

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

**TO:** City Planning Commission

**FROM:** Timothy Boscarino, staff  
Marcell R. Todd, Jr. staff

**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.**

**DATE:** September 17, 2014

## **NATURE OF REQUEST**

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has the received the request of the City of Detroit Downtown Development Authority and Olympia Development of Michigan, LLC and (DDA/ODM) to approve the establishment of a PD (Planned Development) zoning district to be established, thus enabling the development of a mixed-use arena and event center. A public hearing on the matter is to be held Thursday, September 16, 2014, at 6:00PM.

## **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. 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 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 staff 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, a 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.

CPC staff, with input from relevant city departments, continues to study the above concerns as it continues its analysis and moves toward the development of a staff recommendation.

## **INITIAL STAFF ANALYSIS**

CPC staff has 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.. Furthermore (although this is outside the scope of the PD review) staff will explore the possibility of an additional pedestrian bridge over the Fisher Freeway.

**Surface parking.** The petitioner has provided a draft traffic management study. CPC staff is reviewing the study and may request additional information to ensure that the proposed development does not create an increased demand for surface parking. We will also look to the expertise in the Traffic Engineering Division of DPW where the technical review of this document is being conducted.

**Connectivity.** CPC staff, consistent with community input, is 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. Staff will communicate with DDA/ODM to seek clarity of intent.

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

**Security and Public Safety.** CPC staff continues to gather input from the Police and Fire departments. CPC staff also continues to examine United States Department of Homeland Security guidelines for major event venues, specifically with respect to potential impacts on adjacent land uses.

## **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 (Mixed-Residential/Commercial) to CS (Special Commercial) in the Master Plan. The proposed development would be consistent with this Master Plan change.

Attachments