

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES STAFF REPORT

For Planning Commission Meeting of May 20, 2014

**SUBJECT: Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters Addition Special Exception Use and Site Plan for City Council Approval
(125 South Fifth Avenue)
Project Nos. SP14-015 and SEU14-008**

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission, after hearing all interested persons and reviewing all relevant information, finds the petition to substantially meet the standards in Chapter 55 (Zoning Ordinance), Section 5:104 (Special Exceptions), and hereby approves the special exception use petition for a drive-thru facility at the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters, 125 South Fifth Avenue.

PROPOSED CITY PLANNING COMMISSION MOTION

The Ann Arbor City Planning Commission hereby recommends that the Mayor and City Council approve the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters Addition Site Plan.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the special exception use be **approved** because the propose use is of such location, size and character as to be compatible with the zoning district in which the site is situated; and the location and size of the proposed use, its nature and intensity, the site layout and access, and effect of the proposed use on public services would not be hazardous or inconvenient to the neighborhood nor unduly conflict with the normal traffic of the neighborhood.

Staff recommends that the site plan be **approved** because, once the outstanding Forestry comment is addressed, the site plan complies with applicable local, state and federal laws, ordinances, standards and regulations; limits the disturbance of natural features to the minimum necessary to allow a reasonable use of the land; and does not cause a public or private nuisance and does not have a detrimental effect on the public health, safety or welfare.

LOCATION

This site is located at the northeast corner of South Fifth Avenue and East Washington Street, and is in the Downtown Development Authority district.

DESCRIPTION OF PETITION

The subject site currently contains the 23,325 square-foot two-story headquarters of the Bank of Ann Arbor, including 19 parking spaces under the building, 18 surface parking spaces north of

the building, and a drive-thru teller window. It is zoned D1 (Downtown Core base) and Midtown Character overlay district. Both its frontages are Secondary. The petitioner seeks approval to reconfigure the main entrance to the building, moving it from the center of its South Fifth Avenue face to the corner of Fifth and East Washington Street, and construct a 9,179-square foot third story addition over the rear of the building, its eastern half. The building is proposed to be a total of 32,651 square feet.

The site has an existing drive-thru facility, a bank teller window, on the north side of the building. When it was installed, downtown banks were permitted drive-thru windows as an accessory use (no special exception use approval required). The current zoning designation of the site, D1, requires special exception use approval for drive-thru facilities. By code, when a site plan is proposed that includes a use which now requires special exception use approval, that use must seek a special exception use approval in order to continue.

No off-street vehicle parking spaces are required for the bank, because the total floor area is less than the normal maximum allowed. However, there are 35 spaces currently and 34 spaces proposed on the site plan. One parking space will be converted to a landscaped island. Four off-street bicycle parking spaces are required for the building. The site currently has two Class C spaces (one uncovered hoop) and a total of seven are proposed – four Class C spaces and three Class A spaces. The site has two points of access, one two-way driveway to South Fifth Avenue and two one-way driveways to East Washington Street. All driveways will remain unchanged.

Storm water management for the site, which currently has none, is proposed in underground storage tanks beneath the surface parking area. Detention for a 100-year storm volume will be provided.

The estimated construction cost is \$4,200,000.00.

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD REVIEW

The petitioner presented the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters Renovation and Addition project to the Design Review Board on January 15, 2014. The proposed design seeks to transform the current style from contemporary to traditional by replacing the yellow brick façade with brown and red-colored bricks and limestone-colored stone accents and trim and creating a brick and glass tower at the street corner to create a prominent entry.

In summary, the Board discussed how the proposed design did meet the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines and how refinements could be made for even greater compliance. Some suggestions included making the entry structure taller and more closely aligning design features of the bank with the features of the adjacent Bell Building to the east.

The full Design Review Board report and the petitioner's response are attached.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION MEETING

The petitioner held a meeting for interested citizens on February 4, 2014, a month prior to submitting this project for approval. Invitations were sent to all residents and property owners within 1,000 feet of the site as well as all subscribers to the GovDelivery planning update service. The full report provided by the petitioner is attached.

In general, the discussion addressed:

- The design of the new entrance and the new look of the building
- How construction will impact traffic flow the streets and sidewalks

COMPARISION CHART

	EXISTING	PROPOSED	REQUIRED/PERMITTED
Base Zoning	D1 (Downtown Core)	D1 (Downtown Core)	D1 (Downtown Core)
Gross Lot Area	25,118 sq ft	25,118 sq ft	No minimum
Max. Usable Floor Area in % of Lot Area	74% (23,325 sq ft)	128% (32,651 sq ft)	400% MAX normal (100,472 sq ft MAX) Up to 700% MAX with premiums (up to 175,826 sq ft MAX)
Premiums	None used	None used	Up to 75,354 sq ft
Character Overlay District	Midtown	Midtown	Midtown
Streetwall Height	2 story	2-3 stories	2 stories MIN 4 stories MAX
Offset at Top of Streetwall	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable (because no upper tower)
Building Height	27 ft (2 stories)	40 ft (3 stories)	180 feet MAX
Massing Articulation	Not applicable	Not applicable	None
Side, Rear Setbacks	52 ft side 0 ft rear	53 ft side 0 ft rear	Not applicable (because does not abut R district)
Building Frontages	Secondary Street	Secondary Street	Secondary Street
South Fifth Avenue	4 ft	4 ft	0 ft MIN, 10 ft MAX
East Washington Street	4 ft	4 ft	0 ft MIN, 10 ft MAX
Parking	Special Parking District	Special Parking District	Special Parking District
Parking – Automobiles	35 spaces	34 spaces	None required
Parking – Bicycles	2 Class C	3 Class A 4 Class C	4 spaces (30% Class A, 70% Class C)

SURROUNDING LAND USES AND ZONING

	LAND USE	ZONING
NORTH	Parking (surface)	D1 base, Midtown overlay
EAST	Communications Infrastructure	D1 base, Midtown overlay
SOUTH	Mixed-use	D1 base, Midtown overlay
WEST	Mixed-use	D1 base, Midtown overlay

HISTORY

The site was rezoned as part of the A2D2 Zoning Initiative. The current base and character overlay zoning districts and building frontage standards became effective in December 2009.

A two-story bank was constructed at the corner of South Fifth and East Washington in 1965, with a drive-thru teller window, occupied by at least two other banks before the Bank of Ann Arbor. Site plans were submitted a few times in the 1990's to demolish the bank as well as buildings on the adjacent lots but always withdrawn. The First Martin Corporation consolidated the three parcels at the corner of South Fifth and East Washington in 1990 into one parcel, which is the present Bank of Ann Arbor site.

In 1999, an 8,000-square foot second-story addition was approved and constructed. That approved site plan included several variances granted by the Zoning Board of Appeals to exceed the curb cut limitation on East Washington, a reduced front setback on East Washington and reduced parking aisle width for the parking beneath the second-floor addition. The variances for the reduced front setback and reduced parking aisle width are now moot because of City Code and Zoning Map changes have made those dimensions conforming. The variance to allow an additional curb cut remains valid and in use.

PLANNING BACKGROUND

The Downtown Plan is based upon several guiding values which articulate the most fundamental elements of the downtown. These values include providing a diversity of uses and accommodating a diversity of users, and providing a viable economy, a “green” and energy-efficient built environment and transportation network and social and cultural opportunities. Dense land use and development patterns which draw people downtown and foster an active street life, contribute to its function as an urban neighborhood and support a sustainable transportation system is a goal expressed in the Plan (page 22) as well as promoting downtown as a center of commerce in the community, strengthening and expanding a balanced mix of downtown’s active uses by providing convenient transit and parking, a quality pedestrian environment, strategically located vehicular and bicycle parking, and a diverse land use context needed to support a successful retail environment (page 23).

SPECIAL EXCEPTION USE STANDARDS

General Standards - The Planning Commission, in arriving at its decision relative to any application for a special exception, shall apply the following standards (petitioner’s response in regular type, *staff comments in italics*):

(a) The proposed use or uses shall be of such location, size and character as to be compatible with the appropriate and orderly development of the zoning district and adjacent zoning districts in which the site is situated. In applying this standard, the Planning Commission shall consider whether the proposed use:

1. Will be consistent with the general objectives of the City Master Plan;

The drive-thru window is an essential service for the bank customers and has been in operation in this location for 50 years. It does not interfere with pedestrians walking along Fifth Avenue or Washington Street. The drive-thru window is located to minimize interference with customer parking. It meets the goals of the master plan by avoiding conflicts with pedestrians by its location. The drive-thru is not a destination; the average transactions per day are approximately 20-25 total.

2. Will be designed, constructed, operated, and maintained in a manner that is compatible with the existing and planned character of the general vicinity;

The drive-thru will be maintained as it exists. The drive thru is “behind” the building and not visible from Washington Street. There is minimal visibility of the drive-thru from Fifth Avenue as well. It is visible only because the lot to the north is undeveloped.

Staff comment: The drive-thru facility is located on the side of the building and not between the building and the street, which will be the required location for all drive-thru facilities in the city. It is compatible with the character of the Midtown area.

3. Will be consistent with the general character of the neighborhood considering population density, design, scale and bulk; and the intensity and character of activity;

The drive-thru window as it exists has been part of the Mid-town character district prior to the character district’s inception. The drive-thru is not an intensive use, there are approximately 20-25 transactions a day. Typically the customers using the drive-thru are on their way downtown and use the convenience. They do not necessarily make a trip downtown to use the drive-thru. Many customers use the bank’s drive-thru and then go to the farmer’s market as an example.

4. Will not be detrimental to the use, peaceful enjoyment, economic value or development of neighboring property, or the neighborhood area in general;

The bank itself adds to the economic value and development of the neighborhood, and the drive-thru as an essential service adds to the economic development. The hours of the drive-thru are banking hours (Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, 9 to 5 pm; Thursday and Friday, 9 to 6 pm; Saturday, 9 to noon.) The hours of operation will not adversely affect the adjacent properties.

5. Will not have a detrimental effect on the natural environment.

The drive-thru exists and will not add a detrimental effect to the natural environment.

(b)The location and size of the proposed use or uses, the nature and intensity of the principal use and all accessory uses, the site layout and its relation to streets giving access to it, shall be such that traffic to and from the use or uses, the assembly of persons in connection therewith, and the effect of the proposed use on public services

and facilities, will not be hazardous or inconvenient to the neighborhood nor unduly conflict with the normal traffic of the neighborhood. In applying this standard the Planning Commission shall consider, at minimum:

6. The location of and access to off-street parking and the safe provisions for pedestrian traffic;

There are 3 existing curb cuts for access to the site for vehicles. There are distinct in and out drives. The drives provide clear visibility of the sidewalk and pedestrian traffic.

Staff comments: The drive-thru facility is well placed relative to pedestrians on the city sidewalks. However, there is little to prevent conflicts between vehicles using the drive-thru facility and pedestrians on the bank site itself. Once a driver leaves their vehicle, or before they have returned to it, they are pedestrians. If this was a more frequently used facility, staff might recommend design features such as a clearly marked crossing, differentiated surface materials or barriers. Those features are suburban in nature and given the successful history of the existing drive-thru facility, staff is comfortable with it remaining as is.

7. The relationship of the proposed use to main traffic thoroughfares and to streets and road intersections;

The existing drive-thru's location minimizes interaction with parking. The drive-thru has marked directional arrows for traffic flow on to the site and off the site. Access typically off Washington Street and egress on Fifth Avenue. Each of the access points for the drive-thru as well as the existing parking have plenty of visibility for drivers to be aware of pedestrians.

8. Vehicular turning movements in relationship to traffic flow routes;

The drive-thru utilizes the existing turning patterns. The egress drive from the drive-thru exists on to one-way South Fifth Avenue. The entrance for the drive-thru is access off of Washington Street and is clearly defined, current flow patterns allow room for vehicles parking to by-pass the drive-thru and still park or exit.

9. The intensity and character of traffic and parking conditions on the site, and in the general area;

The bank with existing customer parking and the drive-thru window have a more transient traffic than some of the adjacent uses that do not have parking provided on site. Many properties in the vicinity of Fifth Avenue and Washington Street have on site parking provided. This makes the traffic and parking conditions similar to the area to the existing bank. Across the street is the drive-thru ATM for Comerica Bank.

10. The requirements for additional public services and facilities which will be created by the proposed use will not be detrimental to the social and economic welfare of the community.

The exiting drive-thru itself will not require any additional public services or facilities. In the addition and renovation of the bank we will be providing on site storm water management. Thus bringing the overall facility up to current standards.

SERVICE UNIT COMMENTS

Forestry and Natural Resources – The proposed interior landscape island in the parking lot does not have a tree as required. A tree must be added to the proposed island, or the island must be relocated outside of the underground storm water detention system below, or another treed island must be proposed elsewhere to meet the maximum row of stalls requirement.

Prepared by Alexis DiLeo
Reviewed by Wendy Rampson
6/16/10

Attachments: Parcel and Zoning Map
Aerial Photo
Site Plan
Elevations
Citizen Participation Report
Design Review Board Report
Petitioner's Response to DRB Report

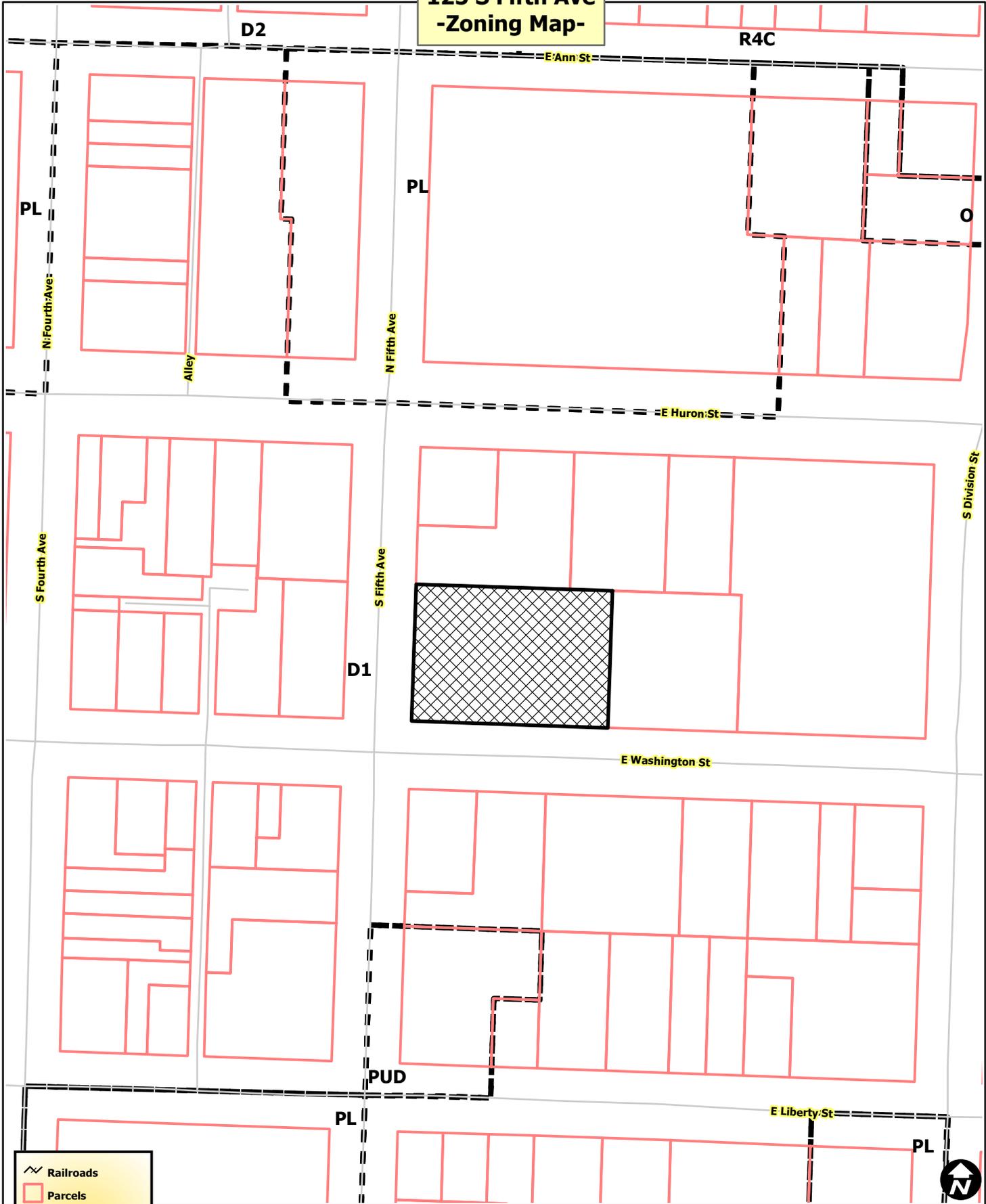
c: Petitioner: Bank of Ann Arbor
Attn: Hans Maier
125 South Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Petitioner's Agent: Bowers + Associates, Inc.
Attn: Susan Bowers
2400 South Huron Parkway
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Property Owner: First Martin Corporation
115 Depot Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104

Systems Planning
Project No. SP14-015

125 S Fifth Ave -Zoning Map-

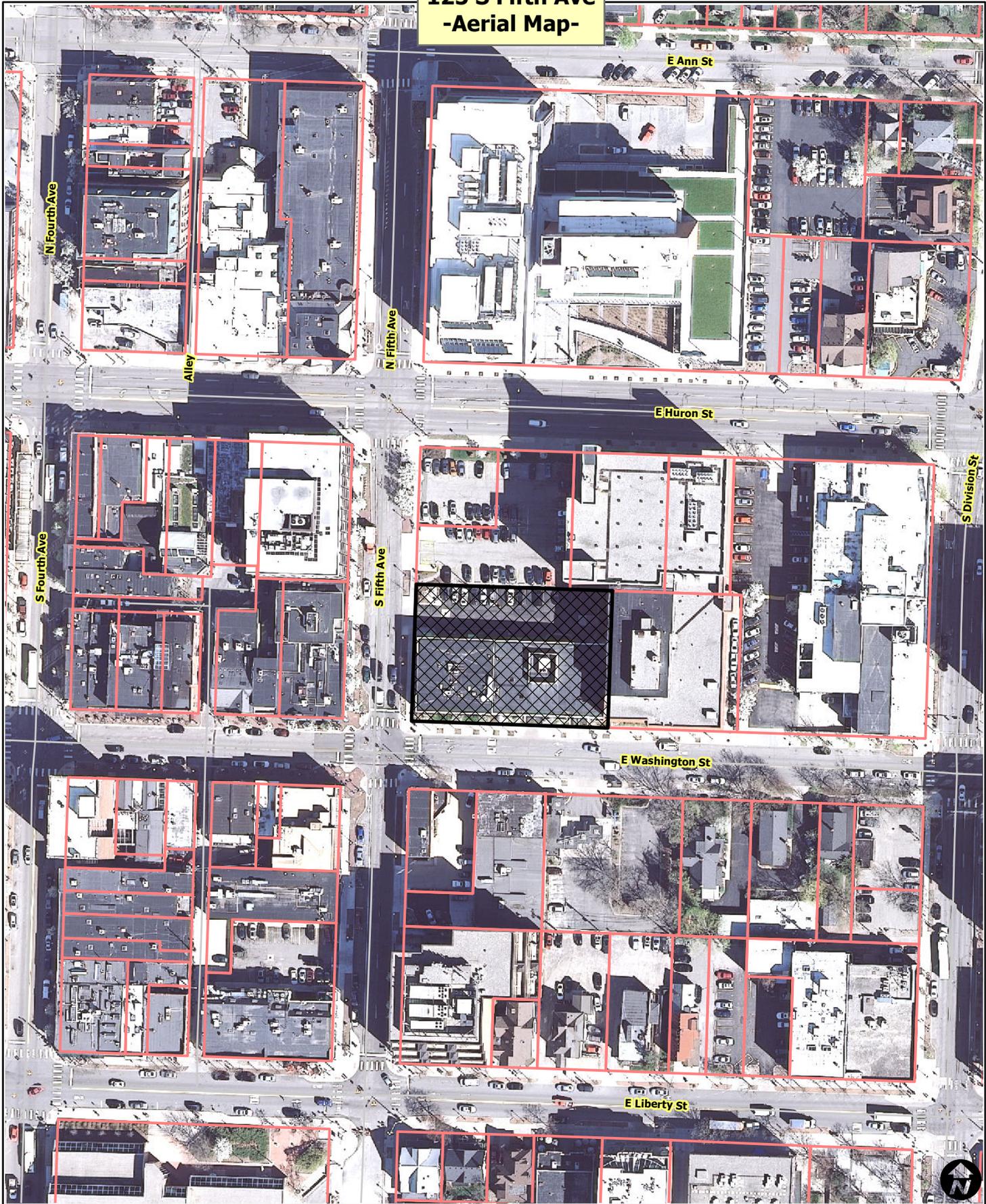


Railroads
 Parcels
Zoning
 Township Islands
 Zoning Districts
 Huron River



City of Ann Arbor Map Disclaimer:
 No part of this product shall be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without prior written permission from the City of Ann Arbor.
 This map complies with National Map Accuracy Standards for mapping at 1 Inch = 100 Feet. The City of Ann Arbor and its mapping contractors assume no legal representation for the content and/or inappropriate use of information on this map.
 Map Created: 12/18/2013

125 S Fifth Ave -Aerial Map-



-  Railroads
-  Parcels
-  Huron River



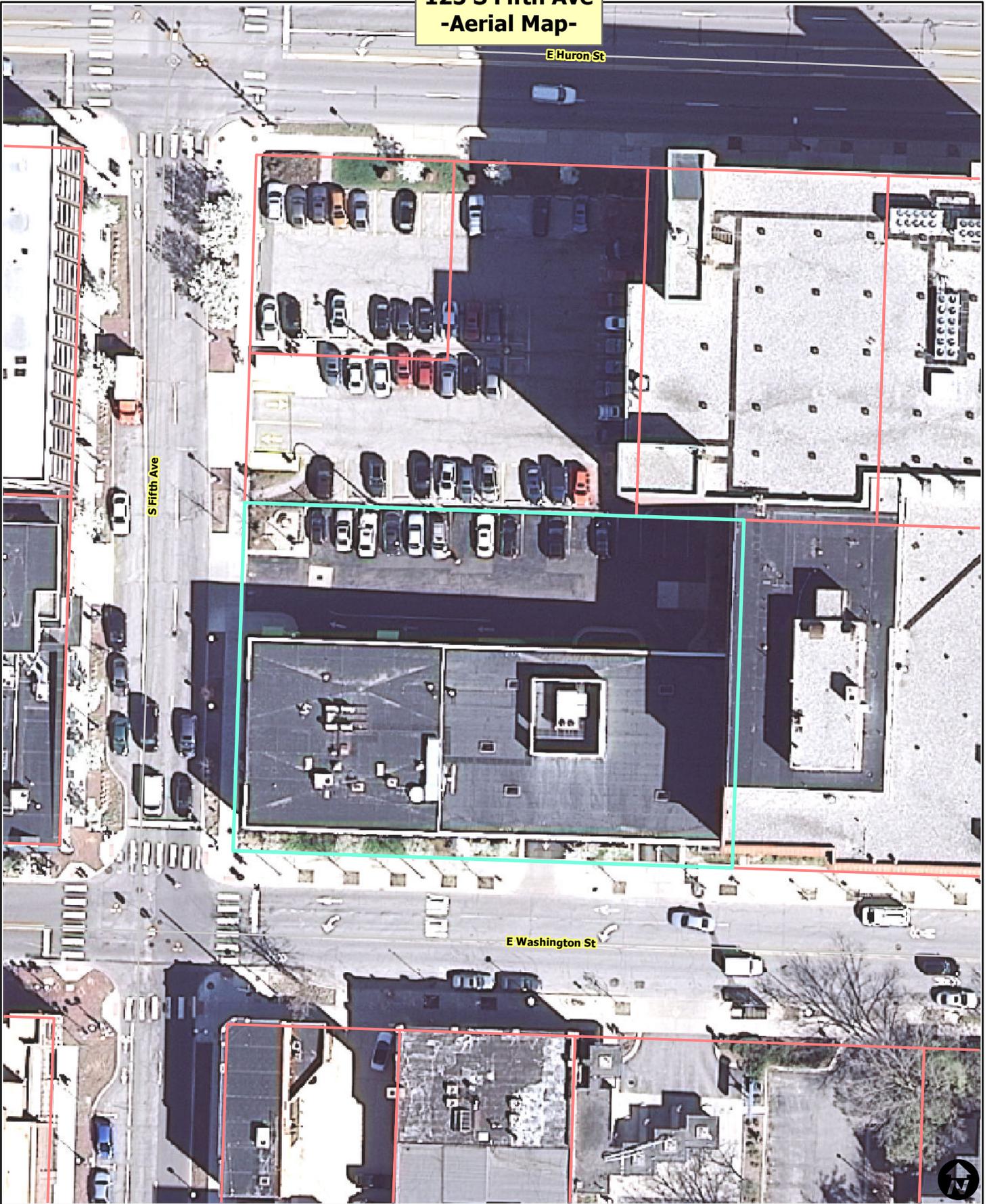
City of Ann Arbor Map Disclaimer:
 No part of this product shall be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without prior written permission from the City of Ann Arbor.
 This map complies with National Map Accuracy Standards for mapping at 1 Inch = 100 Feet. The City of Ann Arbor and its mapping contractors assume no legal representation for the content and/or inappropriate use of information on this map.
 Map Created: 12/18/2013

125 S Fifth Ave -Aerial Map-

E Huron St

S Fifth Ave

E Washington St



-  Railroads
-  Parcels
-  Huron River



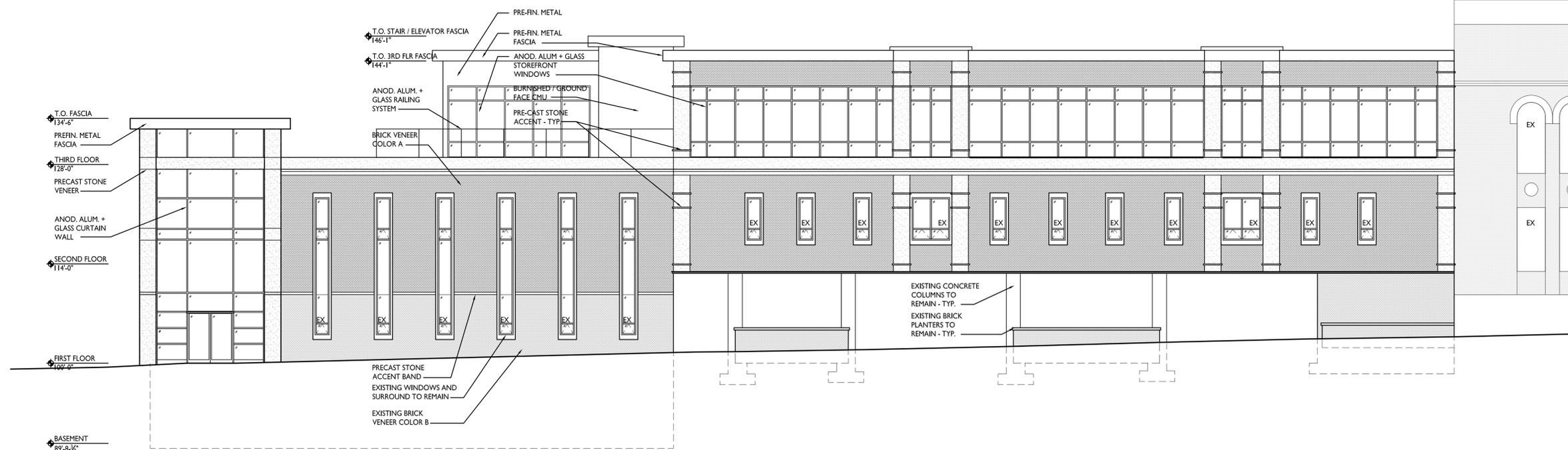
City of Ann Arbor Map Disclaimer:

No part of this product shall be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, for any purpose, without prior written permission from the City of Ann Arbor.

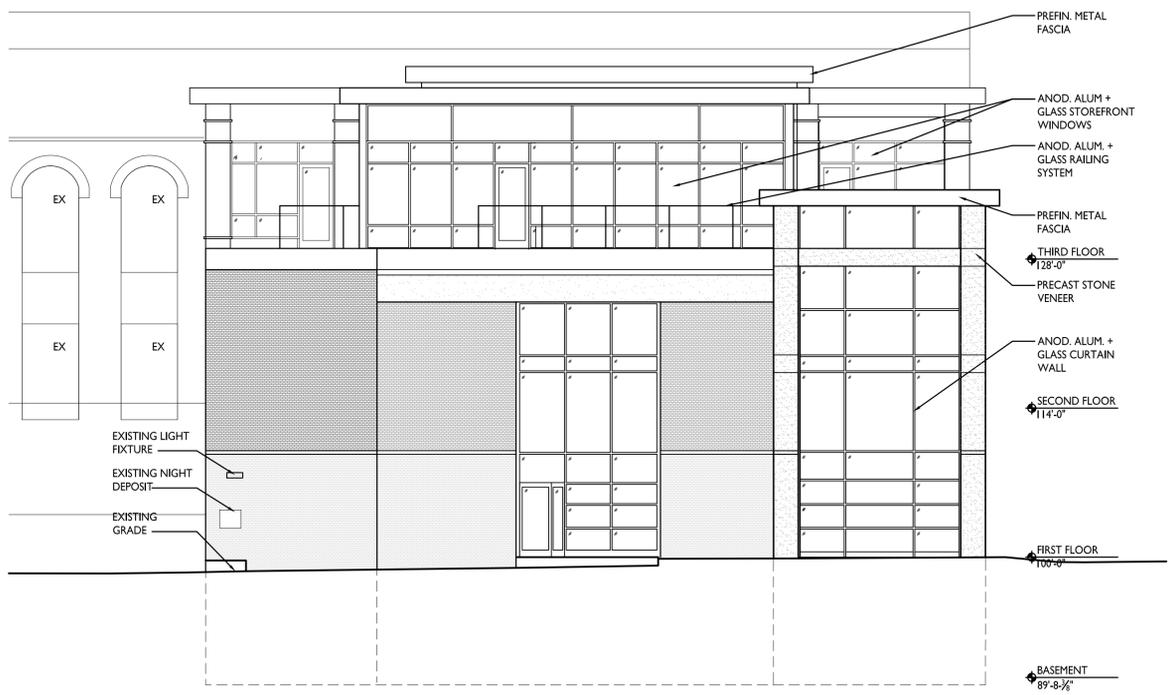
This map complies with National Map Accuracy Standards for mapping at 1 Inch = 100 Feet. The City of Ann Arbor and its mapping contractors assume no legal representation for the content and/or inappropriate use of information on this map.

Map Created: 12/18/2013

PROPOSED ADDITION | EXISTING BUILDING



SOUTH ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"



WEST ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

BOWERS ASSOCIATES
ARCHITECTURE DESIGN
2400 SOUTH HURON PARKWAY • ANN ARBOR, MI 48104
P: 734.975.2400 • F: 734.975.2410
WWW.BOWERSARCH.COM

CONSULTANT + NAME

PROJECT + INFORMATION
BOAA
HQ & BRANCH
125 SOUTH FIFTH AVENUE
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN 48104

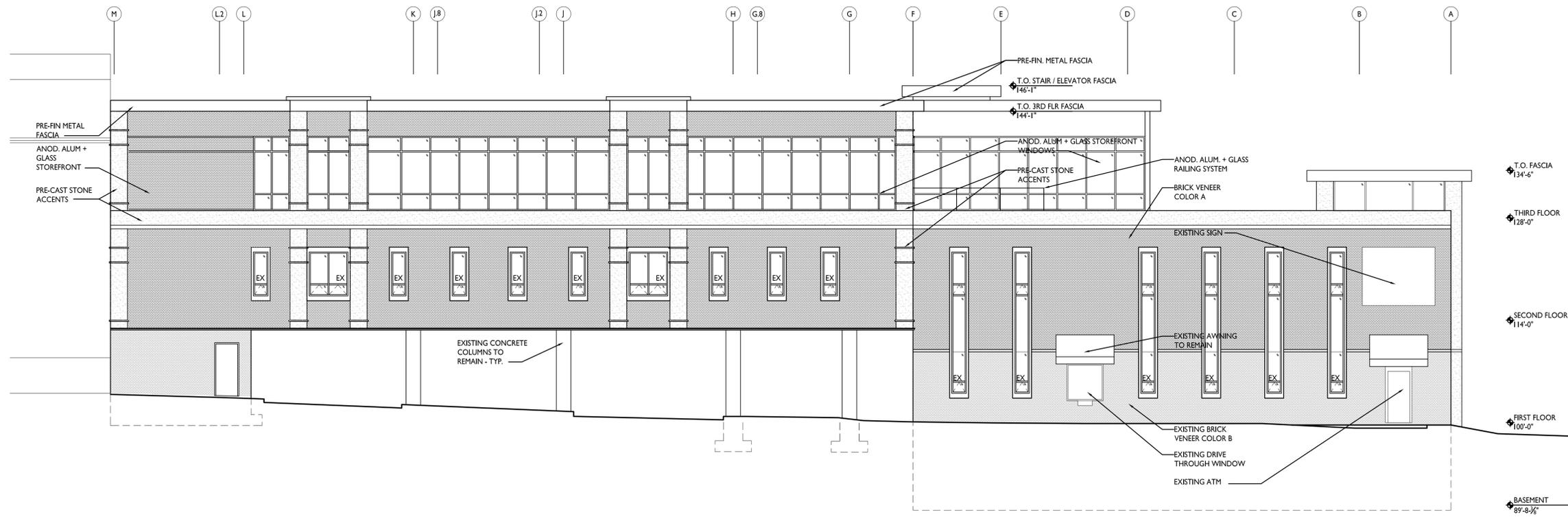
PROJECT + NUMBER
13-411

ISSUE + DATE
24 MAR 2014 SP SUBMIT

SHEET + TITLE
SOUTH + WEST
ELEVATIONS
13411A500B.dwg

SHEET + NUMBER
A5.00

© copyright 2013 Bowers + Associates, Inc.



NORTH ELEVATION
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

Citizen Participation Meeting Report

February 4, 2014

**Proposed Bank of Ann Arbor Addition and Renovation
125 S. Fifth Avenue
Ann Arbor, MI 48104**

Prepared by:
Bowers + Associates, Inc.
2400 S. Huron Parkway
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Ph: 734-975-2400
Fax: 734-975-2410

Date: February 4, 2014
Time: 6:30 pm – 7:20 pm
Location: Ann Arbor District Library Downtown branch

Citizen Participants/Attendees:

Susan Pollay/DDA	150S. Fifth Ave 48104	spollay@a2dda.org
Jeremy Allen/Mlive	111 N. Ashley 48104	jallen42@mlive.com
Charlie Adams/Salon XL	208 E. Washington St. 48104	info@salonXL.com

Citizen participation Meeting Report

Susan Bowers opened the meeting by presenting the site plan and exterior renderings.

Description of Project: THE PROPOSED PROJECT IS A RENOVATION AND ADDITION TO THE BANK OF ANN ARBOR HEADQUARTERS AND BRANCH OFFICE AT 125 S. FIFTH AVENUE. THE RENOVATION WILL CONSIST OF THE REPLACEMENT OF THE EXISTING BRICK FACADE AND A RELOCATED EXTENDED HEIGHT MAIN ENTRY. A THIRD STORY ADDITION WILL BE CONSTRUCTED ABOVE THE EXISTING SECOND STORY AND COVERED PARKING. CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROJECT WILL BE PHASED TO ALLOW CONTINUED USE OF BANK BRANCH.

Citizen Concerns:

- 1) Did the corner entry set out from the existing building was Susan Pollay's question. Yes it will project from the building on both Fifth and Washington Streets.
- 2) Charlie Adams (own's Salon XL) was concerned about street closure and impact of construction on small neighborhood business's. Her business was greatly impacted by the construction on fourth avenue in the summer of 2013. Bowers listened and told her we would let the bank know of her concerns. But most importantly that the bank branch is planning on remaining open during construction. So that closing the roads and impeding on neighboring business would not be in the banks best interest.
- 3) Bowers stated that the General Contractor was local and very understanding of how construction impacts local business. They will address neighbors concerns as soon as possible and where possible.
- 4) Bowers stated that yes pedestrian traffic would be affect but only adjacent to the site. Specifically the corner that is being added.
- 5) Projected construction start date was asked. Bowers response was this summer 2014 to be determined by Municipal Approvals.

Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters Renovation and Addition

Design Review Board Comments

Wednesday, January 15, 2014

14-0008 / DR14-001

The Design Review Board met on January 15, 2014 to review the proposed design of a renovation and addition of the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters and Branch at 125 S. Fifth Avenue. The following report contains a summary of priority issues the Board would like the developer to consider in finalizing the design proposal and subsequent site plan submittal.

Description of Project

Scott and Susan Bowers of Bowers and Associates described the proposed project, a renovation of the existing façade and a third-story addition to the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters and Branch Office at 125 South Fifth Avenue. The current yellow brick façade will be almost entirely removed and replaced with brown and red-colored bricks and limestone-colored stone accents and trim. A third story will be constructed over the eastern half of the building (above the cantilevered second story and covered parking area) and the main entry will be relocated from the center of the South Fifth Avenue façade to the corner of South Fifth Avenue/East Washington Street. The new, relocated entry will have a new extended height foyer. The façade changes are proposed for consistency with other branches and the third floor addition will allow more office space for bank operations.

Summary of Priority Issues

The Design Review Board concluded that the project met the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines, however, further refinements could be made to the proposed design for even greater compliance. Examples of especially applicable guidelines are noted in parenthesis; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the Midtown Character Area guidelines also apply.

Site Planning

1. Relocating the main entrance to the corner and increasing the architectural details with the new façade, including a greater variety of materials, enhances the pedestrian experience as well as improves the building's corner presence. (A.1.2; A. 1.3)
2. The proposed design could and should do more to compliment and coordinate with the Bell Building adjacent to the east. (A.1.1)
3. The location and size of the site, and building, may allow for sustainable initiatives such as porous paving in the parking lot and green elements on the building roof. Rainwater harvesting should be considered. (A.2.6; A.2.7)

4. The existing picnic table in the landscaped area at the northwest corner of the site seems to be popular with bank staff. It would be an amenity to keep, and perhaps enhance, that space even if additional, private, outdoor space is provided on the roof as part of the renovation. (A.3.6)
5. The existing planting beds adjacent to the building along both South Fifth Avenue and East Washington Street are well placed, well maintained and significantly contribute to the pedestrian experience. Along East Washington Street they also serve to minimize the impact of the covered surface parking spaces. Any opportunities to improve the planting beds buffering the surface parking lot from South Fifth Avenue should be considered. (A.4.2)

Buildings

1. The new entry structure at the southwest corner of the building is appropriately placed but could be made even taller for better proportion with the rest of the building. (B.1.1)

Building Elements

1. The proposed materials are a significant improvement over the rather bland existing façade. The wall surfaces will be much more visually interesting. The proposed canopies are a nice feature but should be enlarged to better match the scale of the streetwalls. (C.1.1)
2. The relocated entry is a welcome and positive change to the current configuration. (C.2)
3. The proposed windows on the third-story addition, and the architectural design of the additional story, should reference the established pattern of the adjacent Bell Building to the east. While the previous building addition (the cantilever over the surface parking lot) did not take the Bell Building into consideration, the proposed addition may correct some of the past design mistakes. (C.3.2)
4. The building owners have indicated they intend to use sustainable and/or locally sourced building materials whenever possible. (C.7.1)

Additional Discussion Points

The Board noted that the application materials were very vague and did not provide adequate written explanations or justifications for context or how the proposed design responded to the design guidelines. It was unclear to the Board how the design team arrived at their design decisions, however, the final results were acceptable.

Given the unusual amount of undeveloped surface area of the site, including the planting beds immediately adjacent to the building and the surface parking lot, a landscape plan should have been provided with the design review application. The proposed landscape plan will be an important piece of the site plan submittal for the petition.

Referenced Sections of the City of Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines

- A.1.1 Identify and reinforce positive characteristics of adjacent sites.
- A.1.2 Design sidewalk level features and facilities to provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience.

- A.1.3 Corner sites are an opportunity to express an architectural gateway or focal point and a dominant architectural feature.
- A.2.6 Where location and site size allow, consider use of a rain garden or vegetated roof to retain rainwater and serve as a site amenity, and employ rainwater harvesting methods for use in landscape irrigation systems.
- A.2.7 Use porous materials in drainage and detention areas to promote rainwater percolation into the parent soil.
- A.3.6 Provide dining opportunities, moveable tables and chairs, public art, lighting, ... to frame urban open space.
- A.4.2 Provide a pedestrian-friendly street edge at street level adjacent to surface parking areas and enclosed parking structures. Provide a landscape buffer appropriate for urban conditions at the edges of surface parking areas.
- B.1.1 Design a building to minimize its impact on adjacent lower-scale areas.
- C.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity.
- C.2 The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the downtown pedestrian experience.
- C.3.2 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.
- C.7.1 Use sustainable building materials whenever possible.

Midtown Character District – Architectural styles in Midtown include some 19th century wood-framed residential (mostly converted to office use), by stylistically, the district is dominated by an a range of late 20th century mid-rise office and governmental facilities.

The primary north-to-south street in Midtown is Fifth Avenue. It can be considered Ann Arbor’s “civic corridor,” anchored to the south by the Ann Arbor District Library’s Main Branch, the Blake Transit Center and the Federal Building. To the north, directly across E. Huron Street from Midtown, are the Ann Arbor municipal Center and the old and new fire stations and Hands-On Museum.

With the exception of the Library, the buildings in Midtown have limited hours and are used primarily during the business day. Since Midtown is surrounded by character districts with evening-use venues, it often serves as a passage, in particular the west-to-east blocks between Main Street and State Street. Pedestrians seem to be focused on getting from point A to point B and would benefit from more opportunities to linger.

Future development should find opportunities to establish an identity for Midtown, increasing its vitality and expanding its offerings. Primary pedestrian access to buildings along the civic corridor should be from the corridor street.

March 24, 2014

Response to Design Review Board Meeting

Design Review Board (Wednesday, January 15, 2014)

Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters Renovation and Addition

14-0008 / DR14-001

The Design Review Board met on January 15, 2014 to review the proposed design of a renovation and addition of the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters and Branch at 125 S. Fifth Avenue. The following report contains a summary of priority issues the Board would like the developer to consider in finalizing the design proposal and subsequent site plan submittal.

Description of Project

Scott and Susan Bowers of Bowers and Associates described the proposed project, a renovation of the existing façade and a third-story addition to the Bank of Ann Arbor Headquarters and Branch Office at 125 South Fifth Avenue. The current yellow brick façade will be almost entirely removed and replaced with brown and red-colored bricks and limestone-colored stone accents and trim. A third story will be constructed over the eastern half of the building (above the cantilevered second story and covered parking area) and the main entry will be relocated from the center of the South Fifth Avenue façade to the corner of South Fifth Avenue/East Washington Street. The new, relocated entry will have a new extended height foyer. The façade changes are proposed for consistency with other branches and the third floor addition will allow more office space for bank operations.

Summary of Priority Issues

The Design Review Board concluded that the project met the intent of the Downtown Design Guidelines, however, further refinements could be made to the proposed design for even greater compliance. Examples of especially applicable guidelines are noted in parenthesis; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the Midtown Character Area guidelines also apply.

Site Planning

1. Relocating the main entrance to the corner and increasing the architectural details with the new façade, including a greater variety of materials, enhances the pedestrian experience as well as improves the building's corner presence. (A.1.2; A. 1.3)
2. The proposed design could and should do more to compliment and coordinate with the Bell Building adjacent to the east. (A.1.1)
Bowers + Associates has added an accent band that will align with the accent band on the Bell Building. The new brick will complement the Bell building better than the existing grey-white brick.

3. The location and size of the site, and building, may allow for sustainable initiatives such as porous paving in the parking lot and green elements on the building roof. Rainwater harvesting should be considered. (A.2.6; A.2.7)
The owner may consider porous paving. The project dictates installing storm water management and we are going to do some ground water infiltration
4. The existing picnic table in the landscaped area at the northwest corner of the site seems to be popular with bank staff. It would be an amenity to keep, and perhaps enhance, that space even if additional, private, outdoor space is provided on the roof as part of the renovation. (A.3.6)
The bank will keep the picnic table area and will add some additional landscaping.
5. The existing planting beds adjacent to the building along both South Fifth Avenue and East Washington Street are well placed, well maintained and significantly contribute to the pedestrian experience. Along East Washington Street they also serve to minimize the impact of the covered surface parking spaces. Any opportunities to improve the planting beds buffering the surface parking lot from South Fifth Avenue should be considered. (A.4.2)
The planting beds themselves will remain as they are in construction. Each year the bank reviews the plantings and decides what plants will be installed for the season/year.

Buildings

1. The new entry structure at the southwest corner of the building is appropriately placed but could be made even taller for better proportion with the rest of the building. (B.1.1)
The new entry proportions have been reviewed by Bowers + Associates. The entry is now taller than originally presented to the Design Review Board.

Building Elements

1. The proposed materials are a significant improvement over the rather bland existing façade. The wall surfaces will be much more visually interesting. The proposed canopies are a nice feature but should be enlarged to better match the scale of the streetwalls. (C.1.1)
The entry canopies have been reviewed and adjusted to fit with the proportions of the entry element.
2. The relocated entry is a welcome and positive change to the current configuration. (C.2)
3. The proposed windows on the third-story addition, and the architectural design of the additional story, should reference the established pattern of the adjacent Bell Building to the east. While the previous building addition (the cantilever over the surface parking lot) did not take the Bell Building into consideration, the proposed addition may correct some of the past design mistakes. (C.3.2)
We have aligned with a masonry band on the existing Bell Building. The Floor levels are not the same between the Bank of Ann Arbor Building and the Bell Building. Therefore it is very difficult to align window heads or sill. There is approximately a 5' difference between the finish floors. The design incorporates an element that serves as a visual 'break' between the two buildings to diminish the floor level differences.
4. The building owners have indicated they intend to use sustainable and/or locally sourced building materials whenever possible. (C.7.1)
The intention is to use sustainable and/or locally sourced building materials whenever possible.

Additional Discussion Points

The Board noted that the application materials were very vague and did not provide adequate written explanations or justifications for context or how the proposed design responded to the design guidelines. It was unclear to the Board how the design team arrived at their design decisions, however, the final results were acceptable.

The new entry design utilizes the following sections of the Downtown Ann Arbor Design Guidelines: C1.1a, C2.1,C.3, C.4 The design layout was developed through programmatic requirements and existing conditions for the operation of a bank branch and headquarters. The Design Guidelines are used to take into account the desire to enhance the pedestrian experience at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Washington Street. Sustainable materials(C7.1) are planned for use at new entry element, addition and re-cladding of the existing building.

Given the unusual amount of undeveloped surface area of the site, including the planting beds immediately adjacent to the building and the surface parking lot, a landscape plan should have been provided with the design review application. The proposed landscape plan will be an important piece of the site plan submittal for the petition.

A Landscape plan is provided with Site Plan Submittal. It references (A1.2, A4.2 of the Downtown Design Guidelines)

Referenced Sections of the City of Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines

- A.1.1 Identify and reinforce positive characteristics of adjacent sites.
- A.1.2 Design sidewalk level features and facilities to provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience.
- A.1.3 Corner sites are an opportunity to express an architectural gateway or focal point and a dominant architectural feature.
- A.2.6 Where location and site size allow, consider use of a rain garden or vegetated roof to retain rainwater and serve as a site amenity, and employ rainwater harvesting methods for use in landscape irrigation systems.
- A.2.7 Use porous materials in drainage and detention areas to promote rainwater percolation into the parent soil.
- A.3.6 Provide dining opportunities, moveable tables and chairs, public art, lighting, ... to frame urban open space.
- A.4.2 Provide a pedestrian-friendly street edge at street level adjacent to surface parking areas and enclosed parking structures. Provide a landscape buffer appropriate for urban conditions at the edges of surface parking areas.
- B.1.1 Design a building to minimize its impact on adjacent lower-scale areas.

C.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity.

C.2 The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the downtown pedestrian experience.

C.3.2 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.

C.4 Awnings: C4.2- Each awning should be sized to fit within individual storefronts, windows, or door openings. C4.3-The proportions of awnings should relate to the overall proportions of the building façade. C4.4 – Color selections should be compatible with the overall color scheme of the façade. Solid colors or simple, muted-stripe patterns are appropriate.

C.7.1 Use sustainable building materials whenever possible.

Midtown Character District – Architectural styles in Midtown include some 19th century wood-framed residential (mostly converted to office use), by stylistically, the district is dominated by an arrangement of late 20th century mid-rise office and governmental facilities.

The primary north-to-south street in Midtown is Fifth Avenue. It can be considered Ann Arbor’s “civic corridor,” anchored to the south by the Ann Arbor District Library’s Main Branch, the Blake Transit Center and the Federal Building. To the north, directly across E. Huron Street from Midtown, are the Ann Arbor municipal Center and the old and new fire stations and Hands-On Museum.

With the exception of the Library, the buildings in Midtown have limited hours and are used primarily during the business day. Since Midtown is surrounded by character districts with evening-use venues, it often serves as a passage, in particular the west-to-east blocks between Main Street and State Street. Pedestrians seem to be focused on getting from point A to point B and would benefit from more opportunities to linger.

Future development should find opportunities to establish an identity for Midtown, increasing its vitality and expanding its offerings. Primary pedestrian access to buildings along the civic corridor should be from the corridor street.