

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS IN THE DOWNTOWN ANN ARBOR DESIGN GUIDELINES (JANUARY 12, 2011) IN RELATION TO PROPOSED PROJECT, "THE VARSITY," AT 425 EAST WASHINGTON AND 412-416 EAST HURON

A. "DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR CONTEXT AND SITE PLANNING" pp. 6-12

- A.1.1 "Identify and then reinforce the positive characteristics of adjacent sites." (p.6)**
- A.2.2 "Site designs should accommodate solar access and minimize shading of adjacent properties and neighborhoods. (p.7)**
- A.3.5 "Orient an urban open space to the street or to cultural, historic or natural resources." (p. 9)**
- 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." (p.9)**
- A.4 "Parking, driveways and service areas are necessary functions, which should be designed to benefit the urban experience." (p.9)**
 - 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." (p. 9)**
 - 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." (p.10)**
- A.5 "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. " (p. 11)**
 - A.5. 1-5 further support these connections but A.5.4 might be particularly relevant: "Provide landscaping, seating, public art, lighting, interpretative markers, and water features to enrich and enliven pedestrian walkways and use areas." (p.11)**
- A.6 Cycling and Transit "Walking, cycling, transit and other multi-modal means of transportation are to be considered in the design of the streetscapes." (p.12)**

B. "DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR BUILDINGS" (Pages 13-14)

- "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 considerations including: Maximum Floor Area Ration (FAR) Maximum building height; Maximum and minimum streetwall height; Average offset at the maximum streetwall height; Maximum building module length." (p 13)**

B1 “Building Massing”

- B1.1. “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.” (p.13)
- 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 express different building modules. “ (p. 14, also e and f)**
- 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. Suggested strategies include: a) Use a distinct horizontal molding to define the base. b) Provide a variation in the façade plane of the upper floors. c) Provide a distinct change in the ratio of solid to void (wall to window percentage) to distinguish the base from the upper floors.” (p. 14)**
- B.1.4 “If appropriate to the context, establish a design treatment that includes a differentiated building top. Suggested strategies include: a) Use a distinctive cornice line or roof form. B) Change wall surface materials, colors or texture of the building top.” (p.14)**

C. “DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR BUILDING ELEMENTS” (pages 15-19)
“Building elements include specific design features that give character and detail to a building.”

“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” (pages 15-16)**
“Building elements and architectural details used at the street front have a direct impact on the quality of the pedestrian experience and should 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.1.1** “Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian Activity”—including first floor canopies, architectural details, wall surfaces with visually interesting detailing, textures and colors, art features including sculptures, friezes, and murals. (p. 16)
- C.2** “Entries”
“The location, spacing and general pattern of building entries impact the quality of the pedestrian experience downtown. . . .Entries should be clearly defined, accessible, and located to express rhythm and visual interest along a street front.” (p. 16)
- C.3** “Windows” (p. 16)
Window design and placement should help establish a sense of scale and provide visual interest.”
- C.3.1** “A high level of ground floor transparency is encouraged throughout downtown.”
- C.3.3** “Window depths should be appropriate to the building design concept.
- C.4** “Awnings”
The use of awning 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.” (p. 17-18)
- C.5** “Materials” (p18) “Building materials should reinforce the massing and architectural concepts and enhance the character of the building and its context. . . .
- C.5.1** Apply materials to provide a sense of scale in proportion to the scale and mass of the building.”
- C.6** “Building Operational Systems” (p. 18)
“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.”
- C.6.1** “Integrate solar or wind systems into the design of the top of the building.”
- C.6.2** “Locate and sufficiently screen mechanical systems to minimize or eliminate noise impacts on adjacent sites and building.”
- C.7** “Sustainability in Building Elements” (p. 18)
“Consider sustainability when selecting structural and façade materials and designing functional building elements.”

CHAPTER 2: DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR CHARACTER DISTRICTS (Pages 20-43)

The zoning regulations for downtown Ann Arbor define a series of Character Overlay Zoning Districts to reflect the diversity of historical and built environments within the downtown. This chapter attempts to describe these character districts and their existing features. Map of all districts is on page 20.

The description of the “East Huron Character Districts” is on page 29. One should pay close attention to three important parts of this description:

“Traffic along Huron Street needs to accommodate automobile entrances to on-site parking for major structures.” How does this proposal intend to do that and how will it handle the possibility of back-ups on East Huron? How will it impact the pedestrian experience? How will it impact the historic structures to the east and to the west? How does the north face of this building comply or not comply with the many other elements of good design expected for all parts of this structure?

“Generally, structures are set back from the sidewalks, with landscaping in the foreground, either in the form of a lawn or a landscaped plaza or planter. A landscaped buffer strip is also found between the sidewalk and street, with grass, pavers, trees or similar elements.” Will this proposal fit this setback pattern or conflict with it.?

“The East Huron Character Districts are integrated with or adjacent to three designated historic districts—Division Street Historic District, Ann Street Historic District, and the Old Fourth Ward Historic District. “ How can we avoid negative impacts upon the historic properties to the east and west of this 13- story building with its underground parking entry only a few feet from the pedestrian sidewalk?