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# City of Detroit

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TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Marcell R. Todd, Jr., Senior City Planner  
Timothy Boscarino, Staff

RE: **Request of Olympia Development of Michigan, LLC and the City of Detroit Downtown Development Authority 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. (RECOMMEND APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS)**

DATE: October 22, 2014

On October 23, 2014, the City Planning Commission (CPC) may take action on the request of Olympia Development of Michigan, LLC and the City of Detroit Downtown Development Authority (ODM/DDA) to approve a Planned Development (PD) zoning district to be established, enabling the development of a mixed-use arena and event center. The following report reflects our analysis, comment made at a public hearing on the matter that was held at the September 18, 2014 CPC meeting, input from a Neighborhood Advisory Council that was convened to provide comment on the proposed development, and comment solicited from relevant city departments. CPC staff recommends approval with conditions; these will be discussed by staff at the October 23 CPC meeting and presented in a separate document.

## **PD DISTRICT FOOTPRINT AND EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The boundary of the proposed PD district is clearly indicated by a bold line on sheet C2.01A of the attached ODM/DDA submission. The site, approximately 12 acres, consists of all zoned land bounded by Henry, Clifford, and Sproat streets and Woodward Avenue, exclusive of three lots at the southwest corner of Henry Street and Park Avenue which constitute the Park Avenue Hotel Historic District. Portions of Park Avenue and Sibley Street are also located within the proposed development and will require vacation via a separate concurrent petition request.

The site presently contains several small-scale commercial buildings which are owned by ODM/DDA or affiliated entities, as well as a single billboard along Woodward Avenue. Most of the site, however, consists of unpaved or gravel lots which are frequently used for parking.

## **PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT**

The above referenced proposal seeks to demolish all existing structures, 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 ODM/DDA 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 located on the site.

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 Street 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, 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 ODM/DDA proposal as a “via” or “a glass-enclosed street” which would be open to the public to facilitate pedestrian circulation and access to retail and office facilities within. Of necessity, access to this gallery space would be controlled during ticketed events.

The Floor Area Ratio of the proposed development, calculated in accordance with Section 61-13-157, is 2.17 exclusive of the parking structure, or 3.25 including the parking structure.

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 from a series of entrances along Woodward Avenue, including one at a future M-1 Rail station, from the former Park Avenue right-of-way, and through an atrium that passes through the parking structure at the west end of the site. A driveway serving a “vehicle drop-off area” also passes through this atrium. Deliveries and waste management services will be located on the north side of the facility, along Sproat Street, and enclosed from view. Retail and residential tenants and will have dedicated parking on site, while short-term visitors will use on-street spaces or park in surface lots located off-site, as described in Tab 9 of the “Second Supplement to Project Narrative.”

ODM/DDA design staff have expressed a commitment to adhering to or exceeding best practices in green building and energy-efficient design. However, green building design guidelines were not specifically referenced in the proposal.

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.

### **PRIOR REVIEW AND REVISED SUBMISSION**

The initial proposal by ODM/DDA was presented to the CPC at its September 18, 2014 regular meeting, during which the statutory public hearing was held to solicit comments from community stakeholders (the public hearing results are summarized below). The petitioner subsequently prepared a revised submission, in part to reflect concerns expressed at, and subsequent to, the September 18 meeting. Revised documents submitted to CPC consisted of a “Second Supplement to Project Narrative” dated October 15, 2014 (attached), and revised drawings dated October 20, 2014 (also attached).

Changes made in this revised submission are as follows:

- A revised Woodward streetscape plan depicts an expanded pedestrian corridor, now 18 feet wide instead of 15, accomplished by the elimination of some on-street parking and the use of tree grates.
- North-south pedestrian flow is created along proposed townhouses fronting on Clifford Street has been improved where the sidewalk intersects a ramp accessing the proposed parking structure.
- North-south pedestrian access along the Park Avenue right-of-way proposed for vacation is enhanced by an 18 foot gap between buildings, as opposed to a 15 foot gap in the earlier submission.
- Bicycle parking and storage facilities are now indicated in several locations throughout the site.
- Steps and ramps are eliminated in public spaces to facilitate barrier-free access and improved access for all users.
- Elevations of proposed townhouses along Clifford Street have been revised.
- Additional details are provided regarding aesthetic treatment of Woodward Avenue elevations.
- Residential floor plans for buildings C, D and E are provided.
- Details regarding the proposed parking garage, lacking from the original submission, are provided.
- Additional details regarding exterior illumination are provided.
- Anticipated on-site and off-site parking needs for residents, employees, commercial tenants, and non-event patrons are clarified.
- Projected off-site parking demands for event patrons are clarified.
- Brief construction management guidelines are provided.

## **ANALYSIS**

Staff analysis of the proposed PD district is conducted with reference to the approval criteria for zoning map amendments as described in Section 61-3-80, the PD approval criteria as described in Section 61-3-96, and PD district design criteria as described in section 61-11-15 of the Zoning Ordinance.

### **Approval Criteria for Zoning Map Amendments**

Based on the eight approval criteria outlined in Section 61-3-80 of the Zoning Ordinance, a zoning map amendment appears to be warranted in this case. Particularly relevant items pertaining to the “health, safety, and general welfare of the public” (criterion 3), “adverse impacts on the environment” (criterion 5) and “adverse impacts on other property in the vicinity of the subject area” (criterion 6) are addressed in greater detail by the PD district design criteria below.

### **Planned Development Approval Criteria**

Section 61-3-96 of the Zoning Ordinance lists nine approval criteria specific to PD districts. The proposed development appears to satisfy criteria one through six, which focus primarily on quantitative aspects of the proposed development, the suitability of the PD district zoning as opposed to other zoning classifications, and consistency with the intent of Section 503 of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act.

Criteria seven through nine assess impact on the surrounding community, consistency with the Master Plan, and site design standards, respectively, items likewise addressed by the PD district design criteria described below.

### **Planned Development District Design Criteria**

Section 61-11-15 provides the following design-specific criteria for the review of proposed PD districts (abbreviated for clarity) with analysis following each item:

*(a) Master Plan. This zoning ordinance requires that the proposed major land use be consistent with the adopted Master Plan in all PD developments.*

The Planning & Development Department has suggested 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 is consistent with the MRC designation; however, CS would be more appropriate given the proposed build-out for the larger area.

*(b) Scale, form, massing, and density. Scale, form, massing and density should be appropriate to the nature of the project and relate well to surrounding development.*

The proposed development satisfies this criterion, filling a gap between the Central Business District, to the south, and the Park Avenue Hotel Historic District and Eddystone Hotel Historic District, to the north, all of which feature high-rise development with a traditional street grid and minimal setbacks. The proposed development also provides a transition between these high-rise uses and more moderately scaled development to the west and east, including the Traditional Main Street overlay district on Woodward Avenue and the Brush Park Historic District to the east.

Building height to street width ratio varies with building heights and different street widths on Woodward, Henry, Cass, and Sproat streets, but generally meets the minimum 1:3 guideline recommended by the U.S. Green Building Council and other organizations that advocate “complete streets.”

*(c) Compatibility. The proposed development should be compatible with surrounding development in terms of land use, general appearance and function, and should not adversely affect the value of properties in the immediate vicinity.*

The mixed-use and event-driven nature of the proposed development is compatible with the land uses of the adjacent Central Business District; much of the surrounding land use is mixed-use as well.

A significant visual impact on surrounding properties is created by the mass of the project, as well as by roof materials and lighting, as described in Tab 7 of the “Second Supplement to Project Narrative.” It is the intent of the petitioner to use LED (Light Emitting Diode) panels as part of the roof enclosure generally depicted in red. This will allow that portion of the building to vary in color and intensity. However, these panels will not be of a resolution that would allow them to display detailed images or small text. Large-format sponsored signs, to be located at each of the arena’s four primary entrances, will also create a visual impact on surrounding properties.

*(d) Circulation. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation facilities should be adequately designed to meet expected demands. Disruption of traffic flow in surrounding areas should be minimized, and truck traffic should be carefully planned and controlled, especially to avoid use of residential streets.*

Traffic congestion can be as much of an indicator of successful development and associated demand as it is a deterrent and frustrating factor for all parties. A traffic analysis by Parsons Brinkerhoff, commissioned by ODM/DDA, and the city’s Traffic and Engineering Division of the Department of Public Works both agree that there is adequate capacity within the area road network to accommodate anticipated event traffic. The real challenge, especially during times of peak demand, is one of traffic management. Active coordination of events, parking facilities, and the use of multimodal transportation options will be required to ensure a satisfactory level of service.

To an extent, traffic flow surrounding the proposed development will be comparable to existing traffic patterns during events at nearby Comerica Park and Ford Field. Parking facilities are described in Tab 8 and Tab 9 of the “Second Supplement to Project Narrative.” However, additional demands on surrounding streets are certain to occur as a result of the proposed development. Disruptions to traffic flow will also be created by event-related closures of Henry and Sproat streets.

A challenge to non-motorized traffic will be created by the location of the proposed parking structure at the west end of the site combined with the event-specific closures of Henry and Sproat streets. This will direct a large number of cars onto Cass Avenue, presently designated by the city’s Non-motorized Master Plan as a Downtown-Midtown Connector, a primary bicycle

route. Buffered bicycle lanes, proposed for Cass Avenue by Midtown Detroit, Inc. and the Department of Public Works, are likely to be used as de-facto travel lanes for motor vehicles during events. Protected bicycle lanes (where bicycle traffic is separated from motorized traffic by a grade change or a physical barrier such as landscaping or parked cars), although outside the scope of this PD proposal, would alleviate this situation.

Pedestrian traffic in the area is a significant concern, especially given the proximity of the site to other mixed-use development, the Central Business District, M-1 Rail, and bus routes. Disruptions to pedestrian traffic are largely mitigated by proposed pedestrian access ways follow the preexisting street grid, as described in Tab 2 and Tab 3 of the “Second Supplement to Project Narrative.” However, during some events, disruptions to pedestrian traffic may occur with respect to ticketed events that are held outdoors.

*(e) Parking and loading. Where appropriate, adequate vehicular off-street parking and loading should be provided. The City Planning Commission will be guided by standards delineated in this zoning ordinance with adjustments appropriate to each specific situation.*

As one might expect, parking needs have been one of the more challenging aspects of the review of the proposed project. Tab 9 on the “Second Supplement to Project Narrative” shows a total of 4,200 parking spaces available within 1,000 feet of the events center as of opening day. 1,200 of these spaces are to be provided on site via a parking structure, with the remainder provided by existing structures and existing surface parking lots, and inevitably, some new surface parking. Recognizing longstanding concerns with the excessive number and often poor condition of surface parking lots in the area, it is essential that all such lots be properly developed and maintained as per City Code.

However, a number of existing surface lots in the vicinity are expected to be redeveloped with higher and better uses, including structured parking and some surface-level accessory parking. For one example, the surface lot located along the Fisher Freeway service drive and immediately northwest of Comerica Park is expected to be redeveloped into another 1,200-space parking structure.

A narrow interpretation of the site’s existing B4 zoning classification would require, within a radius of 1,000 feet, one parking space per six arena seats, or a total of 3,365 spaces. With an available 4,200 spaces within 1,000 feet of the proposed development, this requirement is met.

A more comprehensive estimate of parking needs suggests a demand of one parking space per 2.5 arena seats, plus 1.25 spaces per apartment unit, 1.5 spaces per townhouse unit, 1 space per 400 square feet of office space, and 1 space per 250 square feet of retail space (where the requirement is not suspended), for a total of 8,909 spaces. However, other modes of transportation are expected to reduce this number: 8% of patrons are expected to arrive by M1 Rail, 6% by taxis and private shuttles, and 3% on foot, resulting in an adjusted parking demand estimate of 7,395 spaces.<sup>1</sup> This demand would be adequately met by approximately 20,000 parking spaces within a ten-minute walk of the proposed development.

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<sup>1</sup> These numbers are based on requirements of the Zoning Ordinance in conjunction with several recent Parsons Brinkerhoff traffic management studies, including one commissioned by ODM/DDA for the proposed events center.

Other than the 1,200 spaces to be provided on-site in the proposed garage, this parking is located in structures and surface lots, many of which are located in the Central Business District and shared with other events and uses. At present, these parking facilities are able to satisfactorily serve events at Comerica Park and Ford Field, both of which exceed the proposed Events Center in capacity and parking demand. On occasion, however, multiple events will occur simultaneously. This will result in a greatly increased parking demand and require some patrons to park outside of the 10-minute radius. The most challenging scenario, all three major sports venues hosting an event on the same day, would be a rare occurrence (approximately six or fewer times per year, based on varying event schedules).

*(f) Environmental impacts. Environmental impacts that relate to such factors as noise, air, combustibles and explosives, gases, soil, and water pollution, toxic waste, vibration, odor, glare, and radiation, should be controlled to be within acceptable levels at all times.*

With the possible exceptions of noise and glare, these items are not expected to exceed acceptable levels typical of a mixed-use and entertainment development.

Light pollution has been previously raised as a concern, due in large part to images that were previously advanced for the arena. However, the actual design is evolving toward a more conservative appearance. Final location, type, and operation of lighting features and fixtures will require coordination and monitoring to ensure against excessive light pollution.

*(g) Open space. Adequate public and private open space should be provided for light and air, landscaping and, where appropriate, for passive and active recreation. Lot size, setbacks and yard requirements are flexible, but the City Planning Commission will be guided by standards that appear in comparable zoning ordinance district classifications.*

The proposed development provides both programmed and passive public spaces. Setbacks are similar to surrounding development and land uses.

*(h) Rights-of-way, easements, and dedications. Where appropriate, adequate rights-of-way, easements and dedications should be provided for trafficways, utilities and community facilities.*

These items appear to be adequate in the proposed development.

*(i) River access.*

This item is not applicable to the proposed development.

*(j) Screening. Appropriate buffering and screening of service, loading, refuse collection, mechanical and electrical equipment and of parking areas should be provided.*

For the most part, proposed service and loading facilities are located below-grade and accessed by way of the parking structure. Refuse collection, located along Sproat Street, and mechanical and electrical equipment, located within a central plant, are adequately screened. Some loading

and servicing, as is customary elsewhere in the Central Business District and Midtown, will be staged on the street.

*(k) Orientation. Careful consideration should be given to orientation both for solar access to the proposed project and for shadow impact upon surrounding development.*

Retail, residential, and office uses are located on the perimeter of the site as well as the atrium surrounding the arena proper would receive solar access. Building footprints and massing are within the intensity and dimensional standards for the B4 zoning classification, as described in Section 61-13-25 of the Zoning Ordinance, and do not create undue shadow impact on the surrounding area.

*(l) Signage. Signage and graphics should be tastefully designed to be visually appealing and in character with surrounding development. They should provide needed information, direction, and orientation in a clear and concise manner.*

Context-specific guidelines for business and identification signs, intended for application to future retail tenants, are specified in Section A-5 of the PD proposal drawings. However, we recommend that approval of the PD not include this portion of the proposal, as the City of Detroit is presently undertaking an amendment to the sign regulations outlined in chapters 3 and 61 of the Detroit City Code. The signage needs for the proposed development will be addressed in the forthcoming amendments. A final submission for proposed signage as well as on site art installations will have to be submitted subsequently to the approval of this PD.

*(m) Security considerations. Security considerations, especially avoidance of visually isolated public spaces, should be a major element of the design program.*

Generally, visually isolated public spaces are avoided and security features are fully integrated into the design.

*(n) Accessibility. Barrier-free access and public safety features should be carefully planned.*

As noted above, the degree of barrier-free access is increased in the revised ODM/DDA submission. Site access appears to exceed best practices in barrier-free design.

*(o) Preservation and restoration. Preservation and restoration of buildings having architectural or historic value should be considered a primary objective.*

The proposed development poses a particular challenge to the adjacent, single-building Park Avenue Hotel Historic District. United States Department of Homeland Security guidelines for major sports venues, adopted by the National Hockey League, suggest a 100-foot “outer perimeter,” defined by road closures, barriers, and other security measures, around the event venue.<sup>2</sup> Due to the location of the arena’s northwest entrance, a substantial portion of the Park Avenue Hotel Historic District would lie within this “outer perimeter” zone, which may impact the feasibility of redevelopment of the presently-vacant Park Avenue Hotel Historic District.

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<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Homeland Security, “Protective Measures Guide for U.S. Sports Leagues,” 2008, 19–20.

The creation of this “outer perimeter,” compounded by the proposed vacation of the Park Avenue right-of-way and resulting interruption of the traditional street grid, subjects the property to “isolation from or alteration of in [sic] the surrounding environment,” a potential “adverse effect” to a historic district, as identified by Section 25-2-7 (b) of the Detroit City Code.

To a lesser extent, the impact of event-related road closures on the adjacent Eddystone Hotel Historic District also constitutes an “adverse effect”. Neighborhood Advisory Council comments (attached), summarized below, also express a concern with quality of life issues in the adjacent Brush Park Historic District.

*(p) Urban design. Urban design elements of form and character, especially in intensely developed areas, should be carefully considered. Such elements include, but are not limited to: richness and interest of public areas through the provision of storefronts, window displays, landscaping, and artwork; color, texture and quality of structural materials; enclosure of public spaces; variations in scale; squares, plazas and/or "vest pocket parks" where appropriate; continuity of experience, visual activity and interest; articulation and highlighting of important visual features; and preservation and enhancement of important views and vistas.*

Quality urban design has been the subject of ongoing discussions between CPC staff, the ODM/DDA design team, the Planning and Development Department, the Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department, and the General Services Department over the past several months. The revised submission provided by ODM/DDA, in large part, reflects the favorable outcome of these discussions.

Neighborhood Advisory Council, Planning and Development Department, and General Services Division concerns regarding urban design (attached) are also referenced and summarized below.

*(q) Amenities. Special attention should be given to amenity and comfort considerations such as provision for outdoor seating, restrooms for public use, bicycle storage, convenience of access points, and protection from harsh weather through features as enclosed walkways and arcaded pedestrian areas.*

The proposed development provides these amenities.

*(r) Maintenance. Careful attention should be given to ease of maintenance of the completed project. Snow removal, mowing, cleaning, and other maintenance and repair operations should be considered.*

General Services Division comments (attached) recommend heated walkways to facilitate snow removal and reduce the risk of injury.

*(s) Construction period. Phasing, staging, and interim circulation patterns should be well-planned so as to minimize disruption during the construction period.*

This item is addressed in a summary manner in Tab 10: Construction Management Plan of the “Second Supplement to Project Narrative.” A more detailed construction management plan may be warranted.

*(t) Urban renewal areas.*

This item is not applicable to the proposed development.

**CITY PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING**

As noted above, the City Planning Commission, in accordance with the provisions of the Michigan Zoning Enabling Act, held a statutory public hearing on the proposed development at its regular meeting on September 18, 2014. 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.

**COMMENT FROM NEIGHBORHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL**

The Neighborhood Advisory Council, an organization convened to represent the interests of the surrounding community, has provided specific recommendations from two committees (attached).

The Construction and Design committee recommends that the existing street grid be retained to the fullest extent feasible, particularly with respect to Park Avenue, and that pedestrian-scale facade treatments be encouraged at ground level along Sproat Street to support pedestrian uses and the redevelopment of the Park Avenue Hotel Historic District and the Eddystone Hotel Historic District. This committee also recommends the elimination of steps along Henry Street to facilitate barrier-free access (this item has been addressed in the revised ODM/DDA submission). Furthermore, the committee cautions against the use of animated and illuminated signs along Woodward and Clifford avenues due to the visual impacts on nearby residences.

The Historic Preservation and Housing Committee advocates for the retention of existing structures within and surrounding the proposed development, particularly the Park Avenue Hotel Historic District and the Eddystone Hotel Historic District. The committee also expresses a concern that the proposed development will “create conditions that make it more difficult to redevelop hotels Park Avenue and Eddystone.” Additionally, the committee requests a portion of the proposed development be designated for affordable housing.

**COMMENT FROM CITY DEPARTMENTS**

Please note that these comments are largely based on the original ODM/DDA application dated August 28, 2014 and the presentation made by the petitioner to the City Planning Commission on September 18, 2014. Many of the items discussed in these comments have been addressed by revised materials submitted by the petitioner on October 15 and October 20, 2014.

General Services Division staff submitted a list of recommendations pertaining to site design (attached), suggesting heated sidewalks, as well as selection of plant materials “to provide winter interest.” The division also expressed concerns regarding pedestrian flow and the need for bicycle parking, among others. Both General Services Division and Planning and Development Department/Historic District Commission staff comments suggest integrating the Park Avenue Hotel Historic District into the proposed development.

## **CONCLUSION**

As noted above, a formal recommendation, with conditions, will be presented by staff at the October 23, 2014, CPC meeting and provided in a separate document.

### Attachments:

“Second Supplement to Project Narrative” dated 10/15/2014

Supplemental drawings dated 10/20/2014

Comments from Neighborhood Advisory Council Construction and Design Committee

Comments from Neighborhood Advisory Council Historic Preservation and Housing Committee

Comments from P&DD design staff

Comments from P&DD Historic District Commission staff

Comments from General Services Division

Comments from Council Member Raquel Castañeda-López