



## City of Ann Arbor Design Review Board

### 413 E. Huron Street Summary Report

October 17, 2012

The Design Review Board met on October 17, 2012 to review the **413 East Huron** 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 East Huron Character Area guidelines also apply.

#### *Site Planning*

1. Provide additional width and porosity at the street level along Huron and Division to create a comfortable pedestrian experience. Suggestions for improving the character of the street level include further setting back the southwest corner of the building, providing a colonnade along both the Huron and Division frontages, or setting the building back from both streets without decreasing the setbacks to the north and east, which will result in narrowing the building. Since there is parking in excess of the requirement, some of the surface spaces behind the building could be removed to shift the first floor back (see Guidelines A.1.1, A.1.2 and A.4.2).
2. Take advantage of the opportunity for a signature building at this prominent corner. Provide attention to the corner experience by differentiating it from the rest of the building, either through height or materials (see Guidelines A.1.3 and B.1.1b).
3. The driveway at the rear could double as a shaded urban plaza, like the Dutch woonerf, to provide a nice amenity for the neighborhood (see A.4.1 and A.4.2).
4. Confirm the feasibility of placing landscaping over the parking structure on the north side. Two feet of soil is not sufficient to support the proposed trees between the parking and the adjacent residences. Consider decreasing the size of the below grade parking to allow for trees (see Guideline A.4.2).

#### *Building Massing*

1. Consider changes in color, materials or pattern of materials to differentiate the tower from the base (see Guidelines B.1.1c and B.1.2).

2. Consider providing variation in the north façade by pulling the center section of the “U” toward Huron Street, creating more articulation of the north facade, and lessening the shading impact on the neighborhood to the north (See Guidelines A2.2 and B.1.1a).

#### *Building Elements*

1. To balance the starker look of the concrete columns at street level, add richer and more detailed materials to supplement the wood storefront windows (see Guideline C.1.1c).
2. Since the proposed design showcases an impressive material palette, consider offering materials proposed (standard sized iron spot brick, stand sized glazed brick (two colors), architectural concrete, stained wood full height grade level doors, full-height TDL metal windows, expressed relief angles at each floor level, and stained wood ceiling at pedestrian colonnade) as a component of the development agreement with the City of Ann Arbor (see Guidelines C.1.1b, C.1.1c and C.5,1).
3. Consider relocating the resident entry closer to the intersection to activate the corner and encourage pedestrian crossings to cross in crosswalks (see Guideline C.2.1).

In conclusion, the design as presented does not meet the intent of the design guidelines in responding to the context of the site, responding to a unique corner opportunity, respecting adjacent properties or enhancing the pedestrian experience.

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

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

- 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.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.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 to urban conditions at the edges of surface parking lots.

*Design Guidelines for Buildings*

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

*Design Guidelines for Building Elements*

- C.1.1 Use building elements to create a street edge that invites pedestrian activity. Suggested street edge elements include:
  - b) Architectural details that provide a sense of scale
  - c) Wall surfaces with visually interesting detailing, textures and colors
- C.2.1 Clearly define a primary entrance and orient it toward the street
- C.5.1 Apply materials to provide a sense of scale in proportion to the scale and mass of the building

Meeting Discussion Summary

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

Members: Absent: Paul Fontaine

Design Team Representatives: Walter Hughes (Humphrey & Partners), Alex Caldewood (Ace Hotel), Eric Choeng (Ace Hotel)

Developer Representative: Conor McNally (Carter)

Chair Burns reviewed the goals of the Design Review Board's review, which are to clarify and interpret the design guidelines. She explained that modifications are voluntary, but the community expectation is that the building will reflect the goals of the city and the context of the site. She noted that the developers had scheduled a citizen participation meeting for November 1 at the same time as the meeting for 624 Church Street proposal. She said the developer's representative is checking to see if the meeting can be moved to another date.

Conor McNally introduced the project. He said that he works for Carter, the development team lead. It is important for the team that the building stands the test of time and appeals to a diverse tenant base.

Their demographic for this project is upperclassman, graduate students and young professionals. Humphreys and Partners is the lead architect and Ace Hotel has been retained for interior and exterior design.

Walter Hughes, Humphrey & Partners Architects, provided an overview of the project. There will be two levels of parking below grade, a fourteen-story apartment building with a FAR of 6.7 and open space at the rear. He said they reviewed the guidelines as they were developing the design. As a result of early feedback they received, they decided to pull the tower toward the corner to provide setbacks to the north and the east. There will be ground floor retail along Huron Street, with the apartment entrance, common areas and a lobby at the southeast corner of the building. The design team focused on activating Huron Street with permeable frontage containing several uses.

Alex Caldewood introduced himself and said his firm, Ace Hotel, is an independent hospitality business from Portland. Their intent is to create something enduring and substantive and they have been working to provide the point of view that informs project. They are looking to become a thread in the fabric of the community.

Eric Choeng, Ace Hotel, reviewed the site plan. The design team sought to create something that would draw in pedestrians and serve the community, in addition to residents. One of the big decisions was to pull the security boundary back to create a lobby at the southeast corner. Next to the parking garage ramp is an alley to the surface parking area and the open space at the rear of site. He said there would be a coffee shop and a rotating food kiosk area in the lobby. They pulled the lobby façade back five feet to invite pedestrians, and at the corner, they also pulled in the entry. He said the design team is open to how to use the green buffer area at the rear of the site, and they want to make it useful.

Hughes and Choeng discussed the building massing. He said they developed a strong two-story streetwall, with a U-shaped tower bounding an amenity area on the third floor. The outdoor area on the third floor creates a step back on the south side. There is a different brick color and finish from the third floor up. There was a conscious decision to choose brick, but use it in a contemporary way. The focus is on sustainable sources and an organic approach. The lower level has wood storefront windows. This treatment changes to a metal window system moving up the tower. There will be exposed concrete columns at the street level, which can provide an opportunity for art.

The Board asked about the design team's assessment of site context. Hughes responded that this site has an eclectic context that is hard to pin down. There are hotels, the hospital, and an interesting dialogue with the Municipal Center. Choeng said they wanted to be brave with this building to show that there can be something different.

The Board discussed the street-level design. The building seems very tight to the street, resulting in a narrow pedestrian zone. This applies to both the Division and Huron frontages, although the Huron frontage is the most important. This narrowness will affect the pedestrian experience due to the proximity of heavy traffic on Huron, and therefore will have an impact on the success of the retail uses.

Suggestions for improving the character of the street level include setting back the corner at the street level, providing a colonnade along both the Huron and Division frontages or setting the building back from both streets without decreasing the setbacks to the north and east which will result in narrowing the building. Since there is parking in excess of the requirement, some of the surface spaces behind the building could be removed to shift the first floor back.

It was noted that the below grade parking extends to the property line on the north, yet there are trees shown in the landscape buffer. Hughes said there would be two feet of cover in which to plant landscaping, such as a hedge and grasses. The Board suggested that the landscape buffer should have verticality to provide privacy for the adjacent neighbors to the north, and that they would need at least four feet of soil to support trees. One suggestion was to decrease the size of the below grade parking to allow for trees. Another suggestion was the use of green screens, but it was noted that this might not be consistent with the historic neighborhood.

The Board asked about the purpose of the driveway. Hughes said the driveway provides access to the surface parking lot and trash area, and deliveries would be made at the rear of the building. The Board suggested that the driveway could double as a shaded urban plaza, like the Dutch woenerf, to provide a nice amenity for the neighborhood.

The Board asked about the third floor outdoor space. The design team explained it will be an outdoor activity area for tenants, like an outdoor room. It will be a green space, potentially with a small pool. They have a similar theme at a building in Cincinnati, which also has colder winters, but the residents still enjoy looking out over the pool. In response to a question about whether the courtyard could be brought down to ground level, the design team indicated that it is important to have a public lobby at street level. If the upper courtyard was moved down, it would take more room than they can provide. The Board noted that the pool at the nearby Campus Inn was recently removed.

The Board observed that looking at the north elevation, the building has an imposing width and there should be some relief other than a wall of windows. They suggested the courtyard may be larger than it needs to be and asked the design team to explore shifting the north segment of the "U" to the south, resulting in an "H" design with a smaller plaza and more variation on the north façade.

A question was raised about the location of bicycle parking. The design team explained that there are parking facilities on each floor and covered spaces near the building entrance.

The Board observed that one strength of the project is the rich palette of materials proposed, and this causes some concern about the potential for value-engineering at the construction stage. Since the proposed design showcases an impressive material palette, the Board suggested the developer consider offering the proposed materials (standard sized iron spot brick, standard sized glazed brick in two colors, architectural concrete, stained wood full height grade level doors, full-height TDL metal windows, expressed relief angles at each floor level, and stained wood ceiling at pedestrian colonnade) as a component of the development agreement with the City of Ann Arbor. The design team responded that

they want to spend money where it is important, but they are not far enough along in the entitlement process to make a commitment on materials without a full accounting of costs. It is possible they may have this information before the site plan is finalized by City Council. They are planning for an early spring construction start.

The Board raised several issues about the massing of the tower. One concern was about how it fit into the context of the area. All of the buildings along Huron and Division are currently set back, so this building would be pulled forward of the buildings on both street frontages. In addition, it is a prominent corner because of the change in street width to the west, but the massing does not respond to this opportunity to do something special. The Board observed that the building feels like it is crowding the corner and suggested that the building be pushed back at the corner.

In addition, the Board commented that the straight-up nature of the tower can be elegant, but the building appears heavy and massive because it is unarticulated and dark. Without a "top", the tower appears blocky. The Board suggested changes in color or materials to differentiate the tower from the base.

The design team explained that the project was envisioned as a building of angles. They noted that the glazing provides a checkerboard surface to the tower. There is a potential to do something with the materials on the corner without losing the consistent aesthetic. From a cost perspective, they would like to avoid lots of different materials. They also would like to maintain the setbacks on the north and east.

The Board discussed the location of the residential entry and whether or not it would encourage pedestrians to cross Huron mid-block. One suggestion was that the pedestrian lobby be moved closer to the corner to encourage crossings at the intersection. The Board acknowledged, however, that it is difficult to anticipate the pedestrian patterns in advance, other than they will always be seeking the shortest route.

The Board observed that the design focuses the richer materials above street level where the pedestrian does not experience it and that there is a lot of concrete at street level. To balance the starker look of the concrete, the Board suggested adding richer and more detailed materials at street level to supplement the wood storefronts. The board encouraged the designers to use the materials in a more playful manner such as shown in the photograph on the materials board of the windows and brick panels shifted out of a vertical rhythm.

## SITE PLANNING

DRB Comment	Design Changes
<p>1. <b>Provide additional width and porosity at the street level along Huron and Division to create a comfortable pedestrian experience.</b>            Suggestions for improving the character of the street level include further setting back the southwest corner of the building, providing a colonnade along both the Huron and Division frontages, or setting the building back from both streets without decreasing the setbacks to the north and east, which will result in narrowing the building. Since there is parking in excess of the requirement, some of the surface spaces behind the building could be removed to shift the first floor back (see Guidelines A.1.1, A.1.2 and A.4.2).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have set the retail back an additional 5 feet from the curb for a total of 20 feet</li> <li>• Created a retail colonnade along Huron</li> <li>• Created a sizeable inset retail plaza at the corner of Huron and Division to enhance the corner experience and provide space for outdoor dining</li> <li>• Moved loading dock into the rear of the building to allow retail to wrap all along Division</li> </ul>
<p>2. <b>Take advantage of the opportunity for a signature building at this prominent corner.</b>            Provide attention to the corner experience by differentiating it from the rest of the building, either through height or materials (see Guidelines A.1.3 and B.1.1b).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduced a glass corner to the building, which involved a redesign of the corner unit</li> <li>• Created signature 2-story retail corner element by eliminating a corner unit</li> <li>• Separated the corner by creating vertical insets midway along the "tower" and introducing a change in façade colors</li> <li>• Added a 5 foot high parapet to the corner to further differentiate it from the rest of the building</li> </ul>
<p>3. <b>The driveway at the rear could double as a shaded urban plaza,</b> like the Dutch woonerf, to provide a nice amenity for the neighborhood (see A.4.1 and A.4.2).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have decided that it is better to move the loading to the rear of the building, which creates a service drive and does not allow for a plaza at the rear of the property.</li> <li>• Ultimately our team feels it is better to create a great street retail experience on Division</li> </ul>
<p>4. <b>Confirm the feasibility of placing landscaping over the parking structure on the north side.</b>            Two feet of soil is not sufficient to support the proposed trees between the parking and the adjacent residences. Consider decreasing the size of the below grade parking to allow for trees (see Guideline A.4.2).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have confirmed that we will have at least 4 feet of soil in the landscape buffer to the north (by building up the planter bed)</li> <li>• This will ensure we can successfully grow trees in this buffer</li> </ul>

## **BUILDING MASSING**

<b>DRB Comment</b>	<b>Design Changes</b>
<p>1. <b>Consider changes in color, materials or pattern of materials to differentiate the tower from the base</b> (see Guidelines B.1.1c and B.1.2). Design Review Board 413 East Huron Street Project October 17, 2012 Page 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have introduced new colors of brick, vertical recesses and changes in the plane of the building façade to differentiate not only the tower from the base, but also to break up the various sections of the tower</li></ul>
<p>2. <b>Consider providing variation in the north façade by pulling the center section of the “U” toward Huron Street, creating more articulation of the north facade, and lessening the shading impact on the neighborhood to the north</b> (See Guidelines A2.2 and B.1.1a).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Have introduced significant variation and articulation in the north façade</li><li>• Varied the plane of the façade by ~4 feet to create articulation</li><li>• Varied the color of brick for each vertical component</li></ul>

## **BUILDING ELEMENTS**

<b>DRB Comment</b>	<b>Design Changes</b>
<p>1. To balance the starker look of the concrete columns at street level, add richer and more detailed materials to supplement the wood storefront windows (see Guideline C.1.1c).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will be replacing the exposed concrete at the street level with either tile or glazed brick</li> </ul>
<p>2. Since the proposed design showcases an impressive material palette, consider offering materials proposed (standard sized iron spot brick, standard sized glazed brick (two colors), architectural concrete, stained wood full height grade level doors, full-height TDL metal windows, expressed relief angles at each floor level, and stained wood ceiling at pedestrian colonnade) as a component of the development agreement with the City of Ann Arbor (see Guidelines C.1.1b, C.1.1c and C.5.1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We absolutely intend to follow through with the high quality material palette that the DRB recognized in our submission</li> </ul>
<p>3. Consider relocating the resident entry closer to the intersection to activate the corner and encourage pedestrian crossings to cross in crosswalks (see Guideline C.2.1).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Our team believes most pedestrian traffic will head towards the corner at State and Huron, so the relocation of the entry is unnecessary</li> <li>• Keeping the entry away from the corner allows for the creation of a more signature retail corner, and supports the ultimate success of the retail space</li> </ul>