

ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

Staff Report

MEETING DATE: March 8, 2023

PROJECT: AC Hotel - 300 East Huron
Project No. DR23-0002

ADDRESS: 300 and 312 E. Huron Street

ZONING: D1 Downtown Core (base)
Midtown Character (overlay)
Secondary (street designation) – South Fifth Avenue
Secondary (street designation) – East Huron Street

DESIGN TEAM: Meyers + Associates; Midwestern Consulting, Inc.

PROJECT LOCATION: The site is located at the southeast corner of E. Huron Street and South Fifth Avenue.

PROJECT HISTORY: The site is currently owned by First Martin Corporation and is used as a public surface parking lot.

PROPOSED PROJECT: The proposed concept includes a 139 key, six-story hotel with a total of 79,808 square feet. Seventeen off-street parking spaces are proposed at grade on the south side of the site. The ground floor of the hotel will include the lobby, breakfast space, meeting rooms, bar/lounge, and back of house spaces. A fitness center is proposed on the 6th floor. The hotel brand is part of the Marriott portfolio.

Primary building façade materials are proposed to include brick with a metal and “textured stone” rainscreen. Aluminum framed glazing systems are also proposed.

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, Midtown Character Overlay District, secondary frontage designation area, and area, height and placement regulations.

	Requirement	Proposed
Lot Area	NA	19,587 sq ft
Floor Area		75,527 sq ft (excludes shafts,

	78, 348 sq/ft MAX	terraces, penthouse; includes basement)
FAR (Floor Area Ratio)	400% standard MAX,)	385.6% FAR
Rear Setback-North	0 ft MIN; 0 MAX	0 ft
Front Setback-West	0 ft MIN; 10 MAX	0 ft
Front Setback - South	0 ft MIN, 10 ft MAX	0 ft
Front Setback - East	0 ft MIN, 10 ft MAX	0 ft
Streetwall Height	Min 2 stories, Max 4 stories	4 stories along E. Huron, 2 stories on S. Fifth
Offset at Top of Streetwall	Average 5 ft MIN	Varies: 4.5 ft and 7.5 ft on north side; 5 ft on west side; 5 ft MIN average on both frontages
Total Height	180 ft MAX	75ft (6 stories)
Massing Articulation	Not applicable	NA with this petition
Tower Diagonal	Not applicable	NA with this petition
Building Coverage	Not applicable	Approximately 72.5%
Open Space	Not applicable	None proposed

2. **Site Context and Site Planning.** The site is currently used as a surface parking lot which is along two of the primary transportation routes through downtown Ann Arbor. City Hall is located immediately across E. Huron Street to the north. The Bank of Ann Arbor's downtown branch is located directly to the south. City Center office building is located to the west and the Michigan Bell Telephone Company structure is located immediately to the east. 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 number of positive characteristics into the proposed project. The following guidelines are additionally relevant:
 - a. Guideline A.1.1 – Positive characteristics of adjacent (and nearby) sites are reinforced.
 - b. Guideline A.1.3 – Corner sites are an opportunity to express an architectural gateway or focal point and a dominant feature.
3. **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 – Step taller building elements away from lower-scale buildings, locate taller elements at the intersection of streets.
- b. Guideline B.1.2 – Vary the height of building modules, cornice lines and roof finish elements.
- c. Guideline B.1.3 – Use a distinct horizontal molding to define the base, provide district change in ratio of solid to void to distinguish base from upper floors. The design guidelines for buildings focus on breaking down massing of larger buildings from their lower-scale neighbors.

4. **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 – High level of ground floor transparency is encouraged throughout downtown.
- d. Guideline C.7.1 – Use sustainable building materials whenever possible.

5. **General Comments**

- a. The design team should consider providing solar panels on the roof of the building in order to reduce energy costs and the building's carbon footprint.
- b. The guidelines indicate that, "corner sites are an opportunity to express an architectural gateway or focal point and a dominant feature". This site, at the corner of two of the busiest streets in downtown Ann Arbor, provides

an opportunity to construct a gateway building that welcomes individuals into the core of Ann Arbor's downtown. The site invites a more vibrant and visually interesting looking building.

- c. The first floor on the north side of the building doesn't include design elements that help activate the street such as a building entrance. Consider providing another building entrance, larger window openings, and public art that could enhance visual interest along the sidewalk.
- d. The color of the upper floors is very muted and reminiscent of a suburban medical office building. Using a different color pallet might result in a more vibrant, exciting looking building in this core downtown location.
- e. Significant portions of the south façade are void of windows which provides a very sterile image and cold image. Windows or murals on these wall sections would enhance the appearance. The east façade will be mostly blocked from view by the Michigan Bell building.
- f. The project does not currently identify a location for bicycle parking.
- g. Portions (and possibly significant portions) of the project may need to be re-designed to address solid waste access issues.

DESIGN NARRATIVE FROM THE PETITIONER:

- 6. **Theme of the Design Concept.** The proposed AC Hotel at the corner of East Huron and South Fifth will be a 6-story, 139 guestroom facility. The AC Hotel brand is a part of Marriott's "distinctive" portfolio, characterized by straightforward detailing and refined gallery-like spaces.
- 7. **Design Guidelines and Character District.** At the northwest corner and along the East Huron streetscape, large expanses of exterior glazing are incorporated for a sense of connectivity between the interior and exterior public spaces. Floors 2-5 are comprised primarily of guestrooms, with a facade that incorporates varying degrees of offset/setback above the streetwall. A simple palette of high-quality exterior materials are used to make a unique composition that relates well to the immediate and extended context. At the 6th floor, the hotel's fitness center is flanked by 2 guestroom wings, and the rooftop terrace allows guests and locals alike to step out and take a moment to enjoy views of the city and the surrounding landscape.
- 8. **Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning.** The site is currently a parking lot. The proposed development will improve the pedestrian experience by reinforcing the street wall and creating a sense of place. The space will be designed to minimize pedestrian, bicycle, vehicular, and bus conflicts while also creating an interesting and inviting space for people to linger. The project proposes a pull-out area on S.

Fifth Avenue.

9. **Design Guidelines for Buildings.** The proposed FAR is 386%, which is less than the maximum 400% FAR. The hotel is proposed to be 6 stories in height (75 feet tall) which is less than the 180 foot maximum in the D1 zoning district.
10. **Design Guidelines for Building Elements.** High quality, durable materials are proposed for the building exterior in alignment with the City's requirement for the D1 Midtown district and the AC Hotel brand identity. Brick masonry is combined with metal and textured stone rainscreen panel systems, alongside aluminum framed glazing systems. The primary entrance is proposed to be located along S. Fifth Avenue.

Attachment: Elevations and Floor Plans