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**TO:** City Planning Commission

**FROM:** Kimani Jeffrey, Staff

**RE:** Neumann-Smith Architecture to amend Article XVII, District Map 4, of the 1984 Detroit City Code Chapter 61, Zoning, and the provisions of the existing PD-H (Planned Development District-Historic) zoning classification for the property commonly known as 100 Mack Avenue, generally bounded by Eliot Street and the portion of vacated Eliot Street on the north, John R. Street on the east, Erskine Street on the south and Woodward Avenue on the west.

The request will facilitate the construction of a multi-level parking deck with first floor retail/commercial space. Additionally, the request includes plans for an adjacent open space amenity (**RECOMMEND APPROVAL**).

**DATE:** May 9, 2019

**BACKGROUND**

Before the Commission is the request of Neumann-Smith Architecture to amend Article XVII, District Map 4, of the 1984 Detroit City Code Chapter 61, Zoning, and the provisions of the existing PD-H (Planned Development District-Historic) zoning classification for the property commonly known as 100 Mack Avenue, generally bounded by Eliot Street and the portion of vacated Eliot Street on the north, John R. Street on the east, Erskine Street on the south and Woodward Avenue on the west.

The request is planned to facilitate the construction of a multi-level parking deck with first floor retail/commercial space. Additionally, the request includes plans for an adjacent open space amenity. A more detailed analysis of the proposal will follow in a subsequent report to be provided after the public hearing.

The property owner and developer, Adam Nyman of Woodward Mack 22, LLC is proposing to erect this multi-level parking deck with first floor retail space along with an adjacent park/open space at the parcel commonly known as 100 Mack Avenue in the Brush Park Historic District.

Please see previous report for full scope and details.

**PUBLIC HEARING RESULTS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

At the CPC public hearing, three individuals spoke to the project. One was a representative from Midtown Detroit Inc. who spoke in support of the proposed parking deck stating that this will help the parking problems for the area. The representative also spoke to the need for shared parking for

multiple projects in the area that will allow parking to concentrate instead of being dispersed neighborhood wide. Additionally, a representative from Giffels and Webster spoke regarding a traffic study that had been conducted for this site and surrounding area that concludes that the parking deck would not have any overbearing negative impact on the neighborhood, but would only slightly alter traffic conditions (this study was provided in staff's original report for this matter).

Another speaker was a resident who spoke in opposition to the proposal because of the size and scale of the parking structure. The person also spoke to this development having a negative impact on the neighboring community. Specifically the resident spoke to dangerous traffic conditions that exist on John R and the fear that the proposed garage will exacerbate the current issues

A representative from the Mayor's Office also spoke at the public hearing, stating that the Mayor's Office would be taking this matter up and working with the appropriate departments to create a traffic mitigation plan. (Please see staff analysis).

Although, the Brush Park CDC had originally submitted a letter of support for this project earlier in the past year, they have since taken a contrary position. Due to the time that has transpired since that matter was reviewed, the CDC asked that the developer present once again. This meeting was held on April 29<sup>th</sup>. At this meeting the development team presented along with the Mayor's Office, on ways that traffic calming measures would be implemented to make the area safer. That plan will be included in the analysis.

## **ANALYSIS**

This project is generally in conformance with the PD District design criteria of **Sec. 61-11-15** of the Zoning Ordinance. Some of the criteria that are considered as a part of the process are as outlined:

***Master Plan.** The proposed development should reflect applicable policies stated in the Detroit Master Plan. The policies relating to the geographic area in question as well as general policies will be considered. This zoning ordinance requires that the proposed major land use be consistent with the adopted Master Plan in all PD developments.*

The Planning and Development Department has submitted a Master Plan Determination, stating that the proposed development does conform to the MP Future Land Use designation. Regarding the City of Detroit Master Plan of Policies, the subject property is located in the Lower Woodward area of Neighborhood Cluster 4. The future land use designation for the subject parcels indicates (MRC) Mixed Residential-Commercial. "These areas are often characterized by medium-to-high density housing developed compatibly with commercial and/or institutional uses."

***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. **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 scale, form, massing and density proposed for this development are appropriate for a site of this nature. The proposed parking structure abuts a Major Street and Mass Transit Route consistent with the provisions of Neighborhood Cluster 4 in the Master Plan of Policies. Woodward Ave. serves as the spine of the City and is as an appropriate thoroughfare for dense development, especially those within the greater downtown area. The development is proposed to have ground level commercial spaces that will help to activate the pedestrian realm.

As it relates to the massing and form of the structure, city staff met for approximately a year in order to understand how the development might be improved by incorporating a liner building to mask the parking element from the street. This would have been desired by CPC and PDD staff in the beginning. However, after a series of meetings and studies that were conducted, the developer concluded that approach was not feasible for the constraints of the site.

While the density, in terms of person(s) able to be accommodated by the structure, will be low. The structure will however, serve the purpose of housing the many vehicles for the Red Cross site that would otherwise be located at grade level surface parking. In essence, the structure will allow for much greater density for the overall site, as developments such as the West Elm Hotel are now being considered to locate on the surrounding area and utilize the SOMA structure for parking.

***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.*

Circulation and pedestrian safety have been the central issues of concerns surrounding the SOMA development proposal. For that reason, the City's Mayor's Office has been integral in finding mitigation strategies that will not only help the SOMA project, but the existing traffic issues that exist now. The measures that the Mayor's Office, Detroit Police Department and the Department of Public Works have committed to address are as follows:

1. The intersection of Edmund and John R will be converted from two-way to all way controlled stop;
2. Pedestrian crossing signs with blinking lights will be installed at the intersection of Watson and John R;
3. Yield to pedestrian signs will be installed in the crosswalks at the intersection of Watson and John R;
4. Yield to pedestrian signs will be installed at the intersection of Eliot and John R;
5. Pedestrian crossing signs with blinking lights will be installed at the intersection of Eliot Street and John R;
6. Spaces on Erskine will be marked as loading areas to alleviate congestion and double parking while trucks unload for the Scott apartments and commercial/retail business, and
7. The DPD Commander for the precinct has committed to allocating resources during high traffic event nights by deploying officers to ticket violators and mitigate traffic heavy impacts.

These would add to the zebra cross walks that were installed last fall at Watson and John R and Erskine and John R.

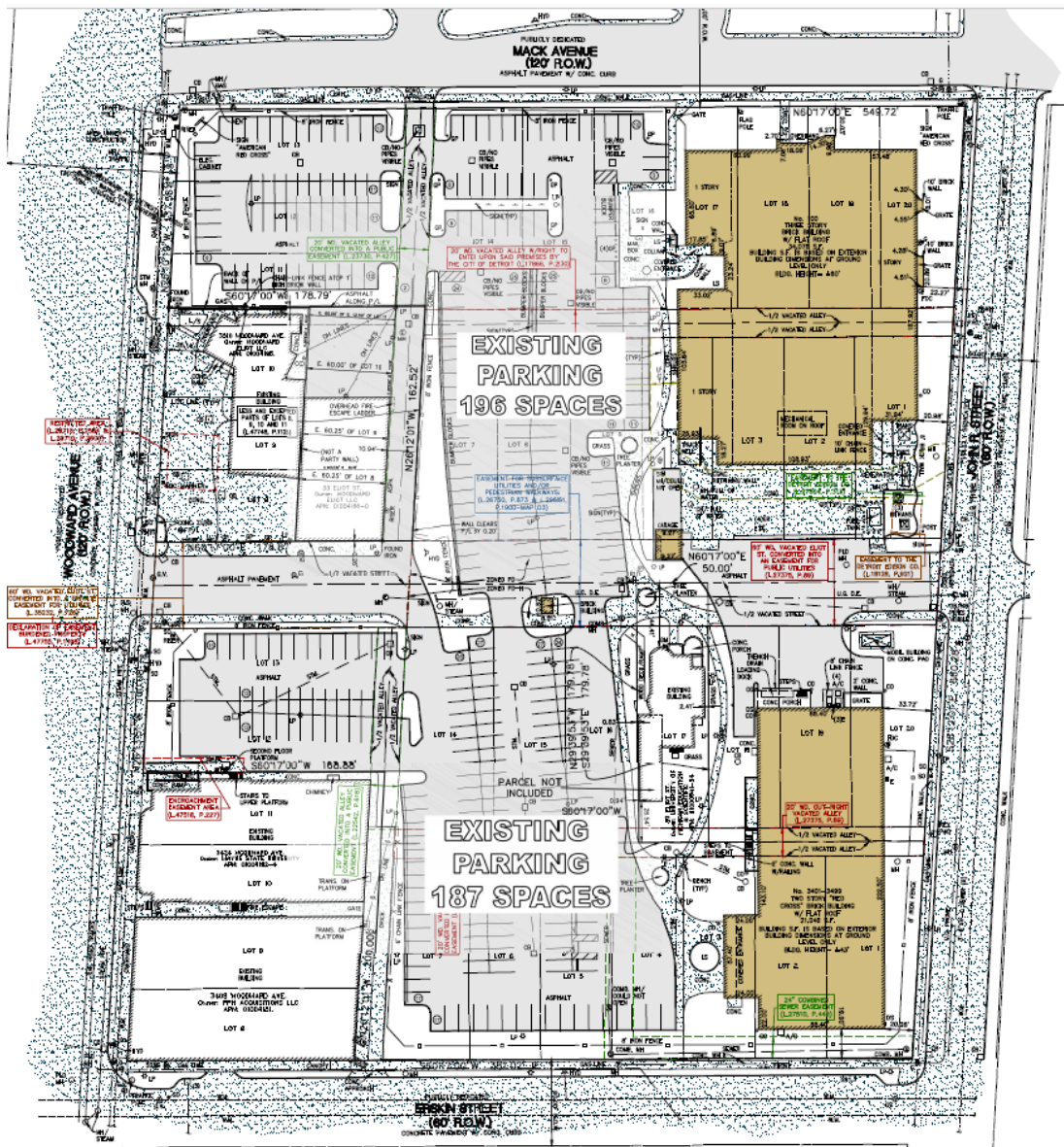
***Parking and loading.*** *Where appropriate, adequate vehicular off-street parking and loading should be provided. The City Planning Commission will be guided by standards delineated in this zoning ordinance with adjustments appropriate to each specific situation.*

While this proposed parking garage would hold many more spaces than what would be required for the ground floor commercial space (approximately 60 spaces), it can be argued that the structure will provide relief to the entirety of the Red Cross site which is expected to experience much change in coming years increasing parking demand. Currently there is the proposal from the West Elm Hotel development that would utilize 116 spaces of the proposed SOMA parking deck. This is one of several developments and deals that are expected to come to fruition as this site is expanded and built out.

It is expected that very dense development will take place on this site as more development interest grows in the area. So, while the SOMA development might not be the most desired type of development when viewed in isolation in and of itself, it can add to the larger composite picture providing parking for a site that will have dense development realized by other interests.

The current Red Cross space alone could utilize a sizeable amount of the parking deck if they are filled (which there is a possible deal being negotiated for City Departments to locate in the existing Red Cross buildings) which would take a sizeable amount of the parking stalls in the structure in addition to the already anticipated hotel.

There are currently an approximate 383 surface level off-street parking spaces on the Red Cross site. If built the SOMA parking deck would replace the portion of the site that houses 187 of those spaces and replacing it with the proposed deck which is to hold 591 spaces. There is a case to be made that this would be a more efficient use of the current surface parking (See site plan below).



**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.*

A case could be made that this parking deck would add to the noise and air pollution of the site and it likely will bring slight increase in undesirable conditions. However, based on the traffic study that was conducted and spoken to at the public hearing by Giffels and Webster, it is not expected that the parking structure will induce more traffic, but instead simply alleviate parking and traffic problems that currently exist, at least regarding the traffic that is a result of uses that are being served on site. Given the amount of on-street parking that takes place currently on any event night, one could also argue that this could alleviate “<sup>1</sup>sharking.”

**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.*

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

CPC staff suggests that provision be made so that we can ensure that all screening for the development is appropriate as final plans are worked out through the design process.

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

Again, CPC staff would have desired that the front facing façade of the building that faces Erskine, not be that of a parking structure. However, based on the studies that the developer has conducted and the limitations that have been found, staff has digressed on the issue of the portion of the development that is oriented towards Erskine Street and what this façade looks like.

**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.*

Staff also strongly encourages that CPC staff be allowed to have full review over any signage that is placed on the subject building, so that the signage is not overwhelming to the street scape. We will work with HDC staff to finalize consistent with standard condition of approval. Signage that has been shown in renderings is likely not desirable for this building, more tasteful signage will be explored.

**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.*

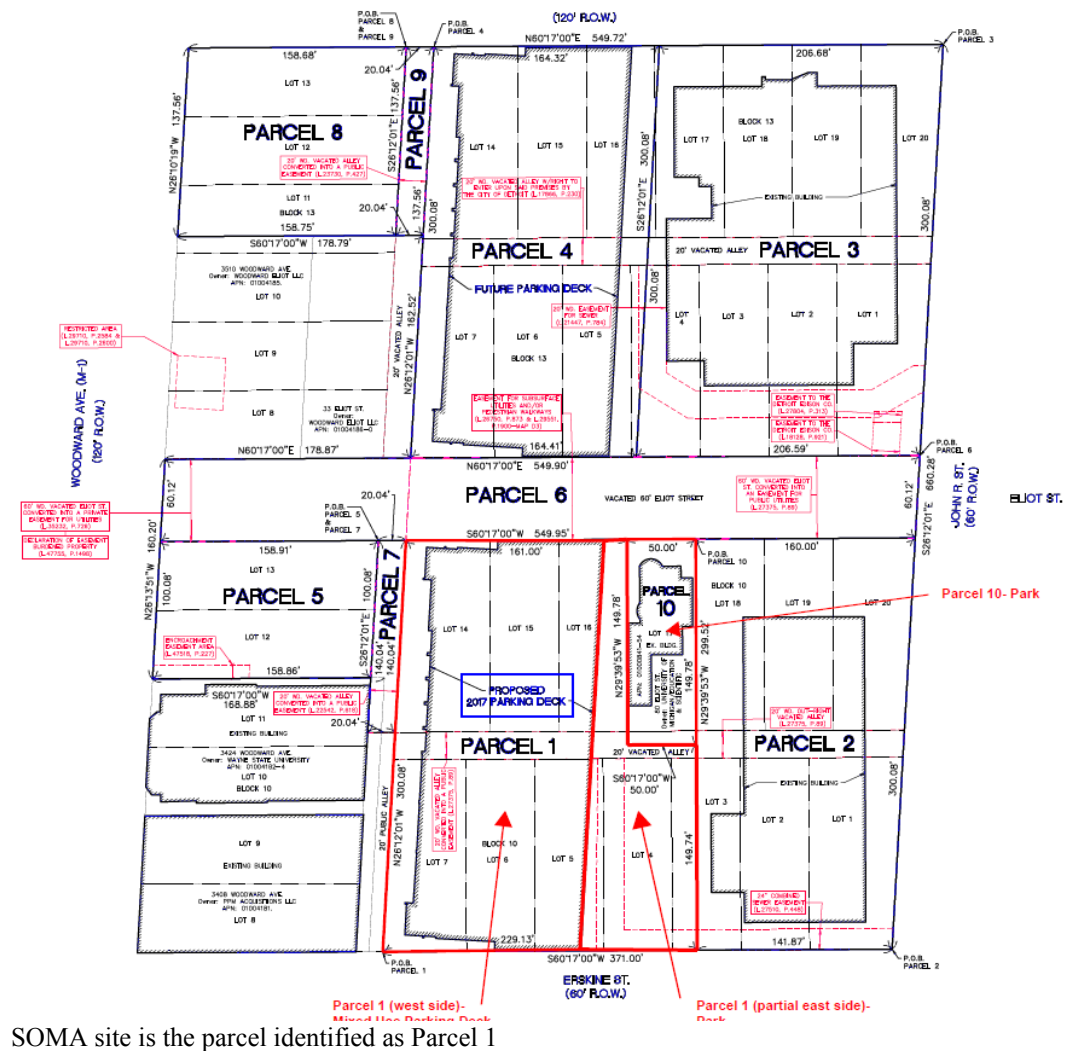
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<sup>1</sup> The continual revolving search for on-street parking spaces by commuters as they clog streets until a space becomes available.

One of the best features of this proposal is that it will create a park/open space amenity adjacent to the structure. The park would complement the commercial and retail space that it is to rest alongside. This will serve to create even more synergy for the businesses as well as bring alive a site that has been dormant for decades serving only as surface parking. This will be a major amenity for the community as the developer plans for it to remain a public space. This help to address the lack of open spaces in the Brush Park neighborhood and supplement City efforts that are also underway.



Proposed open space on SOMA site



## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION**

The staff of the Planning Commission has completed its review the requested PD modification. This request amounts to the provision of commercial parking, which is not consistent with the spirit and intent of the never adopted Brush Park 4 Modified Development. However, existing and anticipated development require parking that the proposed structure can supply. The end result, achieved via separate undertakings, we believe, will be a build out that does achieve the vision of the Urban Renewal Plan. The traffic issues present and future are real and will require intervention and coordination with the City to support the desired density with the redevelopment of this area. Staff supports implementation of the traffic mitigation plan developed by the Mayor's Office, the Department of Public Works and the Detroit Police Department. Staff will be working with the administration on the progression of the plan and report back to the Commission as appropriate.

Based upon the aforementioned reasons outlined in this report, CPC staff recommends approval of the proposal of the SOMA development with the following conditions:

1. That the developer work with the immediately adjacent community to minimize disruption to the neighborhood during construction and operation of the proposed deck and address impacts that may arise;
2. That the developer work with the City Planning Commission and Planning and Development Department staff to ensure that all safety design concerns have been addressed to the extent practicable; and
3. That final site plans, elevations, lighting, landscape and signage plans be submitted by the developer to the staff of the City Planning Commission for review and approval prior to submitting applications for applicable permits.

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