

City of Detroit

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION

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Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
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Brenda Goss Andrews
Damion W. Ellis
David Esparza, AIA, LEED
Gregory Pawlowski
Frederick E. Russell, Jr.
Angy Webb
Henry Williams

City Planning Commission Regular Meeting Minutes September 10, 2020

I. Opening

- A. Call to Order - Chairperson James called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm
- B. Roll Call - Marcell Todd, Director CPC called the roll. A quorum was present.

Attendees: Andrews, Hood, Russell, James, Williams, Ellis and Pawlowski

Excused: Esparza and Webb

- C. Amendments to and approval of agenda

Commissioner Andrews motioned to approve the agenda; seconded by Vice-Chairperson Hood. Motion approved.

II. Minutes

- A. Meeting minutes of June 4, 2020.

Commissioner Andrews motioned to bring back the minutes of the June 4, 2020 at the next scheduled CPC meeting, June 24, 2020; seconded by Commissioner Pawlowski. Motion approved.

III. Public Hearings and Presentations

- A. **PUBLIC HEARING** – to consider the request of Emily H. Peterson to amend Article XVII, District Map No. 48 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, by showing an SD1 (Special Development District – Small-Scale, Mixed-Use) zoning classification where an R1 (Single-family Residential District) zoning classification currently exists on one (1) parcel, commonly identified as 1920 Atkinson Avenue.

George Etheridge, CPC staff, provide a summary of report dated September 4, 2020 relative to the request of Emily H. Peterson on behalf of Nepulu, LLC to amend Article XVII, District Map 58, Chapter 50, Zoning, by showing an SD1 (Special Development District – Small Scale, Mixed-Use) zoning classification where an R1 (Single Family Residential District) zoning classification currently exists on one (1) parcel, commonly known as 1920 Atkinson Avenue.

The petitioner proposes to convert the existing building into a mixed use structure with a small neighborhood restaurant on the ground floor and multi-family residential on the upper levels. The building will share the side lot with the Congregation Detroit development, which was rezoned in 2017, as a green outdoor community space.

The subject site is located within the Rosa Parks area of Neighborhood Cluster 6 of the Detroit Master Plan of Polices. The Future Land Use map for this area shows “Low-Medium Residential” for the subject property. The Planning and Development Department (P&DD) submitted a report on November 21, 2016 regarding development in this area indicating the appropriateness of this requested rezoning.

Public Comments

Ishmail Terry: I'm on the other side of 12th and 14th Streets, I'm trying to figure out, how would that impact what we're doing over there. I wanted to know if changing zoning to a SD1 in affluent area, how does that impact our development; does it carry over.

George Etheridge, CPC staff: No this SD1 is simply the inclusion of the one parcel identified as 1920 Atkinson, it's an expansion of the existing SD1 which was approved by City Council in 2017; it does not extend to the development area that Mr. Terry is referencing.

Ishmail Terry: Can we actually use that as a template to utilize over there in that area.

George Etheridge: That is an item that we would be happy to discuss with Mr. Terry, regarding the feasibility of having that corridor rezoned in accordance with the master plan.

Chairperson James: Mr. Terry, Mr. Etheridge will contact you after this meeting and discuss that area and the current development that is going on. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. So at this time.

Pierre Haden: I just want to say I am strongly in favor of this new project I think that the Congregation has enhanced and given a lot of people in Boston Edison an outlet to actually just have a place to walk to and enjoy. I think will definitely help our neighborhood.

Joya Harris: I'm a long time lifelong resident of the Boston Edison area and I love the way things have been progressing here. I have to give major kudos to the congregation, because it has been a place where we can go. I think that the expansion and the project that we've talked about can only enhance our neighborhood, I fully support it.

Jesse Cory: I wanted to join this conversation about the Congregation and what a positive benefit it has been to our community. I think that this new project that they're working on will only continue to build out this little corner and interact with the park that we have nearby in a real positive way.

Staff Recommendation

The proposed zoning classification of SD1 would permit the requested use of a “Restaurant, carry-out, without drive-up or drive-through facilities” and “multiple-family dwelling” on a by-right basis; and is an appropriate designation consistent with the characteristics of the adjacent properties. Based analysis and consistent with the approval criteria of Section 50-3-70 of the Zoning Ordinance, CPC staff has no objections to the rezoning request.

Commissioner Andrews motioned to accept staff’s recommendation; seconded by Vice Chairperson Hood. Motion approved.

- B. PUBLIC HEARING** – to consider the request of Brian Hurrtienne, to amend Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, *Zoning*, by amending Article XVII, *Zoning District Maps*, Section 50-17-31, *District Map No. 29*, of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance to show a R3 (Low Density Residential District) zoning classification where a R2 (Two-Family Residential District) zoning classification is currently shown for the properties commonly known as 7631 E. Lafayette Street and 1000 and 1008 Townsend Street. The petitioner is proposing to develop a multiple-family dwelling.

Kimani Jeffrey, CPC staff, provided a presentation relative to Brian Hurrtienne’s request on behalf of John Chu, property owner, to amend Chapter 50, Article XVII, *Zoning District Maps*, Section 50-17-31, *District Map Nos. 29*, to show a R3 (Low Density Residential) zoning classification where a R2 (Two Family Residential District) zoning classification currently exists on parcels commonly known as 7631 E. Lafayette and 1000/1008 Townsend. The development team proposes two building structures which will have twelve (12) studio apartments and twelve (12), one (1) bedroom

apartments.

The subject site is located within the Butzel Area of Neighborhood Cluster 3 of the Detroit Master Plan of Polices. (MP) The Future Land Use map for this area show Low/Medium Density Residential (RLM). The Master Plan Zoning Table classifies the R3 zoning district is consistent with RLM designation.

Christian Hurttienne, Architect: Presenting on behalf of Jon Chu, who purchased the property, approximately a year ago. The site is to be developed as a multifamily building. The site rezoning request is a direct result of trying to achieve the tax abatement administered through the Detroit economic growth Corporation and that process has culminated with approval by the City Council in July. These are designed units of studios and one bedrooms to complement the existing builds in West Village, which is very adjacent to the site. We are following the Planning and Development Department's initiative of developing middle housing along a high frequency bus route which is Lafayette Avenue. There is a bus stop, just one block away; providing more housing along the edges of neighborhoods. The project is only two stories in height and we are providing handicap accessible units. We have a parking lot in between the buildings that is essentially activated or accessed from Lafayette street where the alley which was vacated in 2005.

John Chu, owner: I'm from California and have existing portfolio of properties in Detroit. This is my first development project in downtown Detroit.

Commissioner Esparza: Is this market rate housing?

Christian Hurttienne: Not totally, one studio unit at or below 60% Area Median Income (AMI) (Current AMI limit of \$825; estimated rent \$675); two studio units – at or below 80% AMI (Current AMI limit of \$1,100; estimated rent \$875); and nine studio units – market rate. Three 1 bedroom units at or below 80% AMI (Current AMI limit of \$1,178; estimated rent of \$975-\$1,000); nine – 1 bedroom units at market rate.

Commissioner Esparza: The one receptacle in the parking lot, is that going to be sufficient?

Christian Hurttienne: Yes, we do have to verify with a trash company for the exact size, but we have plenty of room for the trash receptacles for 24 units.

Vice-Chairperson Hood: I was going to ask a similar question about the rate is for these units. At what point does AMI get recalculated considering people's current work situations with the pandemic. When we say something is market rate or even affordable, the threshold is going to be much higher than what affordable or market rate really is considering lots of people aren't working; were people are working less, when do we recalculate AMI?

Christian Hurttienne: I can offer that we probably won't break ground until Spring of 2021, knowing that we have to go through this process and then submit to the Building and Safety Department, go through the Board of Zoning Appeals; the process is going to take a while, and then it's going to take a year to build. So we won't really open until 2022 and I don't know what your question would mean at that point.

Chairperson James: The plans for green space and those units, I think that we have to make sure that you include space on these properties, especially due to Covid.

Christian Hurttienne: We have looked at that, because it has been a part of health care. So we did expand the fencing area long Lafayette to have it enclosed and have some green space next to the buildings. We want to have those landscapes in a way so that they can be released areas of for the residents.

Commissioner Esparza: We had the rezoning in the nearby area, Van Dyke and Kercheval, I'm trying to recall whether any of those interested stakeholders; are they within the catchment area of this proposed development, where we would have communicated with them or received any input or comment.

Kimani Jeffrey: Yes, some of those stakeholders that were listed in the presentation as being contacted by the developer do overlap with those who were involved in the West Village Project.

Chairperson James: I think it is worthwhile to make sure that we have those discussions with the schools and the surrounding community to determine whether the process of building the property would create some issues for neighbors in terms of parking.

Public Comments

Marguerite Maddox: Expressed concerns regarding the size and entries of the ADA units.

Christian Hurttienne: The studio square footage is 375 square feet and the one bedroom units are 450 square feet. We are required by the Fair Housing Act to be ADA compliant. The ADA units, which are on the first floor, have their own private entrance from the front and from the parking lot, and they do not commingle with the other units. So therefore, the distance would be in compliance with the current compliance rules.

Roger Frank: am a resident and live right near this proposed development. Has the Moses Field School been considered at all; have they talked with anybody over at school about handicapped accessibility for the school, they use buses and the bus uses Townsend Street. I'm concerned about the parking impact on Townsend. There are four stops on Townsend right across from the development are those considered

parking spots for the residents, because it seemed awfully close to the corner of Townsend and Lafayette.

Christian Hurtienne: We have not contacted the school. What you perceive as four spots are actually dimension lines. Those are not meant for parking spaces and on street parking is not counted for any of the parking requirements. It's only off street parking, which are part of parking requirements.

Chairperson James: I'm assuming that you will be able to make contact with the school. I noticed that you didn't make contact with the churches, but make contact with the school and get their buy in and community support. I think it makes good sense to do that; to include them so that you know they understand the impact and we understand the impact as well.

Kimani Jeffrey: We were looking to bring this back for action at your next at your next meeting. The only outstanding thing is to reach out to the schools. So I believe we will be bringing this back with action to support.

- C. **PRESENTATION** – the request of Wayne County Community College District (WCCCD) for PCA (Public Center Adjacent) Special District Review of a proposed Master Sign Plan for the Downtown Campus which is located at 901 W. Fort Street.

Jamie Murphy, CPC staff, provided a summary of report dated September 4, 2020, relative to request of Wayne County Community College District (WCCC) for Public Center Adjacent (PCA) Special District Review for approval of proposed Master Sign Plan for the Downtown Campus located at 901 W. Fort Street.

The proposed Master Sign Plan for the Downtown Campus will be completed into three phases:

PHASE 1 – Seven (7) signs were approved and installed October 2019

PHASE 2 – Five (5) signs to be installed this year.

PHASE 3 – Five (5) signs will be installed in the future.

Restrictions per Section 4-4-7(e) of the Detroit City Code do not apply to developments that require City Council approval per Section 4-4-7(a). The Planning and Development Department (PDD) has reviewed the proposed signage and recommends approval with one (1) condition, that the 20' height of two (2) signs be lowered.

Staff Recommendation

CPC Staff recommendation is to approve that the signage is appropriate, they need it to help the public navigating the campus. And although some of the signs are pretty large. The size of the campus really necessitates some additional signage; CPC staff does not concur with the PDD condition.

Chairperson James: Are they thinking of maybe putting the WCCC logo from there; what struck me was at that space on the Lodge, if I'm coming in and seeing that building, I have no idea of what that building represents. So I'm just wondering if they might not think about sticking a WCCC logo there; that little emblem that they use the one they used on the other parts of the building. That might be good to stick there so that folks seeing that would understand what that is, even if you don't know who Dr. Ivery.

Jamie Murphy: That's a great suggestion, not everyone would know what that meant when they have added it to some of the old ones. When we hear from the representative maybe he will have some more insight into it.

CPC Staff recommendation is to approve that the signage is appropriate, they need it to help the public navigating the campus. And although some of the signs are pretty large. The size of the campus really necessitates some additional signage.

There is a representative from the sign company available if you have any questions for him.

Commissioner Andrews: I share the comment with the chair regarding the sign facing the expressway; if you were a visitor, you would not know that it was talking about WCCC. I do share that concern; the monumental name out shadows the WCCC logo. The one on the building is a huge name and then it seems like the WCCC on the other side of the building is real small; maybe the representative can talk about the scale and how they decided to make the name so huge and the logo so small. The name looks gigantic and the logo looks like a postage stamp.

Russell Baltimore, PDD staff: My only concern is a 20-foot sign pylon is quite large. There are flags that are 30 feet tall and much taller, but a flagpole is eight inches as opposed to something that's five feet by now, or two feet or three feet by 20 feet. I understand the need for the screen to be above someone's reach; even at 11 feet, someone can throw a rock up there and break it. Once we allow these at 20 feet, we will probably get more people coming with large pylons like that downtown.

Chairperson James: Is there a height size that you do recommend?

Russell Baltimore, PDD staff: I was thinking more along the lines of, maybe a five inch show like a 15 feet which is still rather tall. I've worked on projects in other cities where they tried to put in 20 foot signs around malls and in the downtown areas. There are very few occasions that they let that go. The monument sign, they have it in front which is a lot shorter. I don't have a problem with that one at all. It's

Chairperson James: You think if we went to 15 feet to allow for the digital; that should be more than enough for them to incorporate the digital prior to this.

Russell Baltimore, PDD staff: That is just my opinion. I just think 20 feet to tall.

Commissioner Andrews: Mr. Baltimore really explained what I was saying, as well in terms of the scale and the sign.

Roger Briddick, Wayne County Community College has been going through a transformation. The last few years they have been trying to create, not just the college here, but a district; an actual large island in Detroit, an identity for themselves and they are going through some rigors of installing signs on buildings as well as monument signs and pylon signs.

The two pylon signs in question that are 20 feet tall they are in a rather large area, the one on Fourth Street is in a rather large plaza area with no buildings around it and if there was a building around it, maybe they would put a name on the building; sometimes those names are over 20 feet. They are really trying to get a presence, in a rather large area which is the reason why they're looking for a 20-foot-tall sign, just to basically represent and stamp the fact that this is the district. There is the Fourth street sign which is by the plaza. Then there is the Jefferson sign which actually is directly off of Jefferson, so there is only two of these signs that is proposed for this business district.

Chairperson James: You're talking about two of the 20 foot signs, can you make it a five feet difference in size.

Roger Briddick: Well, we could.

Chairperson James: Would WCCC District be amenable to modify that in the design.

Roger Briddick: They are looking for the City Council approval. if you feel a 15 foot is adequate, we need to redesign.

Chairperson James: Concerned with the 20 feet height and driving safety concerns.

Marcell Todd, CPC Director: Ms. Murphy and I could look further at if the Commission is interested. I'm reminded that we do have similar sort of elements, both in terms of their design and usage that anchor the corners of the rents and plaza

along East Jefferson and they're the scale, the width of Jefferson is greater than what we have here at Fort. I would like to check the height of those and look at a comparison. They in fact may be shorter, they may be under 20 feet; that mass may also be overall different. We could bring this back at the next meeting, having had the opportunity to further investigate it, and sit down and discuss it further, not only with our colleagues at PDD, but with the appropriate representatives at the community college.

Commissioner Russell: If we were to approve this could we condition it that they work with staff and the Planning Department to resolve that matter and to fine tune it so as that we're not holding it up.

Marcell Todd, CPC Director: Staff wants more clarity, would you like staff to specifically shoot for 15 feet or to seek a reduction; or that you do not want to see a 20-foot sign but something in the range of 15 to 18 or 19 feet. We would more direction and an understanding of what the will of the Commission is in order to put that forward. We could bring it back at a subsequent meeting after having had the opportunity to discuss it and maybe reach a more definitive solution.

Commissioner Russell: I would not want to put a number on it, not being able to get in detail about exactly where it is. Is there a scheduled that the school is trying to adhere to; are they trying to advance it by a certain time?

Roger Briddick: The school is trying to accelerate things; they actually wanted the signs installed prior to the September. Now they're looking to have the signs installed prior to the January. We are shooting for December finalization and installation.

Commissioner Andrews motioned that we allow CPC staff to continue with the due diligence and then bring that back to the Commissioner, so we all have a clear understanding; supported by Vice-Chairperson Hood.

Commissioner Russell: I just want to add that we are not the only body that's going to review this. Since it's a PCA, it's got to go through City Council with a recommendation from us, the length of time and the permitting process for this is longer than normal; bringing it back sets that schedule back and I just want to make sure that everyone was aware of that.

Commissioner Williams: Offered a friendly amendment to add a date that this item is brought back to the Commission for a vote during the September 24th meeting.

Commissioner Andrews: Accepted the friendly amendment to her motion.

Commissioner Andrews motioned to allow staff to continue their due diligence regarding the height comparisons and discussions with petitioner and the Planning and Development Department; with the friending amendment to

bring the item back for approval of the Commission on September 24th, 2020; seconded by Vice Chairperson Hood. The motion was approved. Commissioner Russell voted no.

D. PRESENTATION – Proposed redevelopment of the State Fairgrounds

Katherine Underwood, CPC staff: At the upcoming September 24th City Planning Commission meeting, there is a public hearing scheduled for the consideration of the request by the Planning and Development Department to amend the Master Plan for the area containing the former state fairgrounds from a regional park designation to light industrial designation. This has been requested to accommodate the sale of land for the proposed Amazon logistics facility. City Planning Commission staff has attended four community meetings and the special land use hearing for this proposed use, which is conditional in the proposed zoning district. As a result of those meetings, staff has submitted a memo to the Commission that is a summary of some of the concerns that were articulated by the community in those meeting. This presentation by the Mayor's Office and the development team will provide an overview of the proposed Amazon facility.

Ray Diggs, Mayor's Office, Economic Development Team:

Participants: Luke Polson from the Economic Development Team, Nick Corey, Executive Director of the Economic Development, Greg Moots, Dave Walker, Karen Gage and Russell Baltimore, Planning and Development Department; Mickey Taylor Hendrix; representative from the City Traffic and Engineering Division, Department of Public Works; the development team, Le torgau and Danny Samson from the Sterling Group and Greg Scoville from Hill.

The request before the Commission is an amendment to the Master Plan in connection with the proposed redevelopment of the former state fairgrounds. The proposed deal includes the land sale of the remaining 138 acres at the State Fairgrounds. It also includes the development of a 3.8 million square foot logistics facility that will house Amazon's operations. A minimum of 1200 jobs will be created as a result of the development and under the terms of the agreement, Amazon has agreed to collaborate with the trade unions; to ensure that the trade union members get employment opportunities; and the purchase price for the land sale.

The development team has agreed to pay an additional \$7 million to the city for the construction of a new transit center on the subject property. There are no public incentives and there are no public subsidies.

The subject property is 138 acres of city owned property; property that currently has a general business district zoning classification. The purchase price for the land is \$9 million, with an additional \$7 million above the purchase price for the land for the construction of a new transit center that will replace the current bus terminal that exists on the subject property.

The future general land use designation under the Master Plan for the subject property is currently a regional park. The property has been vacant for over 10 years and in that time the property has become underutilized.

The State Fairgrounds site hosted the annual state fair for over 100 years; after the fair was discontinued the property sat vacant for over 10 years leading to its eventual sale to the city from the state's land authority in April 2019. At the time of that purchase the city's goal was to ensure that the future project for the site will create real economic opportunities.

This proposed development deal will create a minimum of 1200 jobs and Amazon's commitment to collaborating with the trade work on hiring; and that commitment includes working with the city on job fairs and hiring announcements. The development will take place in three stages. Phase 1 will include developing the first 75 acres, where that 3.8 million square foot facility will house Amazon. Phase 2 will include the development of an additional 26 acres and a 300,000 square foot building. Phase 3 will include the balance of the property; currently there are no firm development plans for the balance of that property.

The economic impact of the proposed project, 1200 jobs, a total of \$400 million will be invested in the development of the facility; and the \$2.9 million estimated net benefit to the city over a 10-year period. The \$2.9 million does not include any direct benefits to the county or to public schools; and the deal does not include any tax abatements or public subsidies.

IV. Unfinished Business - None

V. New Business - None

VI. Committee Reports - None

VII. Staff Report

VIII. Member Report

IX. Communications

X. Public Comment

Adjournment - 9:04 pm