



Image Credit: —  
Christian Mueller

# Maynard House

400 Maynard Street

**ARCHITECT:**

James Livingston, 1962

*Christian Mueller*

Briefly the tallest building in Ann Arbor at its completion in 1962, Maynard House rewards observation with a lively play of shadows on its distinctive concave spandrels. Those sinuous quartz-faced panels contribute to what its architect, James H. Livingston (1922-1975), described as “a sculptured form,”<sup>1</sup> punctuated with contrasting precision by gold-bronze windows, and distinguished by a rich materiality throughout.

Designed by Livingston’s firm for a partnership led by local developers Norris Post and John Stegeman, the project was conceived as a “residential hotel”—well-appointed downtown apartments with the city and university at their doorstep. Visiting lecturers, empty nesters, and culture aficionados seeking a *pied-a-terre* were the intended demographic. In 2016, shortly after the building was sold by the original developers’ children, a longtime resident manager described it to the *Ann Arbor Observer* as “the Grand Budapest Hotel of Ann Arbor...[home to] international scholars, a Nobel laureate, *New Yorker* magazine staff...and, of course, all the awesome permanent residents.”<sup>2</sup>

Now owned by a national real-estate investment trust and marketed as student apartments, the building contains a mix of roomy studios and one-bedroom floor plans; onetime medical office suites on the middle levels have been converted back to apartments. Larger two-bedroom units in the twelfth-floor penthouse share a sun terrace that once featured four crabapple trees, originally lifted to the roof by helicopter.

Exuding a mid-century optimism, Maynard House stands out from its varied context: the First Congregational Church (1876) to the east; the subdued Michigan News Building (1955) to the south; two-story brick commercial buildings to the west. Yet the urbane treatment of the first floor retail spaces creates a vibrancy that smoothly mediates its position at the intersection of campus and downtown. A mixed-use development *avant la lettre*, Maynard House created a template for marketing the charms of city life as an amenity that echoes with Ann Arbor development of the present day. ●

<sup>1</sup> “Architect Calls Maynard House Sculptured Form,” *Ann Arbor News*, May 25, 1962, Ann Arbor District Library news archive, accessed August 3, 2023, <https://aadl.org/node/350671>

<sup>2</sup> Jan Schlain, “The Sale of Maynard House,” *Ann Arbor Observer*, December 2016, accessed August 3, 2023, <https://annarborobserver.com/the-sale-of-maynard-house/>