



# 805 Oxford Rd

Sigma Zeta Housing, LLC

May 19, 2026

Ann Arbor Planning Commission Meeting

Applications for Approval of Site Plan and Special Exception Use

SEU25-0001



# Sigma Zeta Housing LLC – 805 Oxford Rd Site Plan

Lot Size 1.047 acres: One of the largest on the block.

Zoned R2B: Permits sorority housing with SEU.

Currently has a large, sprawling Single-family home: Highest in the neighborhood.

Originally Built in 1897: Used as fraternity house for many years until sold and completely renovated in 2002 to 2005. This is not in an historic district or a historic home.

Proposed site plan meets all of the ordinance requirements of the Unified Development Code. **Your Planning Staff has recommended the site for approval.**

Site comprised of a hill: This creates development challenges - but they were all overcome in the site plan approval process.

# Sigma Zeta Housing LLC – 805 Oxford Road

## Special Exception Use (SEU)

- Planning Commission has discretion in granting SEU application.
- But discretion is not unlimited. Must be based upon evaluation of specific factors in Section **5.29.5 D**
- The Planning Commission is to review SEU applications and apply its discretion to the question of whether the project is compatible with appropriate and orderly development of the Zoning District applying a specified series of factors.

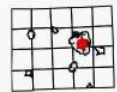
# Compatible with Appropriate and Orderly Development of the Zoning District


**Section 5.29.5 (D)** of the Unified Development Code Seeks to Confirm that the Project is Compatible with Appropriate and Orderly Development of the Zoning District.

- This Section Asks three big picture questions relating to how the project fits into the neighborhood and Ann Arbor’s development plans. You should grant approval of the project if you find that they have been “**substantially met.**”
- First, is the proposed use compatible with the “appropriate and orderly Development of the zoning district and adjacent zoning districts” in terms of location, size and character?



Map Title

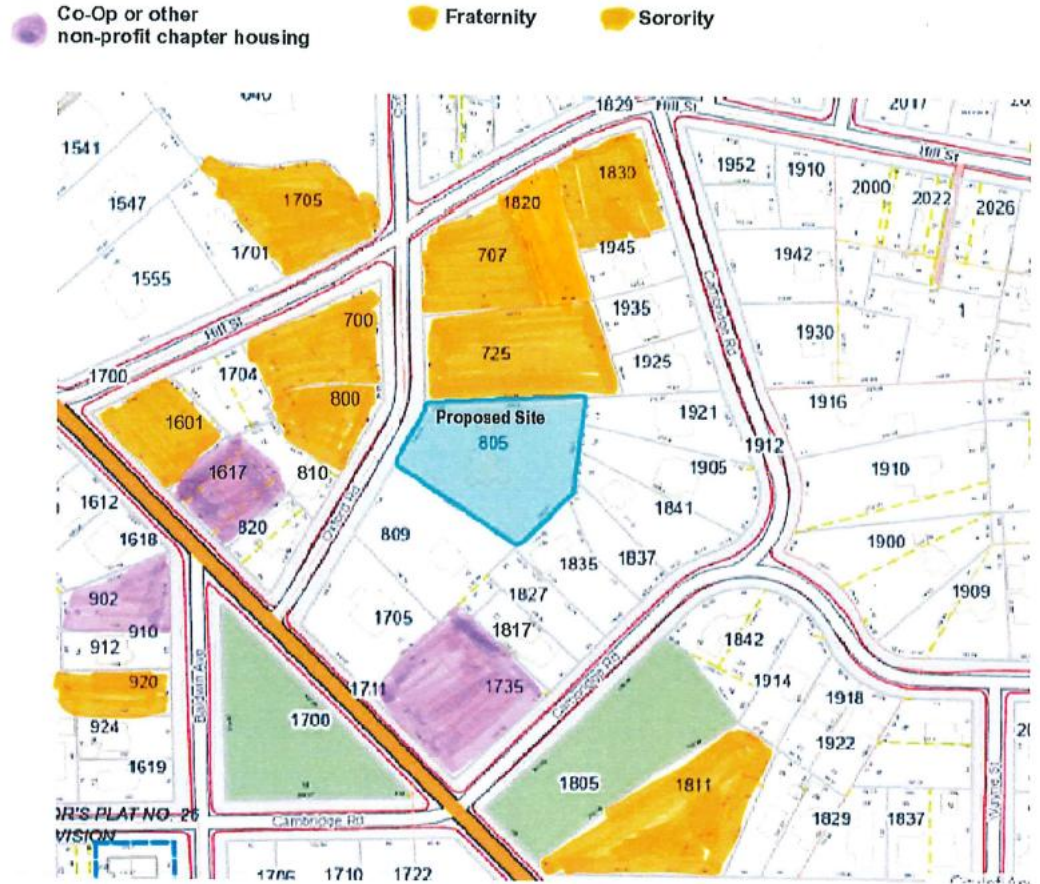


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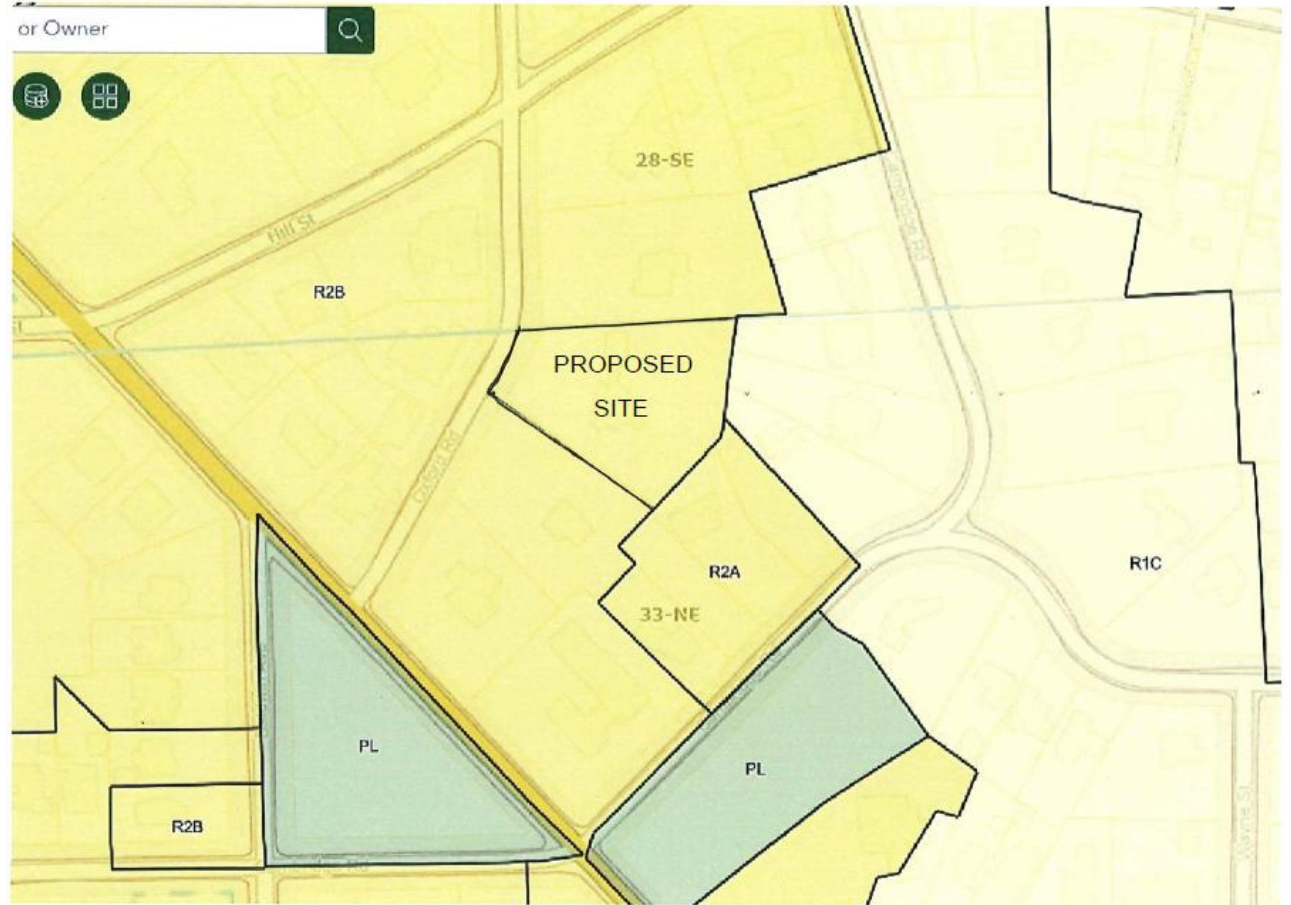
● Co-Op and Other Non-Profit Chapter Housing

● Fraternity and Sorority

- 1830 Hill Street: Alpha Phi – Theta Chapter (Sorority)
- 1820 Hill Street: Alpha Phi – Theta Chapter (Sorority)
- 700 Oxford Rd: Sigma Nu (Fraternity)
- 707 Oxford Rd: Phi Gamma Delta (Fraternity)
- 725 Oxford Rd: Theta Delta Chi (Fraternity)
- 800 Oxford Rd: Sigma Alpha Mu (Fraternity)
- 805 Oxford Rd: Proposed Sigma Zeta Housing LLC, Kappa Delta (Sorority)
- 902 Baldwin Ave: Black Elk Cooperative (Co-op)
- 920 Baldwin Ave: Sigma Phi Epsilon (Fraternity)
- 1601 Washtenaw Ave: Lambda Chi (Fraternity)
- 1617 Washtenaw Ave: Karl D. Gregory Cooperative House
- 1735 Washtenaw Ave: Michigan Branch of Telluride Association
- 1811 Washtenaw Ave: Sigma Kappa (Sorority)



# Zoning Map



# 1830 Hill Street – Alpha Phi



# 700 Oxford Rd – Sigma Nu



# 1617 Washtenaw Ave – Karl D. Gregory Cooperative House



# 1735 Washtenaw Ave – Michigan Branch of Telluride



# 1811 Washtenaw Ave – Sigma Kappa



# 920 Baldwin Ave – Sigma Phi Epsilon



# Square Footage of Sororities

Organization	Address	Capacity	Year Built	Size (Floor Area)
Alpha Chi Omega	1212 Hill Street	49		1912 9,218 sq ft
Alpha Delta Pi	722 S. Forest	69	remodeled 1960	15,998 sq ft
Alpha Epsilon Phi	1205 Hill Street	62		1910 7,640 sq ft + 4,685 sq ft = 12,325 sq ft
Alpha Gamma Delta	1322 Hill Street	64		1920 15,005 sq ft
Alpha Phi	1830 Hill Street	52		1928 10,029 sq ft
Chi Omega	1525 Washtenaw Ave	76		1952 16,419 sq ft
Delta Delta Delta	718 Tappan	60		1929 15,032 sq ft
Delta Gamma	626 Oxford	58		8,045 sq ft
Gamma Phi Beta	1520 S. University	59		1912 13,333 sq ft
Kappa Alpha Theta	1414 Washtenaw	52		1920 18,155 sq ft
Kappa Kappa Gamma	1204 Hill Street	71		1920 12,795 sq ft
Pi Beta Phi	836 Tappan	64		14,433 sq ft
Sigma Delta Tau	1405 Hill Street	70		1895 13,882 sq ft
Sigma Kappa	1811 Washtenaw Ave	62		1908 20,180 sq ft
Zeta Tau Alpha	1550 Washtenaw	49		1920 11,047 sq ft
Sigma Nu	700 Oxford Road			10,152 sq ft
Sigma Alpha Mu	800 Oxford Road			15,659 sq ft
Theta Delta Chi	725 Oxford Road			
Phi Gamma Delta	707 Oxford Road			16,903 sq ft
Delta Chi	1705 Hill			11,885 sq ft
Alpha Sigma Phi	640 Oxford Road			6,064 sq ft
Lambda Chi Alpha	1601 Washtenaw			7,435 sq ft

# Ordinance asks the Planning Commission to consider four factors in applying this first standard 5.29.5 D(1)

- a. Will be consistent with the general objectives of the City Master Plan. **5.29.5 D(1)(a)**
- b. Will be designed, constructed, operated and maintained in a manner that is compatible with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity. **Section 5.29.5 D(1)(b)**
- c. Will be consistent with the general character of the neighborhood considering population density, design, scale and bulk; and the intensity and character of activity. **Section 5.29.5 D(1)(c)**
- d. Will not be detrimental to the use, peaceful enjoyment, economic value or Development of neighboring property, or the neighborhood area in general. **Section 5.29.5 D(1)(d)**
- e. Will not have a detrimental effect on the natural environment. **Section 5.29.5 D(1)(e)**

# Updates

## Changes to Site Plan from Prior Submission to Address Concerns

1. Parking lot reduced from 16 to 8 spaces, and reducing impervious surface coverage.
2. Reduction of proposed residents from 47 to 44, including house manager.
3. Northerly retaining wall moved southerly which allowed preservation of three additional landmark trees.
4. Easterly screening fence increased from 6 feet to 8 feet.
5. Row of arbor vitae added to easterly fence line clustered toward the southerly end of property (closest to 1835 Cambridge).
6. Additional bushes added to the southerly end to provide additional screening.
7. Additional trees added to help rebuild tree canopy.

## Additional Changes Proposed

1. Reduce request of max 75 residents (as suggested by Planning Staff) to 61.
2. Building had been redesigned to all-electric.
3. Considering participating in City Sustainable Energy Utility program.

# What We Heard from the Planning Commission

## 1. There is too much parking.

**Response:** Request was made to reduce on-site parking from 16 to 8 spaces. New site plan has 8 spaces.

## 2. Why does house have to be in the southeast corner – so close to the Cambridge homes?

**Response:** Every other choice of location on the site was worse in significant ways. This location allows all other site plan requirements to be met without variance. This location minimizes sound transmission to the Cambridge properties. This location minimized loss of landmark trees. This location is particularly close to 1835 Cambridge in part because of how far back the house sits on the property in violation of current setback rules. With sound and activities pushed to the Oxford side of the property, this location leave only visual issues which is addressed by the substantial screening by the 8 ft fence and extra landscaping planted along the fence.

## 3. Can we avoid the fire lane and turn around areas so as to reduce impervious surfaces?

**Response.** Parking area reduced. Confirmed that fire lane is required because it is not practical to move building close enough to the road. Also confirmed that solid wasted would require turnaround in any event. Length of fire lane in part dictated by ADA grade requirements. Additionally, the main adverse effect of too much impervious surface is excessive storm water run off. Not an issue here because of underground storm water detention system which reduces storm water run off instead of increasing it.

# What We Heard from the Planning Commission Cont.

## 4. Why does the house have to be so large?

**Response:** It is the size needed to provide the study living, gathering and meeting room amenities desired in a competitive marketplace. Size also allows for compliance with ADA requirements as well as house manager quarters and bicycle storage. The site more than accommodates this size of building. And there are other similar large facilities in the immediate vicinity in the over 18,000 square foot range and the trend is to increase house sizes for the same reasons needed here.

## 5. Why is the house 85% and not 100% electric?

**Response:** Kitchen consultant conveyed strong preference in keeping the kitchen appliances gas powered due to efficiencies and ease in operations. We have nonetheless, offered to make the entire building electric.

## 6. Why is house not equipped with solar panels?

**Response:** Solar Panel vender conducted a study which reveals minimal impact from doing so due to the limited roof area and desire to preserve tree canopy.

## 7. What can be done to reduce removal of trees?

**Response:** Significant efforts we made to reduce the number of the type of trees worth preserving. Location of the building was, in part, the product of trying to minimize the tree removal. That number is down to 28 (4 are in poor health, 13 are invasive species, and 28 healthy). The 121 trees to be added mitigates the removal and will build back the tree canopy to the extent lost, with desirable trees. Site currently has 92 trees. Proposed site plan has 168 trees.

# Factors for Placement of Building on the Back of the Site

## Preservation of Landmark Trees

- Minimize loss of landmark trees including tulip and black walnut tree.

## Pie Shaped Lot

- Front is 115' wide at the front and back is 277'. Makes it impractical to move building to the front of lot for parking and deliveries.

## Turnaround and ADA Requirements

- Provide sufficient clearance for fire lane and solid waste disposal pickup including turnaround and accommodate ADA requirements.

## Grading

- Avoid northerly end of property because of its 10' higher grade compared to southerly end. This allows reduction in building height and impact on neighbors.

# Factors for Placement of Building on the Back of the Site Cont.

## Impervious Surfaces

- Minimize/reduce impervious surfaces.

## Noise

- Minimize/eliminate vehicular and pedestrian activity/noise in the area closest to Cambridge properties including trash pickup, deliveries and sisterhood gatherings.

## Underground Stormwater Detention

- Allow for underground stormwater detention system which must be at lowest point of the site, i.e. the front of the lot. Code requires 10' minimum setback to building and to utility services.

## Comparable to Neighboring Setbacks

- 805 Oxford Rd: 111.5 FT
- North Neighbor: 126.1 FT
- South Neighbor: 118.2 FT

# Other Site Plan Options Explored

## Key Reasons Why This Doesn't Work:

- **Noise:** Dumpster, Philanthropy Events, Loading and Delivery Turnaround
- **150 ft Fire Hose**
- **Solid Waste:** No Turnaround
- **Tree Preservation:** Additional Tree Removal



Conceptual Site Plan Shown at Citizen's Participation Meeting

## Key Reasons Why This Doesn't Work:

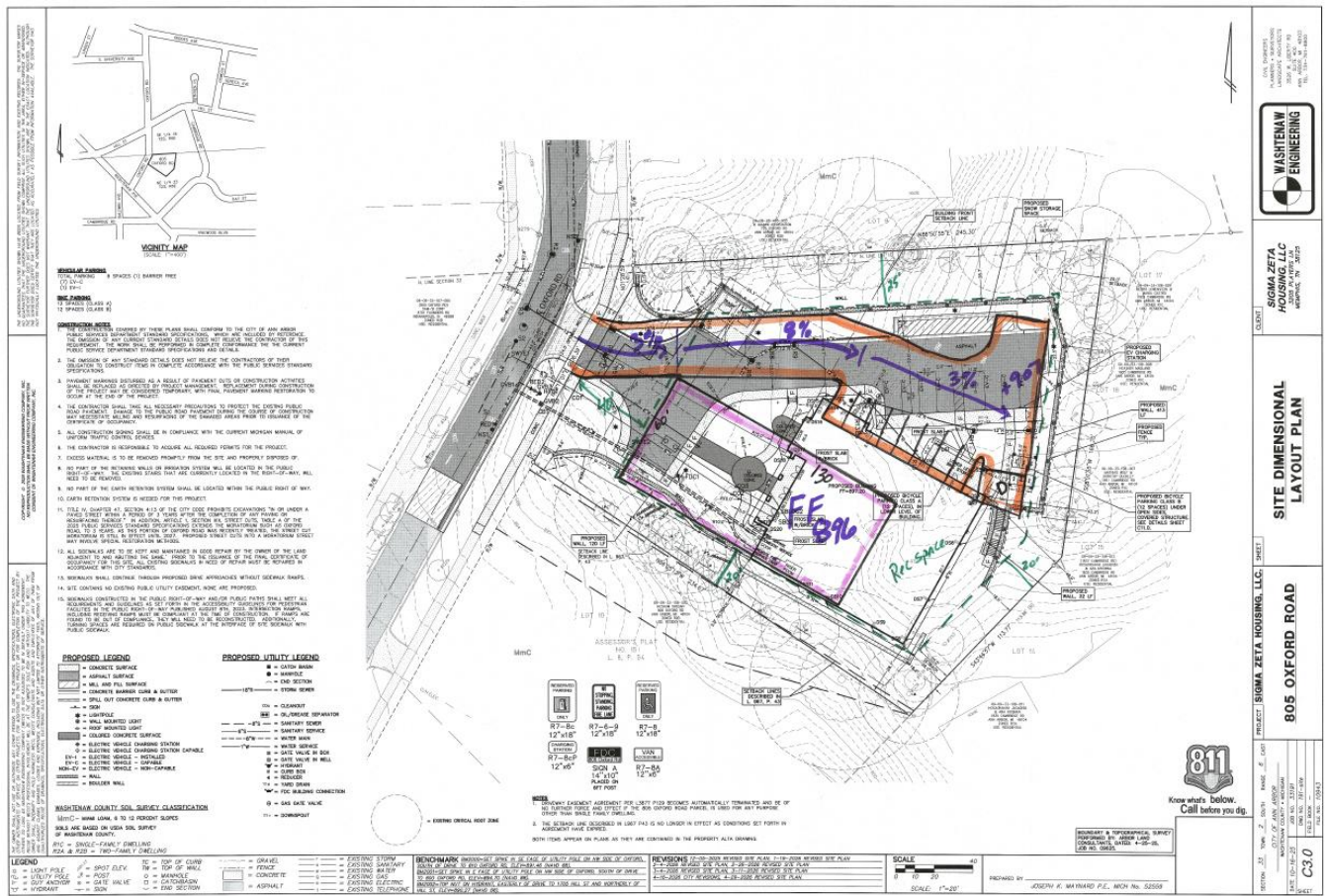
- **Noise:** Dumpster, Philanthropy Events, Loading and Delivery Turnaround
- **150 ft Fire Hose**
- **Solid Waste:** No Adequate Turnaround
- **Tree Preservation:** Additional Tree Removal
- **Parking in the Front:** Not Allowed



Conceptual Site Plan Shown at Citizen's Participation Meeting

# Key Reasons Why This Doesn't Work:

- **Noise:** Dumpster, Philanthropy Events, Loading and Delivery Turnaround
- **Tree Preservation:** Removal of Landmark Trees
- **Significant Financial Impact**
- **Project Viability:** Rectangle Building is not efficient



Conceptual Site Plan Explored after Planning Commission Meeting on April 7, 2026



# Concerns Regarding Size and Scale

- Designed to be nestled into the hill. Only the top two floors are visible to the neighbors. This mitigates any concerns about scale or bulk - and allows the project to meet density objectives of the City and the Applicant.
- Substantial screening is provided in areas that abut residential single family homes.
- Difficult to conceive that a sorority house in this neighborhood, on this block, that the density, design and intensity and character of the activity is not consistent with the neighborhood filled with similar facilities including next door and across the street.



# 1835 Cambridge Rd.



Proposed House

# 1841 Cambridge Rd.



Proposed House

# 809 Oxford Rd.



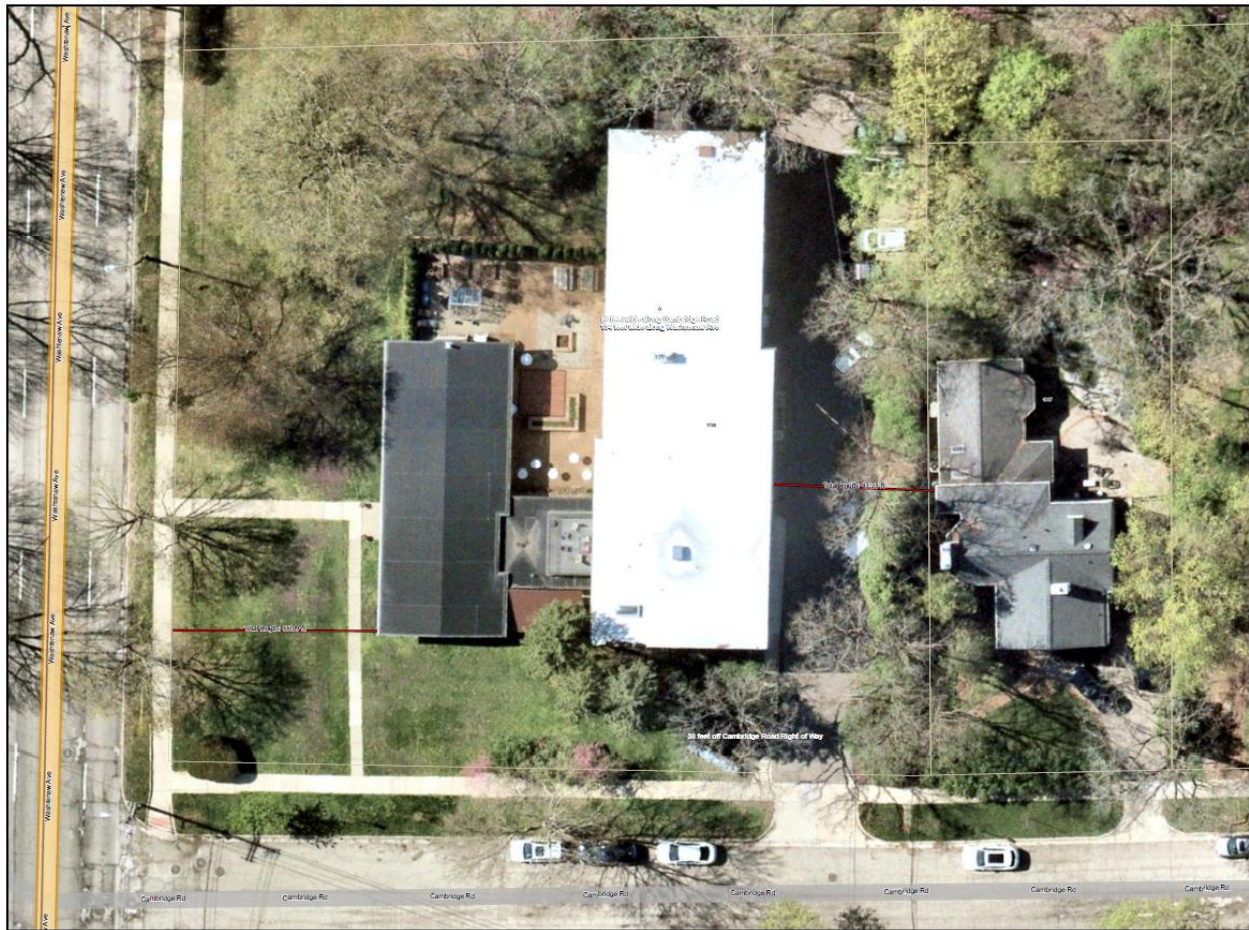
Proposed House

# 1735 Washtenaw Ave (Michigan Branch of Telluride) – Site Map

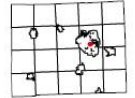
1735 Washtenaw Ave: Zoned R2B

Neighboring House: R2A

Distance Between: 43.23 FT



## Map Title



**Legend**

- Green outline: Quarter Section
- Light green fill: Section
- Yellow outline: Subdivision Conveyance
- Thin black line: Lot Lines
- Thick black line: Lot and Lanes
- White fill: ROW Use
- Black line: Railroads
- Light blue fill: National Recreation Lands
- Light green fill: National or Conservation Easement
- Light blue fill: Recreation Lands
- Blue fill: Lake
- Blue line: Stream
- Circle with '1': Overlay 1
- Circle with '2': Overlay 2

**Other Recreation Lands**

- Circle with '1': Overlay 1
- Circle with '2': Overlay 2

Scale: 0 0.1 0.2 0.3 0.4 0.5 Miles  
1:125  
1 inch = 10.67 feet

### Notes



Created 5/14/2026

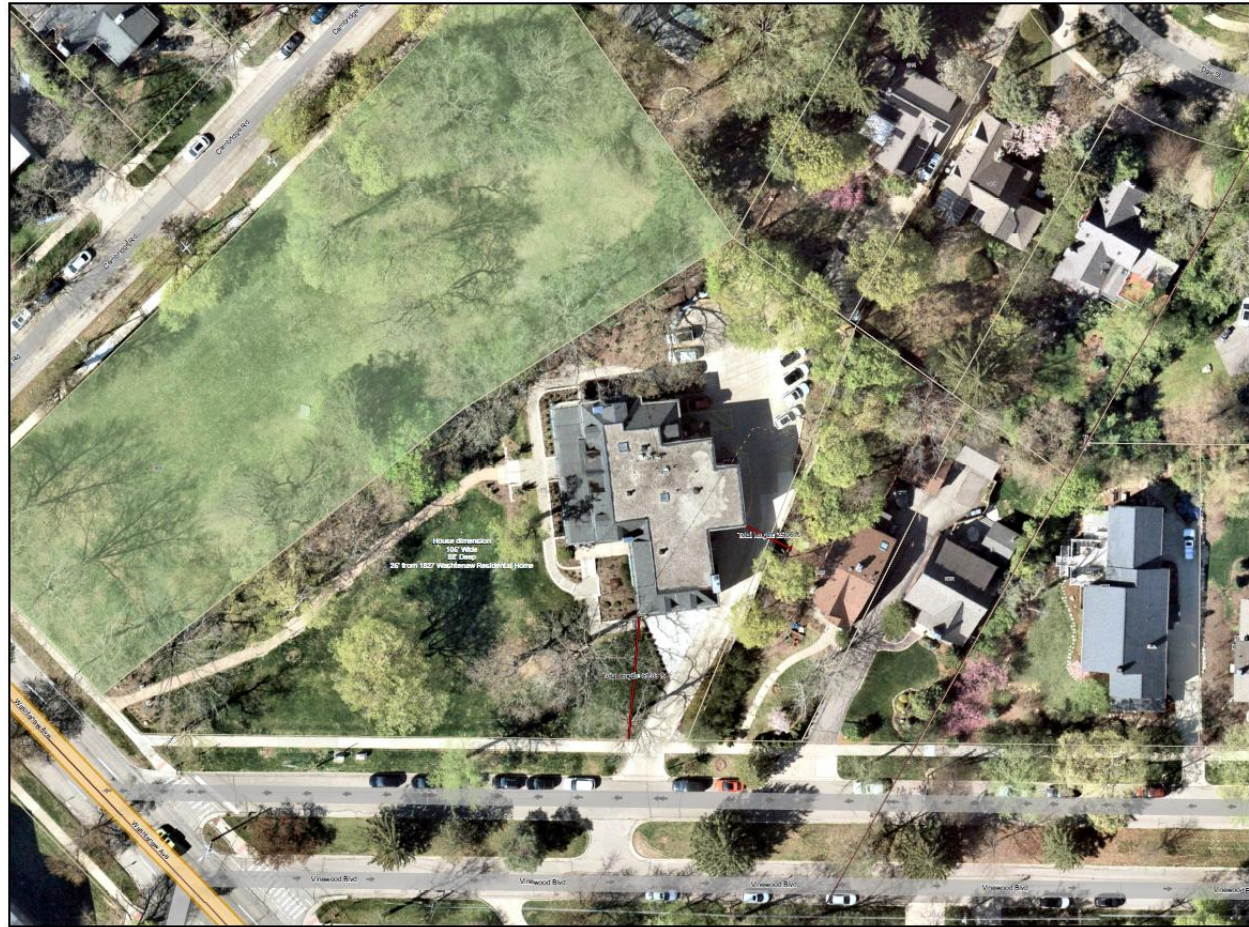
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# 1811 Washtenaw Ave (Sigma Kappa) – Site Map

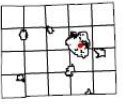
1811 Washtenaw Ave: Zoned R2B

Neighboring House: R1C

Distance Between: 25.06 FT



Map Title



### Legend

- Quarter Section
- Section
- Subdivision Conveyance
- Lot Lines
- Lot and eas.
- ROW line
- Railroad
- HOVMO Recreation Lands
- Other Recreation Lands
  - Permitted or Conservation Easement
  - Recreation Lands
  - Water
  - Stream 1
  - Stream 2
- polylineLayer
  - Overline 1
  - Overline 2



### Notes

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Created 5/15/2026

# Neighbor Concerns

# Neighbor Concerns

## 1. Project will destroy an historic home.

**Response:** House is old but not designated as historically significant. It has been renovated over the years, most recently in 2005.

## 2. Loss of tree canopy.

**Response:** The Plan preserves much of the existing tree canopy and to the extent that trees will be removed, many more will be added. Total trees on site will increase from 92 to 168.

## 3. Concerns regarding excessive storm water resulting from impervious surfaces.

**Response:** Plan includes an elaborate underground stormwater detention system which will capture virtually all of the water on site and slowly release it to the City stormwater system which will be improved by this Project. The net effect of stormwater drainage on the neighboring properties will not increase but will decrease by 52% compared to the current conditions.

## 4. Increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic on Cambridge/loss of peaceful and calm residential neighborhood.

**Response:** The site is now designed with only 8 parking spaces. Residents are required to purchase parking spaces in nearby lots or parking structures. All pedestrian travel and activity is designed to only be on Oxford. There is no access from house to Cambridge and will have no effect on the peacefulness currently existing on Cambridge.

# Neighbor Concerns Cont.

## 5. Concerns about noise.

**Response:** House is designed to contain virtually all noise. The gathering areas on the first floor are below grade and the Cambridge homes are protected from the noise by a retaining wall and earthen hill. Residences on upper floors that face Cambridge have only fixed windows (do not open).

## 6. House is too big, the meeting room is too big.

**Response:** House is sized to accommodate a sufficient number of residents (43 students) to allow it to be cost effective. Additionally, the house provides amenities which students desire such as meeting rooms and study lounges necessary to compete for residents on campus. Large size also accommodates numerous ADA requirements, significant bicycle storage and house manager residence. The 1.047 acre lot more than accommodates the footprint of the house and the overall size is mitigated by nestling it into the hillside so that only 1 ½ stories is visible above grade. This favorable compares with other large facilities in the area, including facilities that abut R2A and R1C residential districts such as on Cambridge. See Telluride building at 1735 Washtenaw and the Alpha Phi Sorority at 1830 Hill Street.

# Neighbor Concerns Cont.

7. House is too close to the Cambridge properties, especially 1835 Cambridge.

**Response:** House exceeds setback requirements. Closest point to the property line of 1835 Cambridge is 28 feet (southeast corner of the facility). The northeast corner of the building is 49 feet from the closest Cambridge property line. Locating the building toward the southeast corner of the property is expressly designed to push all vehicular and pedestrian activity from the house to the west and north, hundreds of feet from the Cambridge properties. Suggestions of moving the house westerly toward Oxford Road would not only be out of place for Oxford Road but would force the required fire lane and solid waste dumpster and turnaround to the back of the property closest to Cambridge. It would also push outdoor sorority gatherings to the back of the property closest to the Cambridge homes. The visual effects of having a one and a half to two story building (portion of building above grade) relatively close have been mitigated with the 8 foot screening wall and substantial plantings.

8. New facility will reduce our property values.

**Response:** Property as configured should have no impact on property values of homes on Cambridge because it does not change the character of the Oxford neighborhood or the Cambridge neighborhood from its current state. However, we engaged a local licensed appraiser to weigh in on the issue who has opined that there will be no diminution value to the neighbors as a result of this project.

# This project is intentionally designed to minimize impact on the neighbors.

## Sound Transmission:

1. House is nestled into the hillside so that the entire first floor – where all the assembling will occur is below grade relative to all the neighbors easterly on Cambridge and the southerly neighbor on Oxford. A retaining wall and an earthen hillside is a much better sound buffer than landscaping.
2. The upper floors where the residences are located have been designed with windows that do not open. There will be virtually no sound emanating from this building.
3. Outside activity, if any, will be in the front of the building on the Oxford Road side in front of building because of the building design. Thus, it will not be relevant to neighbors on Cambridge.
4. Concern was expressed about placement of the building at the southeast corner of the property which is closest to the neighboring properties. But this is actually beneficial from the standpoint of sound transmission. It allows for the one potential regular source of noise outside the house, being the delivery and waste disposal trucks, to enter and exit at the northwest corner of the property, as far away as possible from the southerly neighbor on Oxford and the closest neighbor on Cambridge.

# Visual Screening from Neighbors

1. Plan provides required 6 foot screening fence for abutting single family residences. The screening fence on the back of the house abutting Cambridge has been increased to 8 feet.
2. The plan also adds a row of arbor vitae clustered along the south-easterly side which will in just a few years provide additional screening for the neighbors on Cambridge.
3. In addition to the screening fence on the southerly side of the property, more shrubs added to beef up the screening on that side of the house.

# Claimed Diminution of Value Unfounded

1. Speculation that constructing a brand new sorority house on the property would diminish the value of single-family homes nearby is unfounded.
2. Professional residential appraiser, Heather Somers-Strozeski of Davis M. Somers Co. Inc. weighed in and provided an informed opinion which we have provided to the Planning Commission.
3. The appraiser has opined that a new sorority as proposed will have no material adverse effect on property values in the area.

# Excerpt from Appraiser Report from Heather Somers-Strozeski of Davis Somers Co. Inc,

It is my professional opinion that the proposed construction of a new sorority in this neighborhood in general and on 805 Oxford Road in particular, will have no negative market impact on or cause a diminution in value to, the surrounding properties, including the single family property abutting the subject property to the south (on Oxford Road) and to the east (on Cambridge Rd.)

# How is this project consistent with the Master Plan?

- Location of Facility. Among the most fundamental objectives of the Master Plan (now called the Comprehensive Plan) is that new uses be located in designated parts of the City and not in others. The Comprehensive Plan provides current and proposed future use maps. This use is absolutely consistent with where a Sorority House should be located under the Comprehensive Plan. Locating a sorority house in this area is part of that vision.
- Adding Appropriate Density. Adding additional housing is clearly an objective of the Comprehensive Plan. Converting this large parcel from a single family residence to a facility that houses 43 U-M students, takes pressure away from other housing in the campus area. This too, is consistent with the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan.

# Sustainability

- **Sustainability of Energy Source.** Sustainability is also one of the objectives of the Comprehensive Plan. Converting a house which is now entirely natural gas powered for a single family to an almost entirely electric powered facility for 44 people is absolutely consistent with the sustainability objectives in the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Walkability.** The Comprehensive Plan encourages increased density in areas that are walkable to the main commercial hubs to reduce the need for driving and reducing the carbon footprint. The Comprehensive Plan even specifies three story buildings to achieve this density in R2B districts. This location creates that very density in an area that is very much walkable to the main campus and the Main Street retail areas.
- **Storm Water Management.** By providing an underground storm water detention system and improving the storm water main in Oxford Road, we mitigate the effects of impervious surfaces and reduce adverse effects of climate change which has seen more rain in recent years.
- **Maintaining and/or Rebuilding the Tree Canopy.** While removal of some trees is unavoidable, the proposed site plan intentionally retains as much of it as possible and then adds significant plantings to not only mitigate the loss, but will in the long term, add to the tree canopy, another objective of the Comprehensive Plan.

# Maximum Preservation of Trees on Site

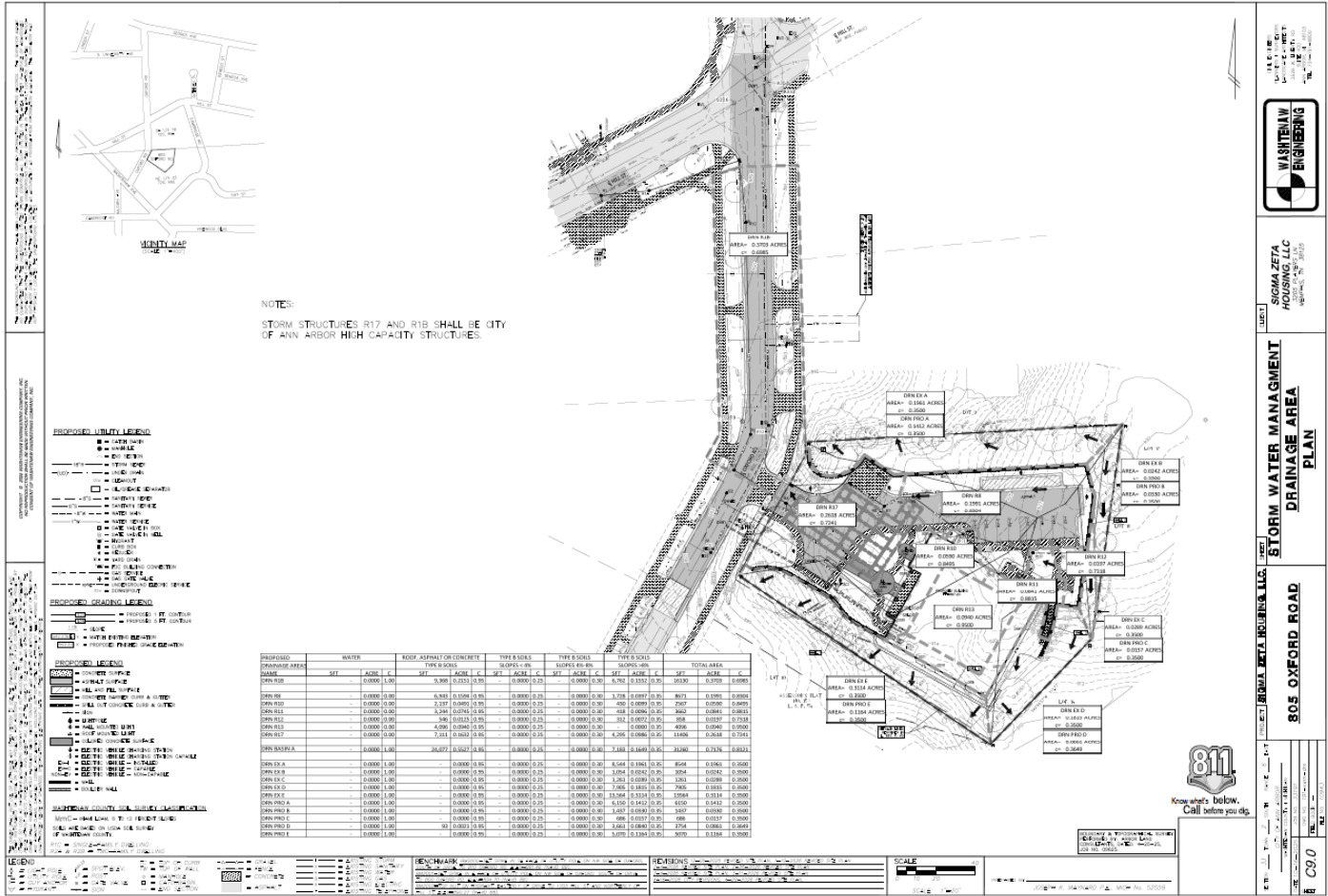
- New Site Plan shrinks the parking area and moves northerly retaining wall to the south. This allowed for preservation of 3 additional landmark trees, reducing tree removal from 48 to 45.
- Of the remaining 45 trees to be removed, only 41 are considered “woodland” trees and of those, 4 are not healthy. Thus, the real number of trees to be removed that the City seeks to limit, is 41 of the 92 trees currently on the site. Of these 41 trees, 13 are considered to be invasive species by the City and removal is generally less objectionable. This leaves only 28 trees of the original 92 that are trees generally worth preserving but which must be removed.
- But the plan contemplates planting some 121 new trees that in time will fill in the existing canopy and provide substantial screening for the neighbors. Accordingly, when completed the tree total on the property will actually rise from 92 to 168.
- Can we plant more trees? Not really. Our goal is not only to maintain and even enhance over time the tree canopy, but to use best practices for tree health by not over-crowding or planting in root zones of existing or future landmark trees.

# Plans

# Storm Water Management Drainage Area Plan

Storm Water Reduction to Neighbors Lot: Reduction of 53%

- Cannot do more as we would need to remove trees and adjust grading



**WASHINGTON ENGINEERING**

**SIGMA ZETA HOUSING, LLC**

**STORM WATER MANAGEMENT DRAINAGE AREA PLAN**

**805 OXFORD ROAD**

**811**  
Know what's below. Call before you dig.

**C90**









Kappa Delta