

November 13, 2025

City of Ann Arbor
Attn: Planning Commission
301 E. Huron Street
Ann Arbor, MI, 48107

Re: Conditional Rezoning Application for D1 Designation

This letter is a supplement to the zoning request form for *The Dean* Ann Arbor project. It supplements the rezoning form and provides additional information to justify a rezoning to D1 Downtown Core with a Midtown Downtown Character overlay. The explanations below illustrate how those designations will benefit the design of the proposed project to better meet the goals of the City's Plans and Ordinance. This letter also responds to the City of Ann Arbor zoning review report prepared by Alexis Dileo, the City's Principal Planner, dated September 25, 2025, and clarifies why the Midtown Overlay is best suited for this project as compared to the Liberty/Division overlay.

BENEFITS OF REZONING THE SITE TO D1

D1 is the best zoning option for this project. The D1 district is, according to the Zoning Ordinance, *"intended to contain the downtown's greatest concentration of development and serves as a focus for intensive pedestrian use. This district is appropriate for high-density mixed residential, office, and commercial development (Zoning Ordinance, Pages 20-21)."* As noted in the rezoning application, *The Dean* will help meet the need for significant housing demand in the City at an appropriate location near the downtown and University of Michigan campuses. Our Site is across the street from the UofM athletic campus, a 2,300-bed student housing project to the south, and a block from Main Street. There are several new or planned mid-rise residential projects in the area. In addition, *The Dean* Ann Arbor will be placed at the bottom of a hill, which will diminish the visual impacts compared buildings of a similar height at other locations in the City.

A review of the various City and agency plans provide support for our request, as listed below. Plans and codes reviewed included the City's draft Comprehensive Land Use Plan, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) Plan and its design guidelines, the Zoning Ordinance, the City's Transportation Plan, A2Zero Plan, the University of Michigan Campus Plan, The Ride's Transit Plan for 2045, and the Regional Transit Authority's Transit Master Plan. Those documents embody common and consistent themes that support our rezoning, with conditions, request.

Our project is within the 'Hub District' area designated by the City's Draft Master Plan. The City's Draft Comprehensive Land Use Plan (June 2025) designates our Site as part of the central "Hub" district. That district is intended for downtown and mid- to high-rise mixed uses as *"an active, mixed-use area that integrates residential and commercial uses."* Our Site helps provide the need for additional student housing at a convenient location to the Downtown, and the U-M Central and Athletic Campuses. Thus, the residential uses for this project are consistent with the City's new draft Master Plan and its objectives.

Concentrates residential development along existing transit routes and near a planned Bus Rapid Transit Route. Our location is between four AAATA transit routes (aka "the Ride"), and a University of Michigan bus line, which run along Madson, 4th and 5th Avenues. Adding a bus stop along those streets

will provide easy access throughout the AAATA system. In addition, our site is within ¼ mile of the Blake Transit Center and the A2D2 Express Bus at 5th and Williams Street. Longer range, The Ride Transit Plan proposes a future Bus Rapid Transit line along Packard just to the north and east of *The Dean* Site. Rezoning and development of our site can help move the needle to gain ridership for all the transit lines and reduce the carbon footprint.

Location Promotes Walking, Biking and Transit. *The Dean* Ann Arbor will be well served by pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit travelers. Residents can easily walk, bike or take transit to the University of Michigan, its athletic facilities to the south, shopping, recreation, entertainment and restaurants downtown and nearby. If this residential density was placed outside of the Hub area, without convenient adjacency to transit, bikeways, and sidewalks, it could translate to 1,663 new vehicle trips (45 in the morning and 136 in the evening peak hours). Given our limited vehicle parking, ample bike parking, location along bikeways, transit routes and sidewalk connectivity to destinations, our traffic impact study envisions just 14 vehicle trips in the morning and 31 in the evening (see the Multi Modal Traffic Impact Assessment-*The Dean* report). This modal transfer is consistent with the City's Climate Change and Sustainability policies.

Replaces the outdated M-1 Limited Industrial District which currently applies to 40% of the site.

Industrial uses were historically allowed on this site due to the adjacent railroad and creek, but the character of the area has radically changed. Uses allowed by current zoning for about half (four parcels – see Sheet 2) of the Site are no longer appropriate. Removing the M-1 designation eliminates uses by-right that could currently be developed next to existing residential and the campus, such as outdoor storage, warehousing, adult entertainment business, auto repair, food/beverage processing and manufacturing facility, laundry and dry-cleaning plant, and light manufacturing. **We will replace uses that are “non-conforming” for the area, with uses that are instead consistent with the City's Hub Designation for the area. This is a unique zoning factor that helps avoid a precedent for other properties.**

Removes residential structures within the Allen Creek Floodplain. Living areas of current residential structures are within the defined Allen Creek Floodplain. One of the goals of the City and FEMA is to remove residential living areas within the floodplain. Our proposed project will just have parking and lobby areas within the flood zone. Housing will be elevated outside of the floodplain area.

SUPPORT FOR MIDTOWN DOWNTOWN CHARACTER OVERLAY

The City of Ann Arbor report prepared by Alexis Dileo is generally supportive of the rezoning request and notes that the *“East Madison Street is a logical southern edge. The D1 district seems to be the appropriate base zoning designation for the site.”* Alexis' report also states that *“the Midtown character overlay district is an acceptable designation and extends the South Fifth Avenue civic corridor.”*

The report does then suggest that the Liberty/Division character overlay district may be another option for the City to consider. We understand this consideration as the proposed project site area, which, although noncontiguous with either the Midtown or Liberty/Division overlay areas, is near the overlay and is grouped within the same central 'Hub' designation on the proposed Future Land Use Map in the 2025 Master Plan Draft. This section, and the attached maps, provides some additional rationale, from the perspective of a community planner, why the Midtown District is the best choice for a Downtown Character Overlay Zoning District and why the Liberty/Division overlay is not appropriate.

As noted in Alexis's report, the Liberty/Division overlay "retains a small-scale residential character" with a "quieter residential feel." *The Dean* site does indeed abut a smaller scale residential student-occupied housing neighborhood to the north. However, large properties to the south are part of the University of Michigan athletic campus. Moreover, this site is part of an area identified for change in the draft Master Plan. Our site is also within an area contemplated by the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) to be added as an expansion of the downtown district. From the site going west on Madison Street toward Main Street, there are a variety of high activity commercial and industrial buildings, such as Union Rec, an auto shop and gas station, and mid-rise residential buildings. Along the south side of Madison, across the street, is the Lumber Co. and the start of the University of Michigan athletic campus. (Exhibit B)

The existing Liberty/Division overlay sits between the Main Street downtown and the State Street student 'downtown' area, in the form of a low-rise residential neighborhood. The stated intent of the Liberty/Division overlay is to preserve existing historic small-scale residential buildings and maintain the 'traditional' scale of historic residential buildings in new development. This intent is appropriate for the area currently within the Liberty/Division district area. This intent does not align and is not appropriate for the properties making up *The Dean* properties and other uses along Madison Street.

Further, the Unified Development Code states in Section 5.14, the Liberty/Division district "*coincides with the East William Historic District, and for this reason, preservation of the integrity of these resources is a high priority...*". The current boundary of the Liberty/Division overlay is jagged to coincide with the East William and the East Liberty Historic Districts, which make-up nearly the entire area of that overlay district (Exhibit A). Whereas the properties of the proposed *The Dean* are not in a historic district, nor do they match the quality or features of the historic homes, nor do they directly abut any historic homes. Instead, the current zoning on some of the lots within the project site are zoned industrial – which is the opposite end of the zoning spectrum of uses (Exhibit C).

Whereas, the areas in the Midtown Overlay district aim to accommodate higher density residential and mixed-use development to serve the downtown and university students. As a higher density residential development, *The Dean* best aligns with the intent of the Midtown Overlay and its correlating dimensional requirements. The Midtown Overlay and the conditions offered in this rezoning, including the setback along the north property line, will accommodate development on surrounding lots as the City works to implement the Master Plan goals.

Additionally, the intent of the Midtown Overlay is to have a strongly defined street edge and active open spaces. One condition offered by *The Dean* is application of the DDA's design standards. The design will promote activity at the street edge, compared to what exists today. Some of the planned key features for an active street edge and activity to create a sense of identity are listed below.

- Front Porch Reframe is inspired by the porches and stoops of the nearby neighborhood and the new Elbel Field, the south-facing facade encourages interaction between public and private realms. The project includes proposing activity and visual interest at the street edge and a Front Porch.
- A Bike Room that has an active frontage along 4th Avenue and Madison Street with punched windows to enhance the pedestrian realm and promote bike travel.
- Referencing the neighborhood's material richness and architectural rhythm, the façades are a woven composition of old and new.
- Streetwall massing hugs the corner of 4th Avenue and Madison Street and grazes the facade along 5th Avenue and Madison Street to properly hold the corners at the existing grade drops.

In summary, by rezoning the Site to D1, the City will be able to meet important density, residential needs, transportation mode-shift, and sustainability goals. We therefore request consideration of the rezoning to D1 with a Midtown Downtown Overlay for the proposed 'The Dean' development.

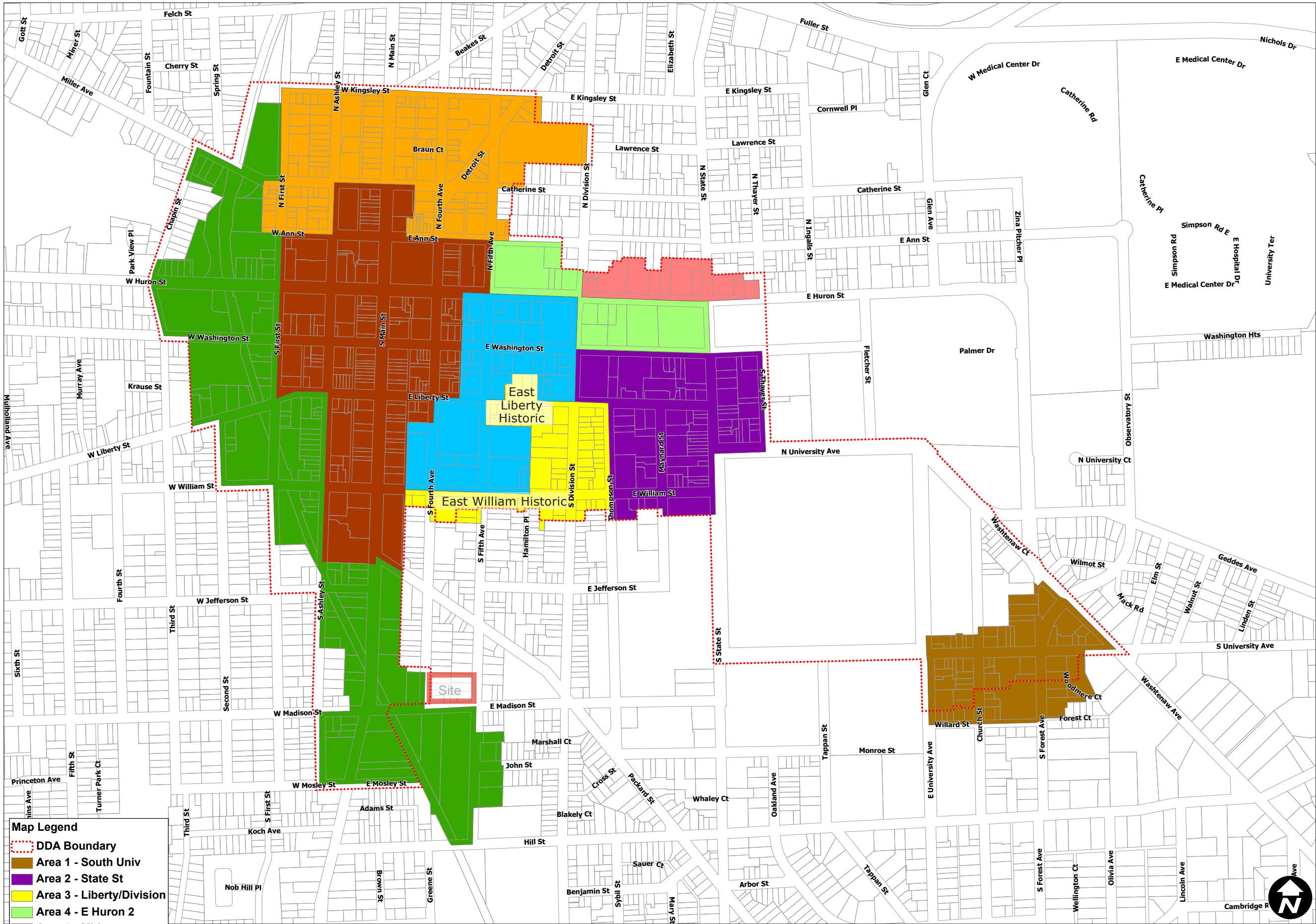
Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to further discussions on the proposed project and rezoning request. Please reach out to me with any questions before the Planning Commission meeting.

Sincerely,

Brad Strader

Brad Strader, Director of Planning
Cincar Consulting

Proposed Downtown Character Overlay Zoning Districts



SITE LOCATION | MICRO



Low-rise
Residential
Neighborhood

PACKARD ST

S ASHLEY ST

S MAIN ST

S 4TH AVE

S 5TH AVE

S DIVISION ST

THOMPSON ST

Union
Rec

Auto
Repair

E MADISON ST

Gas
Station

Mid-Rise
Residential

Athletic
Field



SITE LOCATION | CURRENT ZONING

