

# City of Detroit

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**TO:** City Planning Commission

**FROM:** Jamie Murphy, Staff

**RE:** Request of DTE Energy to either modify the provisions of an existing PD (Planned Development) zoning district or to show an R5 (Medium Density Residential) zoning district where that existing PD zoning district is currently shown for one parcel commonly known at 7800 Pierson Street generally bounded by Tireman Avenue to the north, Braile Street to the east, Sawyer Street to the south, and Pierson Street to the west. **(RECOMMEND APPROVAL OF R5)**

**DATE:** March 15, 2022

## RECOMMENDATION

The City Planning Commission staff recommends APPROVAL of the request of DTE Energy to rezone one parcel commonly known as 7800 Pierson Street from the PD (Planned Development) zoning district classification to the R5 (Medium Density Residential) zoning district classification.

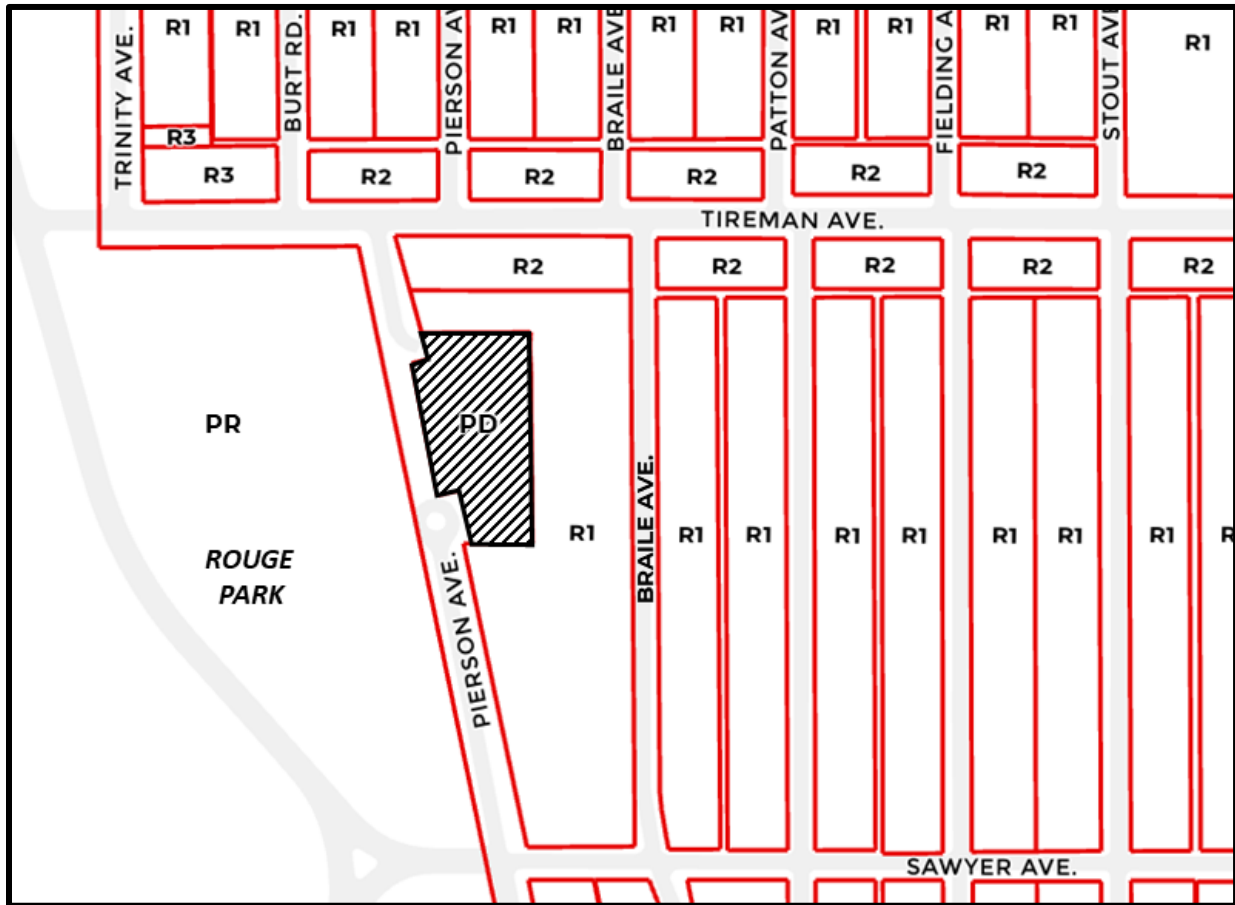
## BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

The CPC has received a request from DTE Energy to amend District Map No. 78 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, by either modifying the provisions of an existing PD (Planned Development) zoning district or showing an R5 (Medium Density Residential) zoning district where that existing PD zoning district is currently shown for the property located at 7800 Pierson Street generally bounded by Tireman Avenue to the north, Braile Street to the east, Sawyer Street to the south, and Pierson Street to the west.

The site is located in City Council District 7 and measures 1.85 acres. It was previously the site of an apartment building which was demolished in approximately 2014.

DTE has been working to increase the reliability of electrical service by increasing its tree trimming program. When tree branches grow around and over the power lines, there is a greater chance that they will fall on the lines and interrupt service. By regularly pruning back vegetation, these outages can be prevented. DTE employs properly trained, journeyman tree trimmers to perform this service. Due to a shortage of candidates to fill these jobs, DTE partnered with the City of Detroit, Focus HOPE and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) to create a tree trimming academy. The training program is six weeks long and the jobs initially pay \$16 per hour with the possibility of \$30 per hour in 2½ years.

This particular site was selected largely due to its location at the edge of Rouge Park. An extensive clean-up was needed as the site had been used for illegal dumping for several years. The facility was permitted on a temporary basis and opened in Summer 2021. The proposed map amendment is being requested to permit the existing training facility for tree trimmers on a more permanent basis. The existing PD district permits only the multiple-family dwelling that previously occupied the site; the proposed R5 zoning district allows the trade school use by-right subject to development standards such as parking and screening. Alternately, the PD ordinance for the site could be modified to permit the tree trimming academy with more specifically tailored development standards.



*Current Zoning map with proposed rezoning hatched*

**PUBLIC HEARING RESULTS**

On March 3, 2022, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on this rezoning request. At the hearing, two members of the public spoke—both in support. No letters of support or opposition were received.

**STAFF ANALYSIS**

*Surrounding Zoning and Land Use*

The zoning classification and land uses surrounding the subject area are as follows:

North: R1 (Single Family Residential) – Single Family Houses

East: R1 – Single Family Houses  
South: R1 – Single Family Houses  
West: PR (Parks and Recreation) – Rouge Park

Although the facility trains people to trim trees, the noise generated is minimal. Most of the onsite instruction is indoor classroom work and learning to climb using safety equipment. The noisiest portion of the instruction is the tree chipper training which occurs approximately ½ day per month.



*Aerial view of proposed rezoning*

### ***Zoning Ordinance Approval Criteria***

Section 50-3-70 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance lists eight approval criteria on which zoning map amendments must be based. Following are the relevant criteria with CPC staff's analysis in italics:

- Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or meets the challenge of some changing condition, trend, or fact. *The existing PD zoning classification is defunct as it only authorizes the apartment building that previously occupied the site. While the PD could be updated for the current use, the parcel does not meet the size requirement for a PD (2 acre minimum) and the development is allowable in several other zoning districts.*
- Whether the proposed amendment will have significant adverse impacts on other property that is in the vicinity of the subject tract. *No significant impacts on nearby property is anticipated. Most of the activity at the site is classroom learning and climbing instruction. Saws are not generally used onsite unless specific trees require pruning—cutting practice*

*moves around to trees that need trimming. When the site was vacant, it became a target for illegal dumping; having an active use there is beneficial to the surrounding area by deterring illegal activity.*

- Whether the proposed rezoning will create an illegal “spot zone.” *Although there isn’t other property zoned R5 in the vicinity, the parcel proposed to be rezoned is 1.85 acres which is fairly large compared to the surrounding residential lots. Also, while the R5 district allows additional uses and density than the existing R2 district, both are residential districts that permit consistent uses and require similar setbacks.*

### ***Master Plan Consistency***

The subject site is located within the Rouge area of Neighborhood Cluster 7 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The Future Land Use map for this area shows “RL – Low Density Residential” for the subject property. The Planning and Development Department (PDD) has reviewed this proposed rezoning and determined that the R5 district will not change the overall character of the area and is generally consistent with the Master Plan. The proposal to modify the existing PD district does not comply with Section 50-11-13 of the Zoning Ordinance because the major land use (Retail, Service, and Commercial) does not correspond with the general Master Plan land use category (Residential).

### ***Community Input***

DTE has been engaging with the community over the past several years beginning with the potential selection of the site and continuing through the present, now that the facility is operating. The Friends of Rouge Park and Warrendale Community Organization have been particularly supportive.

### ***Conclusion***

Based on the above analysis and consistent with the approval criteria of Section 50-3-70 of the Zoning Ordinance, CPC staff recommends **APPROVAL** of the rezoning request.

Attachment: Public Hearing Notice  
PDD Master Plan Interpretation

cc: Antoine Bryant, Director, PDD  
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Greg Moots, PDD  
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