ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Staff Report

MEETING DATE: November 18, 2015

PROJECT: The Residences at 615 South Main Street
Project No. DR15-007

ADDRESS: 615 South Main Street

ZONING DISTRICTS: D2 (Downtown Interface) Base, First Street Character Overlay

DESIGN TEAM: Brad Moore, J Bradley Moore & Associates Architects, Inc.
Brandt Stiles, CDG
Bob Lamkin, HLR Architects
Scott Betzoldt, Midwestern Consulting

PROPOSED PROJECT: A new 6-story, 336,000-square foot courtyard residential building is proposed for an 86,160-square foot site at the northeast corner of South Main Street and East Mosley Street. The site currently contains several occupied one and two-story commercial buildings including a historic buggy factory building. The buggy factory is probably better known to most townies as “the old Ark”. All existing buildings except for the original portion of the buggy factory will be demolished to make way for the new development.

The contemplated development has an irregular parallelogram shape following the site boundaries with an open courtyard in the middle. The new construction will have a 10-foot front setback from both streets and the north side, and a 26-foot setback from the rear along the railroad tracks. An underground parking garage is planned with an entrance to East Mosley Street. All existing curb cuts on South Main Street will be closed.

STAFF COMMENTS:

1. The height and placement regulations for this site (D2 base, First Street character overlay, secondary street frontage) are:

Front Setback	Minimum 0 feet, Maximum 10 feet
Side Setback	Minimum 0 feet
Rear Setback	Minimum 0 feet
Streetwall Height	Minimum 2 stories, Maximum 3 stories

Offset at Top of Streetwall	Minimum Average 5 feet
Massing Articulation	Maximum 66 feet
Total Height	Maximum 60 feet

2. Much like the northern reaches of the First Street character area and the western edge of the Kerrytown character area, the south end of First Street is experiencing significant contextual changes. The new 618 South Main Street development, across the street from the proposed site, has created a strong, defining presence in this area.

3. The proposed design responds well to the Guidelines for context and site planning, open space, and parking, driveways and service areas.

4. The proposed design includes a considerable degree of variation in façade planes and building materials. Each module contains a different treatment for its streetwall and upper floors. The design team should consider varying only one aspect of the building components – either contrasting bases and tops, but all bases and all tops have the same materials, or consistent building materials within each articulation module. Variety is good, a jumbled clutter is not good.

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. The project team's assessment should seek to define opportunities to enrich the design excellence of the 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.1.6 Where adjacent properties are underdeveloped and/or the block lacks inviting and interesting characteristics, consider a building, site and streetscape design that helps to create a vibrant pedestrian setting.

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.2.1 Orient the building location to best accommodate climate, rainfall and area drainage patterns. The use of pervious versus impervious surfaces should be determined for each project based on beneficial environmental results.

A.2.3 Where location and site features allow, use deciduous trees, which provide shade in the summer and sun in winter months.

A.2.4 Orient plant groups to provide wind protection of plazas and entries in wintertime and allow cooling breezes into outdoor spaces.

A.2.5 Plant native and non-invasive species, especially those that require low levels of water and are tolerant of urban conditions.

A.2.6 Where location and site size allow, consider use of a rain garden or vegetated roof to retain rainwater and serve as a site amenity, and employ rainwater harvesting methods for use in landscape irrigation systems.

A.2.7 Use porous materials in drainage and detention areas to promote rainwater percolation into the parent soil.

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. In commercial areas, open spaces should have an urban quality and character that enliven the street and enhance the pedestrian experience. Outside the commercial core and in civic areas, open spaces may be more park-like settings for human activity. Private property open

spaces should be sized relative to the intended use and level of anticipated adjacent pedestrian activity.

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.3.3 Locate urban open space that serves the general public at sidewalk level. Semi-private or private open space and activity areas may be appropriate if placed above or below the public sidewalk level.

A.3.4 Place an urban open space in a location that serves as a focal point on a site.

A.3.5 Orient an urban open space to the street or to cultural, historic or natural resources.

A.3.7 Enrich the space using special paving, plants, trellises and site structures.

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.4.3 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.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.5.3 Provide engaging spatial opportunities for window shopping while also maintaining a zone for efficient circulation, especially in areas where there

is already heavy pedestrian use.

A.5.4 Provide landscaping, seating, public art, lighting, interpretive markers, and water features to enrich and enliven pedestrian walkways and use areas.

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.

A.6.1 Provide a comfortable environment for transit patrons if the site in question includes or is adjacent to a transit stop. Consider adequate waiting space, trash receptacles, and seating or leaning walls.

A.6.2 Consider use of convenient bicycle racks, including proximity to building entries, weather protection and security when selecting a location for bicycle parking and storage.

B. Design Guidelines for Buildings

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:

- *Maximum floor area ratio (FAR)*
- *Maximum building height*
- *Maximum and minimum streetwall height*
- *Average offset at the maximum streetwall height*
- *Maximum building module length*

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.

B.1.3 Provide a clear definition between the base (the lower floor or floors) and upper floors to maintain a sense of scale at the street level.

B.1.4 If appropriate to the context, establish a design treatment that includes a differentiated building top.

C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements

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.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity.

c) Wall surfaces with visually interesting detailing, textures and colors

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.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street.

C.3 Windows. Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.

C.3.1 A high level of ground floor transparency is encouraged throughout downtown.

C.3.3 Window depths should be appropriate to the building design concept. For example, windows flush to the wall surface are often appropriate for modern designs, but traditional concepts should have punched or recessed windows.

C.4 Awnings. The use of awnings is encouraged at the sidewalk level to provide shelter from the rain, to modulate natural light, and to indicate entry and provide transition from the outdoor to the indoor environment.

C.4.1 Operable awnings could be considered at storefront and window locations.

C.4.2 Each awning should be sized to fit within individual storefronts, windows, or door openings.

C.4.3 The proportions of awnings should relate to the overall proportions of the building facade

C.4.4 Color selections should be compatible with the overall color scheme of the facade. Solid colors or simple, muted-stripe patterns are

appropriate.

C.4.5 Simple shed shapes with open ends are preferred.

C.4.6 Opaque, water repellant, non-reflective fabrics should be considered.

C.4.7 External illumination of awnings is appropriate.

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.

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.6.1 Integrate solar or wind systems into the design of the top of the building.

C.6.2 Locate and sufficiently screen mechanical systems to minimize or eliminate noise impacts on adjacent sites and buildings.

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

C.7.1 Use sustainable building materials whenever possible.

C.7.2 Select and apply building elements to maximize the building's environmental performance.

C.7.3 Incorporate building elements that allow for natural environmental control. Suggested strategies include: 1) Operable windows for natural ventilation. 2) Rotating doors or wind locks at high volume entries. 3) Interior or exterior light shelves/solar screens above south facing windows.

First Street Character District

The First Street character area lies to the west of the Main Street and Kerrytown districts, and forms the eastern edge of the Old West Side Historic District. The topography forming the Allen Creek Valley with its flood plain, the buried/piped Allen Creek, the Ann Arbor Rail Road track with its historic, turn-of-the-century industrial

architecture, and the proposed future Allen Creek Greenway, are distinct aspects of this district needing recognition during any First Street District proposed project design. The mixture of historic and non-historic residential and industrial architecture, and the valley land form, gives this area a distinct difference from other downtown character districts.

The area is a mixed use linear district (north to south) that follows the railroad tracks' older industrial railroad buildings, some of which have been converted into occupied industrial, construction, and other office uses, occasional art and dance studio activities, bars and nightclubs. The district also includes residential frame two and three story structures. The relatively quiet mixed-use neighborhood streets are highlighted by elevated train tracks with trestle bridges above east-west crossing streets from Washington Street north to Miller, and with wooden warehouse-like structures along the tracks, some of which are currently empty. The presence of the Allen Creek Flood Plain and the railroad track and its trestles are unique attributes worthy of design consideration.

The district's urban landscape largely consists of tree lined streets with relatively consistent lot spacing, and an occasionally vacant parcel. At times, a triangular shaped parcel caused by the orientation/alignment of the tracks is in contrast with the local streets. The future Allen Creek Greenway should be given design consideration as a potential element of all First Street Character District proposals.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo, City Planner
November 13, 2015