

## ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD APPLICATION

November 11, 2024

ANN ARBOR GALLERIA

### DRB Narrative

*1. A brief description of the design concept (what the project/structure looks like).*

The proposed development at 1208 South University Avenue consists of an 18-story mixed use residential and retail tower with frontage along University Avenue and Forest Avenue.

The building's three-story brick base harmonizes with the area's design language along University Avenue, maintaining the established street scale. At sidewalk level, transparent glass invites engagement by opening up the retail and active lobby spaces to the street, enhancing visibility and connection with pedestrians. Above, punched window openings at Levels 2 and 3 echo the rhythm of neighboring buildings while preserving the contemporary architectural character of the district.

The base is capped by a band at Level 4 to facilitate the transition to the 14 stories that form the tower. Above the 4th floor, the tower is comprised of contemporary materials, utilizing a glass and metal panel window wall system intermixed with balconies that add articulation and depth. The northwest corner is further accentuated with a projected, continuous window wall which reappears on the rooftop level of the south façade.

*2. A brief description of the development program (the intended uses, known or possible tenants, etc.).*

The proposed development consists of 259 rental apartment units and 5,189 sf of ground-level commercial tenant space. The ground floor also incorporates a residential lobby, fitness center, and leasing area as well as storage for 52 bikes and 29 garage parking spaces. Parking and loading have been concealed off the south side alley. An additional 54 garage parking spaces are contained on Level 2 for a total of 83 garage parking spaces within the building.

Residential units begin on Level 3 and extend up to Level 18. The fitness center has been conveniently located on Level 1 with an interior resident lounge, and exterior rooftop deck and pool on Level 18. The development's residential tenants are anticipated to be young professionals and college students

*3. Describe the context of the site.*

The property at 1208 South University Avenue is an urban area within Ann Arbor's downtown core. Neighboring mixed-use and residential developments reach up to 18 stories and at street level they meet the property line along the pedestrian sidewalk. The site is adjacent to the University of Michigan campus.

*4. Is there an inspiration or a theme for the design concept? Describe.*

Building off the scale and character of neighboring structures, the design concept emphasizes urban planning strategies with a contemporary aesthetic that utilizes timeless materials. The design and massing are placemaking and distinct, but also relatable and responsive to the cultural and environmental demands of the community and region.

*5. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level A, starting on page 6 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.*

Continuity with the urban pattern and adjacent streetscape is achieved by considering the pedestrian experience and configuring the building form and functions to coalesce with the surrounding context. For instance, the inclusion of expansive storefront windows not only complements the established street-level aesthetic but also fosters community engagement through retail prospects and a vibrant residential lobby. Moreover, thoughtful planning places vehicle-related functions like parking, trash, and service areas discreetly off the alley, while strategically situating bicycle parking directly off University Avenue, reducing potential conflicts between bikes and vehicles within the site.



6. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Buildings. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level B, starting on page 13 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The massing of the proposed development respects the established heights, proportions, and character of neighboring structures and fosters a sense of connection with the district's urban fabric. For instance, the three-story base is topped by a fourth-floor setback band demarcating a clear transition to the tower above. Additionally, the northwest corner's glass curtain wall serves as a visual separator, enhanced by a series of balconies that add dimension to the facade. The building culminates at its highest level with subtle pilaster features providing a distinctive identity to the roofline.

7. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for Building Elements. Please refer to Chapter 1, Level C, starting on page 15 of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The proposed development merges traditional and contemporary building elements to enrich the pedestrian experience and further elevate the allure of the surrounding cityscape. Notably, canopies and framed openings at ground-level storefronts serve as welcoming cues, guiding and clearly delineating building entrances within the vibrant streetscape. Furthermore, the exterior materials deliberately celebrate the diversity found within the district, carefully chosen not only for their aesthetic appeal but also for their environmentally conscious qualities, contributing to a sustainable and visually engaging urban environment.

8. Describe how the project responds to the Design Guidelines for its Character District. Please refer to Chapter 2, starting on page 20 of the Downtown Design Guidelines

Aligned with the qualities of the South University Character District, the project reflects the district's architectural character, materiality, and massing. The mixed-use residential and retail tower is a natural evolution befitting this vibrant community and its active street life. The progressive design uses contemporary materials and traditional approaches to achieve placemaking, distinctive architecture that relates to the vitality of the district.

9. If desired, note any other important elements, features, or design concepts not covered above that will help the Design Review Board understand how the project fosters excellence in the design of the built environment of downtown Ann Arbor, the overarching goal of the Downtown Design Guidelines.

The development considers the overarching goal of the Downtown Design Guidelines by balancing contextual integration, human-centric design, sustainable practices, innovation, functionality, and community engagement. The contemporary design concept respects the architectural vernacular and scale, fostering a livable downtown environment that adheres to the Downtown Design Guidelines.