

# ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

## Staff Report

**MEETING DATE:** August 17, 2016

**PROJECT:** 1215 South University Avenue Design Project  
Project No. DR16-011

**ADDRESS:** 1215 South University Avenue

**ZONING DISTRICTS:** D1 Downtown Core, South University Character, Primary Frontage

**DESIGN TEAM:** Robert Hoida – Hobbs + Black Architects  
Nowak and Fraus (Civil Engineer)  
Johnston Design (Structural Engineer)  
Berbiglia Associates (MEP Engineer)

**PROPOSED PROJECT:** A new 4-story, 12,000-square foot building is proposed on a 25.5-foot wide lot vacant lot on the north side of South University Avenue between Church and South Forest streets. It is the site of the former Pinball Pete's which was destroyed by fire in October 2009.



Figure 1 – Location Map

The proposed building is 51 feet tall and is intended to have retail space (specifically restaurant) on the first floor and basement level, and office space on the upper three floors. A small garden patio is planned for the rear of the building for use by the

restaurant tenant.

The building's exterior design is contemporary and "purposely forward looking." The street façade is principally glass, side walls are a dark colored burnished block. Upper areas will be clad with architectural high-performance cement panels and wood trim. A thin metal panel fin will accentuate the street elevation.



The application materials describe the site context as "an eclectic mix of low-rise (1-2 story) to high-rise buildings which are a very eclectic mix of building styles." Further, "one might describe the architecture of the area as either an eclectic mix of architectural styles or as a hodge-podge of uninspiring buildings."

**STAFF COMMENTS:**

1. The area, height and placement regulations for this site (D1, South University character, primary frontage) are provided in the chart below. A cursory review of the proposed development indicates it meets all applicable zoning regulations.

	<b>Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>FAR (Floor Area Ratio)</b>	400% max (13,000 sq ft)	Less than 400% (12,000 sq ft)
<b>Front Setback</b>	Min 0 feet, Max 1 feet	1 ft
<b>Side Setback</b>	None	0 ft
<b>Rear Setback</b>	None	0 ft
<b>Streetwall Height</b>	Min 2 stories, Max 3 stories	3 stories
<b>Offset at Top of Streetwall</b>	Min Average 5 feet	5 ft
<b>Total Height</b>	Maximum 150 feet	51 ft
<b>Massing Articulation</b>	Maximum 45 ft	Not applicable
<b>Building Coverage</b>	No maximum	Approximately 90%
<b>Open Space</b>	No minimum	Approximately 10%

2. The proposed development incorporates all of the applicable **design guidelines for context and site planning**. It identifies and reinforces the positive characteristics of the adjacent site and enriches the pedestrian experience.

3. 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. In the case of the proposed development, there is less of a need to break down scale. However, all buildings no matter their size need detailing, variation and a sense of scale. The proposed design incorporates these fundamental principles well.
4. The proposed development also incorporates all of the applicable **design guidelines for building elements**. It has an appropriate street edge, entry, windows, and materials.

### **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.1.1 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.1.4 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.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.4 Parking, Driveways and Service Areas.** Parking, driveways, and service areas are necessary functions, which should be designed to benefit the urban experience.
- 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.6 Cycling and Transit.** Walking, cycling, transit and other multi-modal means of transportation are to be considered in the design of streetscapes.

## **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.

## **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.

## **South University Character District**

This district is located on the southern and eastern edges of central campus. Current architectural character includes diverse styles ranging from older eclectic forms to new/contemporary ones, expressed through a wide variety of architectural materials including wood siding, brick, limestone, precast concrete, and various metals. Building heights range from one and two floor/low-rise to mid and hi-rise. Rooflines vary from two and three story frame houses to flat roofed contemporary expressions at various building heights and façade expressions.

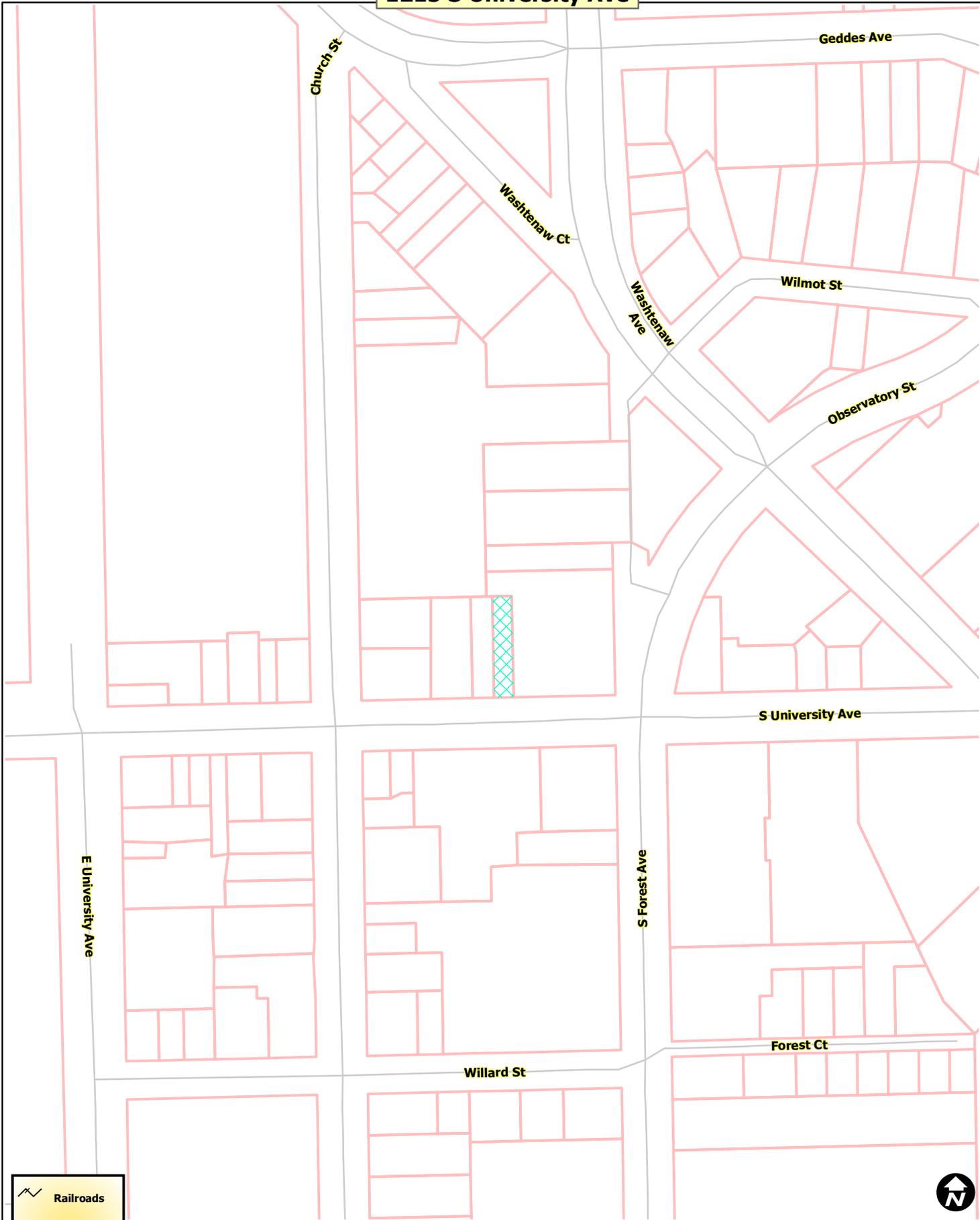
This area is a mixed use district, largely consisting today of university population-focused restaurant and commercial services, and student housing. This district is busy and vibrant with automobile and pedestrian activity. Sidewalk level doorways provide access to upper floor offices and apartments.

The urban landscape includes sidewalk extensions (bump-outs) with circular tree sized planters; a well developed tree canopy over some sidewalks; and outdoor dining spaces at sidewalk and rooftop levels. First floor facades are more transparent with clear, large display windows, allowing inside first floor retail activities to be visible from, and contribute to, the district's active street life.

The cumulative character can be described as a busy and vibrant urban setting that encourages and accommodates a diverse range of downtown activities.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo, City Planner  
August 12, 2016

**1215 S University Ave**

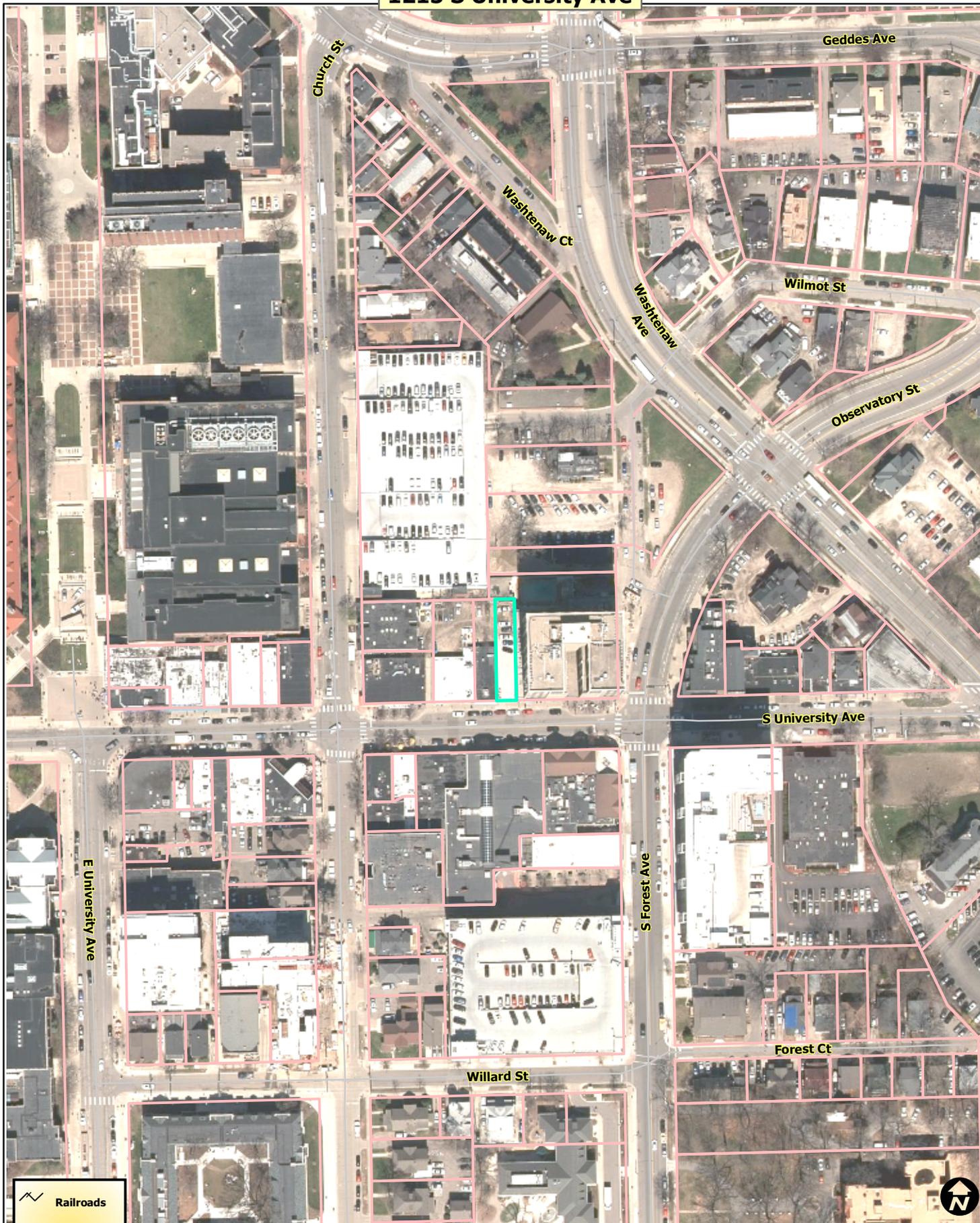


 Railroads  
 Parcels  
 Huron River



Map date 7/21/2016  
Any aerial imagery is circa 2015  
unless otherwise noted  
Terms of use: [www.a2gov.org/terms](http://www.a2gov.org/terms)

# 1215 S University Ave



- Railroads
- Parcels
- Huron River



Map date 7/21/2016  
Any aerial imagery is circa 2015  
unless otherwise noted  
Terms of use: [www.a2gov.org/terms](http://www.a2gov.org/terms)

1215 S University Ave



-  Railroads
-  Parcels
-  Huron River



Map date 7/21/2016  
Any aerial imagery is circa 2015  
unless otherwise noted  
Terms of use: [www.a2gov.org/terms](http://www.a2gov.org/terms)