

Lesley Carr Fairrow, Esq.
Chairperson
Lisa Whitmore Davis
Vice Chair/Secretary

City of Detroit

CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-6225 Fax: (313) 224-4336
e-mail: cc-cpc@detroitmi.gov

David Esparza, AIA, LEED
Joyce V. Hayes Giles
Alton James
Daniel Klinkert
Frederick E. Russell, Jr.
Arthur Simons
Roy Levy Williams

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HONORABLE PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STANNING COMMITTEE

RE: Request of the City of Detroit Downtown Development Authority and Olympia Development of Michigan, LLC and the to approve a Planned Development (PD) District to be established on land presently zoned B4 on Map No. 3 of Chapter 61, Article XVII of the 1984 Detroit City Code, Zoning, to construct a mixed-use arena and event center on land approximately bounded by Woodward Ave., Henry St., Clifford Ave., and Sproat St. (RECOMMENDING APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS)

NATURE OF REQUEST

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has received the request of the City of Detroit Downtown Development Authority and Olympia Development of Michigan, LLC (DDA/ODM) to approve the rezoning of land currently zoned B4 to a PD (Planned Development) zoning district classification thus enabling the development of a mixed-use arena development. A public hearing on the matter was held on Thursday, September 18, 2014, at 6:00PM. Action was taken on Thursday, October 23, 2014 at a special meeting of the Commission.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The above referenced proposal seeks to demolish several small-scale commercial buildings, vacate portions of Park Avenue, Sibley Street, and Clifford Street, and construct a complex of structures including a 20,189-seat arena, several multi-story, mixed-use buildings, a parking deck, and semi-public outdoor event space. The central structure of this proposed facility is frequently described by DDA/ODM as a “deconstructed arena,” meaning that ancillary functions traditionally incorporated into an arena structure (such as offices, maintenance facilities, and retail) will instead be located in adjacent buildings that serve to enclose and define the exterior to the arena bowl and concourse.

Mixed-use development will incorporate both commercial and residential spaces in addition to arena-related facilities. A total of five 4–5-story mixed-use buildings will house retail, residential, and office uses, and the site will also include 3-story townhouses fronting on Clifford and Cass Streets where Clifford merges into Cass, and a central utility plant building located adjacent to the former Park Avenue right-of-way. The “deconstructed” nature of the facility is

intended to allow pedestrians to walk amongst the buildings and even the arena, as well as traverse the former Park Avenue right-of-way, during times when ticketed events are not in session.

The arena itself, the largest structure in the proposed complex, begins with a below-grade playing field and rises to approximately 8 stories above ground. Much of the arena itself will be concealed behind the surrounding mixed-use buildings; however, its uppermost stories will be visible when viewed from a distance. The arena proper will be connected to the surrounding mixed-use buildings by a sheltered gallery, described by the DDA/ODM proposal as “a glass-enclosed street” which would be open to the public to facilitate pedestrian circulation and access to retail, office facilities and restaurants within. Of necessity, access to this gallery space would be controlled during ticketed events.

Vehicle access will be located on the west end of the site, where a parking deck will be served by entrances and exits to Cass Avenue, Henry Street, and Sproat Street. Pedestrian access will be primarily from a series of entrances along Woodward Avenue, including one at a future M-1 Rail station, and from along the to-be-vacated Park Avenue right-of-way. A pedestrian sidewalk will also run alongside a “drop-off/turn-around” driveway which enters from Clifford Street and passes at grade beneath the parking deck. Deliveries and waste management services will be located on the north side of the facility, along Sproat Street, and enclosed from view. DDA/ODM design team have expressed a commitment to adhering to or exceeding best practices in green building and energy-efficient design.

Context-specific guidelines for business and identification signs, intended for application to future retail tenants, are also specified in the PD proposal.

Vacation of Park Avenue, Sibley Street, and Clifford Street requires separate approval of the City Council, after an analysis and recommendation from the Department of Public Works City Engineering Division; ODM/DDA is concurrently seeking this approval.

SURROUNDING ZONING AND LAND USES

To the north: B4, including two non-conforming single-family houses, the Park Avenue Hotel Historic District (a vacant building) and the Eddystone Hotel Historic District (also a vacant building); however, a majority of land to the north is vacant.

To the east: PD and Traditional Main Street Overlay Area, including vacant land and numerous townhouses, a portion of which are located within the Brush Park Historic District.

To the south: B4, primarily vacant land, but also including small-scale commercial uses.

To the west: B4, several vacant commercial buildings and the Mariner’s Inn (a shelter and treatment center for the homeless).

COMMUNITY INPUT

In order to identify and address effects on the surrounding community and on the city as a whole, CPC staff has engaged in ongoing discussions with a number of stakeholders including the DDA/ODM design team, the Neighborhood Advisory Council which was convened by City

Council to represent the interests of the host community, Council Member Raquel Castañeda-López (representing District Six in which the proposed development is located), the Planning and Development Department (specifically, Master Plan, urban design, and Historic District Commission staff), The Department of Public Works (DPW) and the General Services Department over the past several months.

Concerns identified by the surrounding community include (in no particular order): preservation of the existing street grid, when feasible, to ensure walkability and connectivity; minimization of light pollution; energy efficiency (including adherence to LEED guidelines); the provision of public and semi-public green space; preservation of historic buildings; opportunities for inclusive and affordable housing; “complete streets” and opportunities for alternative transportation, including bicycle parking facilities and connections to M-1 Rail; effective management of vehicle traffic and parking during events, including, if necessary, a parking impact study and mitigation plan; inclusion of street furniture (including benches and public art) to encourage use of the facility during off-peak hours, especially for children, the elderly, and people with disabilities; and finally, appropriate sidewalk and walkway widths to create an inviting pedestrian environment during periods of peak travel.

ISSUES

The CPC reviewed the various comments received at the September 18, 2014 public hearing on the matter, concerns expressed by City Planning Commission members at that meeting, and input from the Neighborhood Advisory Council and all relevant City departments. Ten people spoke, most of whom stated that they were residents of the surrounding community or representatives of community organizations.

Desires expressed at the public hearing included (in chronological order), the preservation of historic buildings, the provision of affordable housing, formal recognition of Neighborhood Advisory Council demands, quality transportation planning and urban design, local hiring practices, improved parking design, the mitigation of traffic congestion, noise pollution, and light pollution, walkability and the maintenance of the existing street grid especially with respect to Park Avenue, LEED-certified or comparable energy-efficient design, reuse of salvaged building materials from demolitions, barrier-free access, avoidance of displacement of nearby residents, and quality stormwater management.

In addition, CPC staff identified the following items:

- Light pollution
- Visual impact of roof materials
- Sign guidelines and animated signs
- Importance of pedestrian-friendly view corridor along Park Ave.
- Compatibility of Parsons-Brinkerhoff traffic management plan with proposed Bus Rapid Transit and bicycle lanes on Cass Ave.
- Bicycle parking locations
- Building height to street width ratio with respect to Complete Streets best practices
- Estimated parking demand and ability of surrounding land uses to accommodate parking
- On-site and off-site of parking for residential and retail tenants
- Green building practices
- Construction management practices

- General design

INITIAL ANALYSIS

CPC identified several areas of concern regarding the development proposal.

Pedestrian access. Sidewalk and walkway widths must be adequate to provide pedestrian flow during peak periods in conjunction with impinging and related activities. Staff will continue to identify best practices and work with stakeholders to develop the appropriate solution.

Surface parking. The petitioner has provided a draft traffic study. CPC staff is reviewed the study and made requests for additional information to ensure that the proposed development would not create an increased demand for inappropriate surface parking. The Commission also look to the expertise in the Traffic Engineering Division (TED) of DPW where the technical review of this document was conducted. TED was satisfied with traffic study and prepared for the project to advance.

Connectivity. CPC, consistent with community input, was concerned about access for pedestrians, bicycles, and emergency vehicles to and from the area south of the Fisher Freeway and the area west of Clifford Street. This access may be inadequate along the Park Avenue right-of-way and along the Sibley Avenue right-of-way due to narrow walkway widths. This was communicated to the petitioner and the plans modified as a result.

PD district boundaries and adjacent historic districts. Consistent with concerns preliminarily expressed by the Planning and Development Department, CPC sought additional details regarding DDA/ODM rationale for excluding the adjacent Park Avenue Hotel Historic District from the PD proposal, and additional information regarding potential impacts on adjacent historic districts and other opportunities as it concerns this resource.

MASTER PLAN

A preliminary recommendation from the Planning and Development Department suggests that an area including the subject site, and extending south to the Fisher Freeway (I-75), should be changed in classification from MRC (Mixed-Residential/Commercial) to CS (Special Commercial) in the Master Plan. The proposed development would be consistent with the current MRC designation, but the CS designation would be more appropriate.

An additional report covering the full analysis conducted by the Commission will follow.

RECOMMENDATION

The City Planning Commission having completed its review and analysis of the above captioned request and recommends approval with the following conditions:

1. That required parking for the residential component of the project be provided and maintained within the parking structure;
2. That where possible the developer further refine and soften the hardscape characteristics of the open space components of the project with plant material, ground cover and other

3. That task or activity lighting be directed or shielded in order to minimize or where possible eliminate spillover or intrusive light on to adjacent of or nearby property. That illuminated signage, internally illuminated external cladding or architectural features and features illuminated by external fixtures will be subject to review, testing and monitoring by the City, when made operational, in order to ensure against any undesirable or deleterious effect;
4. That a final and more detailed proposal for signage including on premises, off premises, temporary and directional signage as well as static, changeable copy and full motion video display be developed and submitted to the City Planning Commission staff and other applicable City agencies for review as to compliance with the applicable City codes as may be amended and other approvals may be warranted;
5. That sheet A-5.07 of the approval set of drawings be voided from the submission;
6. That a plan for the type, placement and general appearance of art installations that would further enhance the project be prepared and submitted to the City Planning Commission staff for the purpose of distinguishing such features as art and assuring compliance with applicable codes as may be amended;
7. That the Construction Management Plan be further developed, and reviewed and adjusted as warranted by applicable City agencies including, but not limited to, the Planning and Development Department, Building Safety Engineering and Environmental Department, the Department for Public Works and City Planning Commission staff; and
8. That final site plans, elevations, landscaping, lighting and signage plans be submitted to the staff of the City Planning Commission for review and approval prior to application being made for applicable permits (excluding permits for mass excavation, utilities, demolition and abatement).

Additionally, as it concerns the larger district (Catalyst Area) in which the PD is located, CPC recommends that the strategy and/or guidelines to be prepared for the district address but not be limited to the following:

- Traffic Management Plan
- Shared Parking Plan
- Future reuse of nonessential surface parking lots
- Snow removal
- Security Provisions
- Plan for Infrastructure Improvements

Also, due to this proposals impact upon adjacent historic districts the Commission will forward copy of its report to the Historic District Commission per the provisions of chapter 25 of the City Code.

The staff recommends introduction and setting of a public hearing for November 20th or later if this matter is to be addressed before the end of the year. The Council may also wish to have a discussion before the Committee including all Council members or set a Committee of the Whole meeting at which time a full presentation could be given by the petitioner and staff.

Respectfully submitted,

LESLEY C. FAIRROW, ESQ., CHAIRPERSON

David Whitaker, Director, LPD
Marcell R, Todd, Jr., Senior City Planner
Timothy Boscarino, Zoning Specialist

Attachments

cc: Thomas Lewand, Group Executive
Melvin Hollowell, Corp. Counsel
Trisha Stein; Interim Director, P&DD
John Baran, P&DD
Bruce Evans, P&DD