

# ANN ARBOR DESIGN REVIEW BOARD

## Staff Report

**MEETING DATE:** September 21, 2016

**PROJECT:** 1107 South University Avenue Design Project  
“The Collegian – North”  
Project No. DR16-012

**ADDRESS:** 1107 South University Avenue

**ZONING DISTRICTS:** D1 Downtown Core, South University Character, Primary Frontage

**DESIGN TEAM:** James Sharba– Hobbs + Black Architects  
Tom Dillenbeck – Hobbs + Black Architects  
Tom Covert – Midwestern Consulting Engineering  
Ronald L. Hughes – Hughes Properties  
Sean Havera – Hughes Properties

**PROPOSED PROJECT:** A new 11-story, 114,000-square foot building is proposed to replace the existing buildings on four lots between the East University Avenue pedestrian mall and Church Street on the north side of South University Avenue. The assembled site is 16,340-square feet (0.38 acre). It currently contains four adjoining two-story buildings that house the Ulrich’s Bookstore. Addresses comprising the site include 547-548 E. University and 1107-1119 S. University (shown in red below, see Figure 1 Location Map).



Figure 1 – Location Map

The proposed building is 140 feet tall. A basement level (not counted in the building height), 10 occupied levels and a mechanical penthouse will be provided. Retail space is planned for the street level and a portion of the second floor. Residential apartments are planned for the third floor and above. Building services and utilities are located at the rear (north) and will be accessed by a pedestrian alley along the north side of the site to Church Street.



The proposed footprint is generally rectangular but with a cutout at the southwest corner to accommodate an existing building that is not part of the development.

Passers-by will perceive the building as a two-story base supporting a slightly recessed, nine-story flag-shaped tower.

The South University area has a mixture of three development booms, including one and two-story buildings from the 1920's and 30's, one-story buildings from the 1970's and 80's, and ten-plus story buildings from the 2010's.

As stated by the applicant: "The proposed development's exterior design has a contemporary character. Its material palette blends masonry products from nearby university buildings. Large glass retail fronts, with timeless masonry detailing, seek to contribute to the life of the vibrant character of the district. The placement of the various masonry products used on the building help break down the mass of the building into smaller segments providing a classic hierarchy of form."

#### **STAFF COMMENTS:**

1. The Downtown Development Authority is coordinating an improvement project to reconstruct South University Avenue between East University and Washtenaw Avenue. The design phase is complete and construction is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2017.
2. The area, height and placement regulations for this site (D1, South University character, primary frontage) are provided in the chart below. A cursory review of the proposed development indicates it will meet all applicable zoning regulations.

	<b>Required</b>	<b>Proposed</b>
<b>FAR (Floor Area Ratio)</b>	Up to 700% with premiums (114,380 sq ft)	698% (114,000 sq ft)
<b>Front Setback</b>	Min 0 feet, Max 1 feet	0 ft
<b>Side Setback</b>	None	0 ft
<b>Rear Setback</b>	None	0 ft
<b>Streetwall Height</b>	Min 2 stories, Max 3 stories	2 stories
<b>Offset at Top of Streetwall</b>	Min Average 5 feet	5 ft min, up to 10 ft
<b>Total Height</b>	Maximum 150 feet	140 ft
<b>Massing Articulation</b>	Maximum 45 ft	Variable 16 to 32 ft (estimated)
<b>Building Coverage</b>	No maximum	Approximately 90%
<b>Open Space</b>	No minimum	Approximately 10%

3. The applicant should confirm the massing articulation dimensions. Staff suggests, if a regular articulation rhythm is not employed, the articulations might mimic the underlying lot lines of the combined site.
  
4. The proposed development is in somewhat of an awkward situation in that it is not exactly a corner site (an opportunity to express an architectural gateway or focal point and a dominant architectural feature, Guideline A.1.3) nor is it solely a mid-block site (where a secondary role design may be best, Guideline A.1.5). More clearly, the design identifies and reinforces the positive characteristics of the adjacent site and enriches the pedestrian experience. Sidewalk level features and facilities provide enrichment of the pedestrian experience. No open space is proposed, however, and the development relies entirely on the public sidewalk for its pedestrian amenities. The development's service entries have been located to minimize impact on pedestrians and maintaining pedestrian safety, circulation and comfort. Overall, the proposed development incorporates the majority of the applicable **design guidelines for context and site planning**.
  
5. The **design guidelines for building massing** generally focus on minimizing the impact of a new building and providing details, variation, and design treatments that break down scale. In staff's opinion, the tower of the building has appropriate variation, details and design treatments. However, the base does not reflect any of the architectural character of the existing, former or remaining buildings on this block and it does not offer any sense of scale. There is no relationship whatsoever between the proposed building's South University façade and the facades of 1101 or 1123 S. University. The second floor of the two-story base is particularly sparse on details and design elements that compliment the block and the character area. More attention must be given to the blank wall above 1101 S. University

6. The proposed development also incorporates all of the applicable **design guidelines for building elements**. It has an appropriate street edge, a high level of ground floor transparency and entrances oriented towards the street. Its primary entrance is not well defined compared to the retail entries, although as a retail street this may be most appropriate.

## **APPLICABLE GUIDELINES: From the Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines**

Staff has identified the following Guidelines as applicable to the proposed project. These include Guidelines both with which the proposed project is and is not consistent. The Design Review Board may find other Guidelines are also applicable.

### **Chapter 1: General Design Guidelines**

#### **A. Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning**

- A.1 Urban Pattern and Form.** When considering urban pattern and form, the petitioner should assess the character of the adjacent streetscape, open spaces, and buildings to determine how they function as places and facilities supporting human use.
  - A.1.1 Identify and then reinforce the 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.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.
  - A.1.6 Where adjacent properties are underdeveloped and/or the block lacks inviting and interesting characteristics, consider a building, site and streetscape design that helps to create a vibrant pedestrian setting.
- A.2 Site Planning and Natural Systems.** An urban setting can be a challenging environment in which to respond to natural systems. Consider natural systems such as sun and wind patterns, climates and seasonality, rainwater harvesting, and significant individual features such as street tree patterns and landmark trees on public and private sites.
- A.3 Open Space.** Open spaces can include public and private courtyards, plazas,

patios, terraces, alleys, and gardens. Throughout downtown, site features and elements that invite use should be provided.

A.3.2 Locate an urban open space where there is a high level of existing or potential pedestrian activity.

A.3.6 Provide dining opportunities, movable tables and chairs, public art, lighting, interpretive materials, historic markers, water features, and architectural details such as windows and storefront walls, to frame urban open space.

**A.4 Parking, Driveways and Service Areas.** Parking, driveways, and service areas are necessary functions, which should be designed to benefit the urban experience.

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.

**A.5 Pedestrian Connections.** Pedestrian connections include sidewalks, alleys and arcades that provide pedestrian access within, through and among properties. Such connections provide access to buildings, courtyards, plazas and other site elements.

A.5.3 Provide engaging spatial opportunities for window shopping while also maintaining a zone for efficient circulation, especially in areas where there is already heavy pedestrian use.

**A.6 Cycling and Transit.** Walking, cycling, transit and other multi-modal means of transportation are to be considered in the design of streetscapes.

## **B. Design Guidelines for Buildings**

**B.1 Building Massing.** Building massing principles address the overall height, size and shape of a building. Although these guidelines refer to the visual aspects of structures, it is important to note that downtown zoning districts address key building massing considerations including floor area ratio, building height, streetwall height, offset and module length.

B.1.1 Design a building to minimize its impact on adjacent lower-scale areas. Suggested strategies include:

- a) Step taller building elements away from adjacent lower- scale buildings and/or neighborhoods
- b) Locate taller building elements at the intersection of streets
- c) Provide variation in building massing to reflect the underlying pattern of

established lot widths

- 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. Suggested strategies include:
- a) Vary the height of individual building modules.
  - b) Vary the height of cornice lines and other roof finish elements.
  - c) Change wall surface materials, colors or texture.
  - d) Use vertical moldings to express different building modules.
  - e) Align projecting features, such as balconies or sun screens, to express different building modules.
  - f) Use underlying established lot widths to help determine the width of building modules at the street level.
- B.1.3 Provide a clear definition between the base (the lower floor or floors) and upper floors to maintain a sense of scale at the street level.
- B.1.4 If appropriate to the context, establish a design treatment that includes a differentiated building top.

### **C. Design Guidelines for Building Elements**

Building elements include specific design features that give character and detail to a building. They are not generally addressed by the requirements of the downtown zoning districts. Entries, windows, materials, and other building elements influence the degree to which a new building contributes to the urban fabric. Quality and creativity are most clearly expressed and experienced at this level of design.

The design of building elements should be compatible with its surrounding context. However, a wide range of styles or design themes are appropriate including creative, contemporary, and environmentally-oriented design solutions. Surfaces that have variations in depth with substantial shadow lines add interest.

- C.1 Street Edge.** Building elements and architectural details used at the street front have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and should be combined to create an active and interesting street front. Creative use of materials, textures and architectural details is especially important where there are few windows at the street front of a building.
- C.2 Entries.** The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. Building entries should be located to enhance the street level experience and help give a sense of scale. Entries should be clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front. Although traditional building entry designs may be appropriate, creative and contemporary interpretations are also encouraged.

- C.3 Windows.** Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.
- C.4 Awnings.** The use of awnings is encouraged at the sidewalk level to provide shelter from the rain, to modulate natural light, and to indicate entry and provide transition from the outdoor to the indoor environment.
- C.5 Materials.** Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context.
- 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.

### **South University Character District**

This district is located on the southern and eastern edges of central campus. Current architectural character includes diverse styles ranging from older eclectic forms to new/contemporary ones, expressed through a wide variety of architectural materials including wood siding, brick, limestone, precast concrete, and various metals. Building heights range from one and two floor/low-rise to mid and hi-rise. Rooflines vary from two and three story frame houses to flat roofed contemporary expressions at various building heights and façade expressions.

This area is a mixed use district, largely consisting today of university population-focused restaurant and commercial services, and student housing. This district is busy and vibrant with automobile and pedestrian activity. Sidewalk level doorways provide access to upper floor offices and apartments.

The urban landscape includes sidewalk extensions (bump-outs) with circular tree sized planters; a well developed tree canopy over some sidewalks; and outdoor dining spaces at sidewalk and rooftop levels. First floor facades are more transparent with clear, large display windows, allowing inside first floor retail activities to be visible from, and contribute to, the district's active street life.

The cumulative character can be described as a busy and vibrant urban setting that encourages and accommodates a diverse range of downtown activities.