ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: December 11, 2024

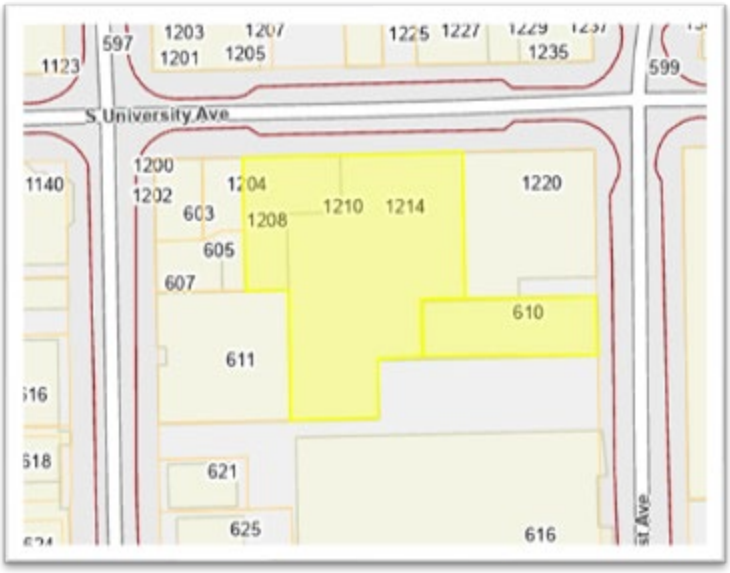
PROJECT: Ann Arbor Galleria, Project No. DR24-0006

ADDRESS: 1208 South University/ 610 South Forest

ZONING: D1 Downtown Core (base)
South University Character (overlay)
Primary (street designation) – South University and South Forest

DESIGN TEAM: Myefski Architects, Midwestern Consulting, Inc.

PROJECT LOCATION: The site is located on the south side of South University between Church and Forest including a parcel that fronts on South Forest.



PROJECT HISTORY: The 1208 S University site is used for ground floor and basement retail. A central open corridor goes through the building connecting to the alley and parking structure adjacent to the south. The building has a second story that is used for office space. The parcel addressed as 610 S Forest contains a three-story apartment building. The petitioner is Ann Arbor Galleria Associates, LLC.

A similar project was heard by the Design Review Board in December 2023. That

project only included the parcels along South University and was approved by Planning Commission in August 2024. The applicant has since acquired an additional parcel (610 South Forest) and is adding that parcel to the project scope. The revised plan will require a complete staff review and Planning Commission approval.

PROPOSED PROJECT: The proposed concept includes 259 residential units, 5,128 square feet of retail, and residential amenities including a rooftop pool, lounge, and fitness room. The residential units will be a mixture of studio to six bedrooms and will contain a total of 991 bedrooms. The building is proposed to be 18 stories and 195 feet tall. There will be 83 off-street parking spaces on two levels of parking accessed from the alley on the south side of the site. The ground floor will include the retail space, fitness room, lobby, 52 space bike room and leasing office. There will also be a designated mail room and package pickup location on the ground floor.

Primary building façade materials are proposed to include brick with prefabricated exterior wall panels. Metal balcony railings and aluminum framed glazing systems are also proposed. The project intends to utilize the height bonus of Section 5.18.4 which allows for a 30% maximum height bonus when providing Affordable and/or Sustainable building elements. The petitioner is proposing the project as all-electric (with the exception of an emergency backup generator) and will include solar panel installation on the roof, which satisfies the sustainability element requirement for additional height bonus (Section 5.18.4.D).

ZONING COMPLIANCE AND SITE CONTEXT:

1. **Zoning Compliance (Area, Height, Placement).** The following provides a cursory review of the proposed development project for compliance with the D1, South University Character Area, Primary Street Frontage, and area, height and placement regulations.

	Requirement	**Proposed**
Lot Area	NA	32,592 sq ft
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	NA	1344% FAR (438,132 sf)
Front Setback-North	0 ft MIN; 10 MAX	0 ft
Front Setback-East	0 ft MIN; 10 MAX	0 ft
Rear Setback - South	0 ft MIN	0 ft
Side Setback - West	0 ft MIN	0 ft
Streetwall Height	Min 2 stories, Max 3 stories	3 stories
Offset at Top of Streetwall	Average 5 ft MIN	Varies, 6 ft MAX
Total Height	150 ft MAX	195ft (18 stories)*

** Utilizing 30% height bonus for providing sustainability or on-site affordable housing, per Unified Development Code Sect 5.18.4.D.*

2. **Site Context and Site Planning.** The 1208 South University site is currently a two-story mixed use building adjacent to two-story buildings along South University. The additional parcel added to the project is a three-story residential building adjacent at 610 South Forest. The design guidelines for context and site planning address the arrangement of buildings and features on the site, including how the site relates to its neighbors, and suggests preferred ways to express and articulate some of the minimum and maximum area, height, and placement standards. Staff finds that the design team assessed the character of the adjacent streetscapes and buildings in keeping with the recommendations of the design guidelines and incorporated a few positive characteristics into the proposed project. Providing limited parking and service areas accessed from the rear helps preserve consistent streetscape.

3. The following guidelines are additionally relevant:

    a. *Guideline 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.*

b. *Guideline 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.*

c. *Guideline 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.*

d. *Guideline 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.*

4. **Building.** The design guidelines for buildings focus on breaking down massing of larger buildings from their lower-scale neighbors. Staff find that the building mass includes some of the suggested strategies to visually divide the mass, provide clear definitions and a sense of scale. The following guidelines are particularly relevant:

    a. *Guideline B.1.1 – Provide variation in building massing to reflect the underlying pattern of established lot widths*

    b. *Guideline 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.*

        i. *Use underlying established lot widths to help determine the width of building modules at the street level.*

        ii. *Vary the height of building modules, cornice lines and roof finish elements.*

5. **Building Elements.** Building elements include specific features that give character and detail to a building and influence the degree to which a new building contributes to the urban fabric. This section of the design guidelines calls for features and architectural details at the street edge to have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and to create an attractive and interesting street front. Staff finds the design achieves the some of the goals of the design guidelines for building elements. The following guidelines are particularly relevant:

    a. *Guideline C.1.1 – Wall surfaces with visually interesting detailing, textures and colors. First floor canopy that complements the design character of the building and its street front, wall surfaces with interesting detailing, textures and colors.*

    b. *Guideline C.2.1 – Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward*

the street. Design a change in wall materials, textures, or colors that frames the entry.

c. *Guideline C.3.1 – Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.*

   iii. *If contextually appropriate, upper floor windows should reference established patterns of adjacent and nearby buildings in size, shape, and spacing by aligning sills and headers and using similar window proportions.*

d. *Guideline 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.*

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

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

e. *Guideline C.7.1 – Use sustainable building materials whenever possible.*

6. **General Comments**

The petitioner has addressed all of staff's previous design comments with the previous project that was approved by the Planning Commission. This amended project design is essentially the same as the previous submittal in December 2023 with the building theme and design extended through the new building extension to South Forest. Planning staff has no additional comments at this time.

DESIGN NARRATIVE FROM THE PETITIONER:

7. **Theme of the Design Concept.** 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.

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.

8. **Design Guidelines and Character District.** 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. **Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning.** 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.

10. **Design Guidelines for Buildings.** 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.

11. **Design Guidelines for Building Elements.** 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.

Attachment: Project Narrative
Submittal Packet
Supporting Materials

Prepared by Matt Kowalski, City Planner
December 2, 2024