to minimize pedestrian/bike/vehicle conflicts while taking advantage of the alley as an open space from which to see and access the new/proposed site and buildings.

A.2 Site Planning and Natural Systems. An urban setting can be a challenging environment in which to respond to natural systems. Consider natural systems such as sun and wind patterns, climates and seasonality, rainwater harvesting, and significant individual features such as street tree patterns and landmark trees on public and private sites.

A.3 Open Space. Open spaces can include public and private courtyards, plazas, patios, terraces, alleys, and gardens. Throughout downtown, site features and elements that invite use should be provided.

A.3.1 Design an urban open space to maximize activity and usability for a diverse population of different abilities.

A.3.2 Locate an urban open space where there is a high level of existing or potential pedestrian activity.

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.4.2 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.

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.

A.4.4 Parking structures should incorporate architectural screens, public art, seating, lighting, kiosks, vending booths, and other ground level service shops adjacent to the street and sidewalk.

A.5 Pedestrian Connections. Pedestrian connections include sidewalks, alleys and

arcades that provide pedestrian access within, through and among properties. Such connections provide access to buildings, courtyards, plazas and other site elements.

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.

A.5.5 Link on-site open spaces, such as courtyards and plazas, directly to a public sidewalk.

A.6 Cycling and Transit. Walking, cycling, transit and other multi-modal means of transportation are to be considered in the design of streetscapes.

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B. 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.

B.1.1 Design a building to minimize its impact on adjacent lower-scale areas. Suggested strategies include:
- a) Step taller building elements away from adjacent lower- scale buildings and/or neighborhoods
- b) Locate taller building elements at the intersection of streets
- c) Provide variation in building massing to reflect the underlying pattern of established lot widths

B.1.2 When a new building will be larger than surrounding structures, visually divide it into smaller building modules that provide a sense of scale. Suggested strategies include:
- a) Vary the height of individual building modules.
- b) Vary the height of cornice lines and other roof finish elements.
- c) Change wall surface materials, colors or texture.
- d) Use vertical moldings to express different building modules.
- e) Align projecting features, such as balconies or sun screens, to express different building modules.
- f) Use underlying established lot widths to help determine the width of building modules at the street level.

C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements

Building elements include specific design features that give character and detail to a building. They are not generally addressed by the requirements of the downtown zoning districts. Entries, windows, materials, and other building elements influence the degree to which a new building contributes to the urban fabric. Quality and creativity are most clearly expressed and experienced at this level of design.

The design of building elements should be compatible with its surrounding context. However, a wide range of styles or design themes are appropriate including creative, contemporary, and environmentally-oriented design solutions. Surfaces that have variations in depth with substantial shadow lines add interest.

C.1 Street Edge. Building elements and architectural details used at the street front have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and should be combined to create an active and interesting street front. Creative use of materials, textures and architectural details is especially important where there are few windows at the street front of a building.

C.2 Entries. The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. Building entries should be located to enhance the street level experience and help give a sense of scale. Entries should be clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front. Although traditional building entry designs may be appropriate, creative and contemporary interpretations are also encouraged.

C.5 Materials. Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context.

C.6 Building Operational Systems. Building operational systems such as waste management, utility services, heating and cooling systems, must be carefully integrated into the design of a building and not detract from the architectural concept.

C.7 Sustainability in Building Elements. Consider sustainability when selecting structural and façade materials and designing functional building elements.

Main Street Character District

The Main Street Character District, once the traditional heart of downtown, has evolved into a regional entertainment, business, and retail destination. The center of the district contains the Main Street Historic District. The 1929 First National Building (at Main and Washington) is a prominent landmark and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

First and second floor heights are similar among traditional buildings, which helps establish a continuity of scale. Architectural details also provide interest and convey a sense of scale in Main Street. While there is a range of building heights and architectural styles, most are of durable materials and high quality execution. This district has the strongest streetwall definition in the city, which is enhanced by the fine-grained texture of narrow storefronts that reflect traditional lot widths.

Being a regional dining attraction, this district is one of the more heavily trafficked visitor areas at night. Curb extensions have encouraged outdoor dining areas, which flourish seasonally. A large number of street trees and pedestrian-scaled lights complement the already pedestrian-oriented nature of the restaurant and retail destinations.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo, City Planner
April 13, 2018