



## City of Ann Arbor Design Review Board

### 624 Church Street Summary Report

October 17, 2012

The Design Review Board met on October 17, 2012 to review the **624 Church Street** proposal. The following report contains a summary of priority issues the Board would like the developer to consider in finalizing the design proposal. In addition, a summary of the meeting discussion is provided for background.

#### Summary of Priority Issues

Examples of applicable guidelines are noted in parentheses; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the South University Character Area guidelines also apply.

#### *Site Planning*

1. Consider incorporating infiltration into the storm water elements, such as a vegetated roof and pervious pavers in the plaza/loading zone area. Adding playful storm water elements in the plaza would enhance its use as a pedestrian gathering area (see Guidelines A.2.6 and A.2.7).
2. The existing restaurant on the site has established a strong pedestrian presence on the street, and the new residential entrance plaza should build on that character. Care should be taken in designing the entry plaza to ensure it is not taken over by loading zone functions (see Guidelines A.3.1, A.3.2, A.3.7, A.4.1).
3. Consider creating through-block connections to the west (see Guideline A.5.1).
4. Because there is such a high demand for street level bicycle parking in this area, it will be important to provide adequate parking in areas that do not interfere with pedestrian movement. Connecting the resident bicycle parking room with the lobby area is also recommended (see Guideline A.6.2).
5. Renderings of the street elevations should incorporate the existing street trees.

#### *Building Massing*

1. Use changes in building volumes rather than simply changing building materials that exist in the same plane to express massing and height of building modules. The use of brick is encouraged at locations where scaffolding would be possible. (See Guideline B.1.2)

2. If the heating and air conditioning design is changed and the grilles are removed from the southeast building face, the articulated panel/grill areas should be kept; flat panels in this location will detract from the design (see Guideline B.1.2)

### *Building Elements*

1. Incorporate human-scale elements into the residential entrance plaza (See Guideline C.2.1)

In conclusion, the Board agreed that the design meets the intent of the design guidelines, although it does not seem unique to the buildings that have recently been built in the downtown.

### Referenced Sections of the City of Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines

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

- 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 of detention areas to promote rainwater percolation into the parent soil.
- A.3.1 Design an urban open space to maximize activity and usability for a diverse population of different abilities
- A.3.2 Locate an urban open space where there is a high level of existing or potential pedestrian activity
- A.3.7 Enrich the space using special paving, plants, trellises and site structures
- 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.5.1 Pedestrian walkways should be well integrated with the existing infrastructure in a way that supports pedestrian connections within and outside the areas of the proposed project
- A.6.2 Consider use of convenient bicycle racks, including proximity to building entries, weather protection and security when selecting a location for bicycle parking and storage

*Design Guidelines for Buildings*

- 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

*Design Guidelines for Building Elements*

- C.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street

Meeting Discussion Summary

Members Present: Tamara Burns (Chair), Chet Hill, Mary Jukuri, William Kinley, Richard Mitchell, Geoff Perkins

Members: Absent: Paul Fontaine

Design Team Representative: J. Bradley Moore

Developer Representatives: Dennis Tice, Mark Bell, Tom Lund

Chair Burns reviewed the goals of the design review process and announced that the developers had scheduled a citizen participation meeting for November 1, 6:30 pm at the Pizza House Restaurant.

Brad Moore presented the project, which is being proposed by the Tice Family, owners of the property and the Pizza House restaurant, and Opus Development. He explained that when the addition to Pizza House was built several years ago, it was designed with a foundation under the southern portion of restaurant anticipating a future taller building. He said the two-story frame house to the south of the restaurant, currently used as a commissary, will be demolished. With the three lots combined, the tower will be located over the southern and middle lot. There will be a first floor entry at the southeast corner for residents, accessed from a covered multiple-purpose plaza that would double as a loading zone for restaurant. This loading zone includes a joint driveway with the residential property to the south. Outdoor dining would remain. No additional retail is proposed; the second floor of the new section will be used for resident common area and amenities.

Regarding the design approach, Moore explained that the tower has been configured to break up its mass. There is a two-story pedestal for the new building that respects the two-story restaurant. The offset at the top of the second story will provide a balcony for the residential units. The proposed material at the base is brick to match the Pizza House. The canopy for the resident entrance will be distinct. The tower surface will be articulated with a variety of material, including precast concrete and curtain wall. The roof level will be designed as an amenity for residents, with passive recreation uses and a sun screen for shading of the rooftop garden. The original design included HVAC with wall venting, but they are now looking at a central heat pump possibility for LEED credits.

The Board raised possibilities for incorporating sustainability into the site. The project already proposes the use of locally pre-cast panels. The Board recommended incorporating infiltration into the storm water elements, such as a vegetated roof and pervious pavers in the plaza/loading zone area. Adding playful storm water elements in the plaza would enhance its use as a pedestrian gathering area. Moore noted that the soils are granular, which could help with infiltration, although the space is tight.

The Board raised questions about how the tower façade would be redesigned if the HVAC grillwork was no longer needed as a result of a change to heat pump. Moore said that they would fill in the openings, but keep the change in surface. The Board encouraged the articulated panel/grill areas to be kept, since flat panels in this location will detract from the design.

The Board discussed the street elements, including street trees, bicycle parking and six-foot wide sidewalk dimension. Moore explained that the original design had four piers in front; the current design now has three. Because there is such a high demand for street level bicycle parking in this area, the Board felt it was important to provide adequate parking in areas that do not interfere with pedestrian movement. The Board also encouraged that the resident bicycle parking room contain a connection to the interior lobby.

The Board discussed the west face of the tower, which will be located at the rear property line and has no transparency due to building code requirements. Moore said he has talked to the Building Official about the possibility of a variance that would allow them to use special suppression to provide openings in western wall. The setback from the building to the south is 11-12 feet, face-to-face.

The Board asked if there is an opportunity for through-block connections to the west and suggested the design team work with the adjacent property owner to connect the sites. Moore said there currently is an informal connection along the north of the site. A grade change of 5-6 feet down from the front of the site is a constraint.

The Board discussed the tower materials and articulation. There was concern expressed about using solely pre-cast concrete and a suggestion to include brick in some areas. Moore explained the constraint of doing construction over an active restaurant. Applying brick would require the set up of scaffolding, which would not be supported by the roof of the restaurant, and would disturb the ongoing functioning of the restaurant. He noted the changes in materials at the southeast corner and the setback above the second floor on the north side as elements that will break up the mass of the building. He noted that the precast windows would be set in about 4 inches with a sill that would simulate limestone. He said the design is meant to look like interlocking pieces. The Board encouraged the design team to use changes in building volumes rather than changes in building materials that exist in the same plane to highlight variances in the massing and height of building modules. The Board also encouraged the use of brick at locations where scaffolding would be possible. Moore indicated they would look into the possibility of using the shared drive area for scaffolding.

The Board observed that existing restaurant on the site has established a strong pedestrian presence on the street, and the new residential entrance plaza will be able to build on that character. One possibility is making the new entry taller or providing variation in the low cornice. The canopy is a strong element. In particular, care should be taken in designing the entry plaza to ensure it is not taken over by loading zone functions and incorporates human scale elements by using techniques such as changing paving materials at the entry point. In addition, attention should be paid to scale and texture on street edge. Moore confirmed that the windows will be clear, not tinted.

The Board noted that rooftop equipment is not shown in the current elevations and recommended that penthouse screening be added to the drawings.

The Board discussed the observation of several that the proposed design is similar to the other recently built towers in the downtown even when there is a wide range of designs that might be appropriate, and whether this is an unintended result of the design guidelines. They asked Moore how much he believed the design guidelines influenced this design. Moore responded that this was difficult to say, since he sat on the citizen advisory committee for the guidelines and it would be hard to determine what he would have done differently. He noted that this is a small constrained site, which limits what can be done. The Board agreed that the proposal did respond positively to the design guidelines.

Prepared by: Wendy Rampson, Planning Manager



To: City of Ann Arbor Planning Department  
301 E. Huron  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

Date: November 26, 2012

Re: 624 Church Street – proposed high-rise addition to the Pizza House restaurant.

To Whom it May Concern,

Below please find the project team's responses to the Design Review Board project comments. Responses are shown in bold italics after the text from the Design Review Board report supplied by the Planning Dept..

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The Design Review Board met on October 17, 2012 to review the 624 Church Street proposal. The following report contains a summary of priority issues the Board would like the developer to consider in finalizing the design proposal. In addition, a summary of the meeting discussion is provided for background.

### **Summary of Priority Issues**

Examples of applicable guidelines are noted in parentheses; the full text of each referenced guideline is provided at the end of the summary. Please note that the South University Character Area guidelines also apply.

#### Site Planning

1. Consider incorporating infiltration into the storm water elements, such as a vegetated roof and pervious pavers in the plaza/loading zone area. Adding playful storm water elements in the plaza would enhance its use as a pedestrian gathering area (see Guidelines A.2.6 and A.2.7). ***There will be a below grade vault for storm water infiltration.***

2. The existing restaurant on the site has established a strong pedestrian presence on the street, and the new residential entrance plaza should build on that character. Care should be taken in designing the entry plaza to ensure it is not taken over by loading zone functions (see Guidelines A.3.1, A.3.2, A.3.7, A.4.1). ***Care will be taken to help insure that the loading zone functions of the plaza to don't overtake its other functions.***
  
3. Consider creating through-block connections to the West (see Guideline A.5.1). ***We believe this is not an appropriate location for a through-block connection. This property is too close to the corner of the block to be appropriate for a through-block connection. A more appropriate location for such a through-block connection would be north of the subject property at mid-block.***
  
4. Because there is such a high demand for street level bicycle parking in this area, it will be important to provide adequate parking in areas that do not interfere with pedestrian movement. Connecting the resident bicycle parking room with the lobby area is also recommended (see Guideline A.6.2). ***Additional guest and resident bike parking has been added to the proposal. The project Owners do not want the access to the internal bike storage room to go thru the lobby for maintenance and security reasons.***
  
5. Renderings of the street elevations should incorporate the existing street trees.  
Building Massing. ***A revised rendering that includes street trees will be completed prior to the project Planning Commission meeting.***

#### Building Massing

1. Use changes in building volumes rather than simply changing building materials that exist in the same plane to express massing and height of building modules. The use of brick is encouraged at locations where scaffolding would be possible. (See Guideline B.1.2) ***Offsets in the building walls are coordinated with material and color changes to break up building massing. Texturing will be incorporated in the precast panels above the second floor which may include some brick or incorporating brick form liners in the precast panels. Brick will be used on the second and first floor.***
  
2. If the heating and air conditioning design is changed and the grilles are removed from the southeast building face, the articulated panel/grill areas should be kept; flat panels in this location will detract from the design (see Guideline B.1.2). ***Panel configuration has been redesigned to account for removal of individual exterior grilles at each dwelling unit.***

#### Building Elements

1. Incorporate human-scale elements into the residential entrance plaza (See Guideline C.2.1)

In conclusion, the Board agreed that the design meets the intent of the design guidelines, although it does not seem unique to the buildings that have recently been built in the downtown. *We agree that the building design meets the intent of the design guidelines.*

#### Referenced Sections of the City of Ann Arbor Downtown Design Guidelines Design Guidelines for Context and Site Planning

- 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
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#### Design Guidelines for Building Elements

- C.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street

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If you have any questions relating to the proposed Project please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

J Bradley Moore, AIA  
J Bradley Moore & Associates Architects, Inc.