

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of March 4, 2025

**SUBJECT: 343 S Fifth Avenue Rezoning
Project No. REZ24-0010**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby waives the Area Plan requirement as provided in Section 5.29.7.A and 5.29.7.B of the Unified Development Code because no new construction is proposed, and recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the zoning of 343 South Fifth Avenue to D1 (Downtown Core District).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends this petition be **approved** because the property is intended to be redeveloped as a public-private partnership, rather than an entirely publicly owned site as it is now. D1 (Downtown Core) zoning is appropriate for its location downtown.

LOCATION

This site is located on the east side of South Fifth Avenue, between Library Lane to the north and East William Street to the south.

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The petitioner requests rezoning from PL (Public Land District) to D1 (Downtown Core District) zoning to pursue a future a private-public partnership. No development is proposed currently, but the intent is to redevelop the site with a new library, new housing, and other amenities in the future. The 1.21-acre site includes the library building and adjacent surface parking lot.

COMPARISON CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Zoning	PL	D1	D1
Gross Lot Area	1.21 acres	1.21 acres	None
Lot Width	198ft (S Fifth Ave) & 264ft (E William St)	198ft (S Fifth Ave) & 264ft (E William St)	None

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Parking	D1
EAST	Retail/office & parking	D1
SOUTH	Residential	D2
WEST	Surface parking & transit center	PUD & D1

HISTORY AND PLANNING BACKGROUND

Before the Downtown Library opened, the lot at the corner of South Fifth Avenue and East William Street contained a two-story dwelling built in the 1890s. The Board of Education purchased the lot in October 1953 with the intention of locating a new public library downtown. Plans for the library began, and the two-story brick building was constructed in 1957.

By the 1970s, the Downtown Library had outgrown its building and in 1974, a two-story east addition was completed, adding 43,000 square feet of floor area. This addition was designed by Donald E. Van Curler. In 1989, the library again expanded east with a four-story addition and a 23-space parking lot. This addition was designed by local architecture firm Osler Milling.

Throughout the early 2000s and 2010s, the Library Board has been exploring the redevelopment of the downtown library site. The lot retained its Public Land zoning designation during the A2D2 Zoning Amendments in 2009. In 2019, the Library Board commissioned a feasibility study to investigate potential redevelopment scenarios for a new Downtown Library as part of a mixed-use building. The complete feasibility study is available at <https://aadi.org/buildings/downtown>. The report concluded that it is financially feasible to redevelop the site with a library, offices, housing, and retail space, though the parcel would require rezoning to accommodate these changes. Although a specific development program has yet to be selected, the proposed rezoning to D1 is the first step towards redeveloping 343 South Fifth Avenue with a new mixed-use building in line with the 2019 study.

STAFF COMMENTS

Planning – The current PL designation of the site is appropriate as the land is owned by a public agency. However, this zoning designation limits the future use of the site by precluding any private uses even if permitted. The D1 (Downtown Core) zoning is also appropriate for this parcel's location. The *Master Plan: Land Use Element* recommends Downtown Core zoning for this site. D1 zoning allows high-density, mixed-use development, as described in Section 5.12.6 of the Unified Development Code. It could accommodate a new library on the site, a mixed-use building including a library branch, or allow for any other permitted use should the library decide to relocate and make the site available for new uses.

If rezoned to D1, the Downtown Character Overlay Zoning District Standards will apply. 343 South Fifth Avenue is located within the Midtown character overlay district. Rezoning to D1 will also offer more predictability for building form if and when the site is redeveloped. The development standards for the PL district, such as floor area ratio, building coverage, setbacks, and height, are "none." The D1 designation will regulate the permitted uses on the site as well as the general building mass. The Midtown character overlay district will regulate the basic building form, including total height, streetwall height, and massing articulation.

Prepared by Mariana Melin-Corcoran, City Planner
Reviewed by Hank Kelley, Deputy Planning Manager

Attachments: Zoning Map
Aerial Map
Ordinance

c: City Assessor
Systems Planning
Project No. REZ24-0010