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TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Kimani Jeffrey and Kathryn Underwood, Staff

RE: Request of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy to amend District Map No. 1 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance to show a PR (Parks and Recreation District) zoning classification where a PCA (Public Center Adjacent District) zoning classification is currently shown for the properties generally bounded by Jefferson W. Avenue on the north, Cabacier extended on the east, the Detroit River on the south, and Rosa Parks extended on the west and more commonly known as 1801 W. Jefferson Ave. (KK, KU)

DATE: May 1, 2019

On May 2, 2019, the City Planning Commission (CPC) is scheduled to hold a public hearing regarding the request of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy to amend District Map No. 1 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance to show a PR (Parks and Recreation District) zoning classification where a PCA (Public Center Adjacent District) zoning classification is currently shown for the properties generally bounded by Jefferson W. Avenue on the north, Cabacier extended on the east, the Detroit River on the south, and Rosa Parks extended on the west and more commonly known as 1801 W. Jefferson Ave.

The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park is the new name of the previous West Riverfront Park, a 22-acre site along the Detroit Riverfront. The new park is part of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy's overall vision to develop five-and-a-half miles of riverfront from the Ambassador Bridge on the west to Gabriel Richard Park, just east of the MacArthur Bridge to Belle Isle.



BACKGROUND

Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park

¹In October of 2018 The Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Foundation announced a \$200 million investment in parks and trails in Southeast Michigan and Western New York.

The gift was for the purpose of honoring the Foundation's namesake, Ralph C. Wilson, Jr, on the 100th anniversary of his birth and celebrates his legacy in the communities he was most devoted to. The funds were split evenly, dedicating \$100 million to each region to help develop signature legacy parks, advance the vision of completed regional trail systems, and support the sustainability of the public spaces that were selected. Ralph C. Wilson's hometown was Detroit and he eventually 'adopted' the hometown of Buffalo, where he founded and owned the Buffalo Bills.

In 2017, the Foundation provided support to the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy to lead a community-driven international design competition for the West Riverfront. The Conservancy launched a competitive selection process to identify the best design team of landscape architects, engineers and specialty consultants. The process culminated with a design competition in which four finalist design teams comprised of national, international and local professionals created a transformational design proposals for the park.

In February 2018, the four finalist design teams presented their work to the Conservancy and its jury, as part of a Detroit-based public exhibition. As a result of the international design competition, Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates (MVVA), a New York-based landscape architecture firm, was selected as the winning firm of the competition. Since this selection, the team has conducted a healthy process to develop the park concept with input from the community through 2018 and 2019. The Conservancy has held more than 20 public meetings and created a Community Advisory Team of Detroiters who visited New York, Chicago and Philadelphia to bring back ideas for the future park.

The park will serve as an anchor to a larger, more extensive regional greenway system, connecting to other parks and neighborhoods, encouraging access for all. The Foundation is also committing \$40 million for construction activity and \$10 million to support the broader efforts for long-term sustainability. In addition, to help achieve the vision of a completed and connected regional trail system in both communities, the Foundation will invest \$50 million in trails in each of Southeast Michigan and Western New York. For each, \$40 million will be allocated toward yet-to-be determined projects that close physical gaps in each region's trail systems and \$10 million will be designated toward helping operate and maintain the trails.

NATURE OF REQUEST

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy currently requests to amend District Map No. 1 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance to show a PR (Parks and Recreation District) zoning classification where a PCA (Public Center Adjacent District) zoning classification is currently shown for the land commonly referred to as 1801 West Jefferson Ave.

In an effort to reinforce the nature of the proposal of former West Riverfront Park, now named Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park, the Riverfront Conservancy seeks to rezone the subject property to the PR zoning classification as ²“the intent of the Parks and Recreation District is to retain, insofar as is practicable and desirable, publicly owned lands in excess of four (4) acres in size already improved for or intended to be improved for recreational uses and/or to be preserved as open space. The restrictions of this classification are intended to encourage preservation of these lands and to permit

¹ As described on the Riverfront Conservancy website.

² Per the zoning ordinance zoning classification description.

development in keeping with the natural amenities of these areas. “The conservancy is seeking to ensure the longevity of the subject space as a park by establishing a more suitable zoning district to protect this space as a park/open space for years to come.

The major activities and spaces that will be included in this park are a beach/cove area, a play garden, sports canopy, picnic area and pavilion for food and beverages. 300 angled parking spaces along West Jefferson are proposed to support the park along with additional on-street parking in the surrounding area.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

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

North: M4; Post Office and the Salvation Army
South: N/A; Detroit River
East: PCA; green space
West: M4; railroad property

Master Plan

The subject site is located within the Central Business District area of Neighborhood Cluster 4 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The Future Land Use map for this area shows Recreation (PRC) and Mixed-Residential Commercial (MRC) for the subject property.

Recreation areas are typically over 10 acres in size and serve both active and passive recreational functions (e.g. playfields, special parks, picnic grounds). Recreation area status may also apply to certain waterfront areas (e.g. public wharfs) suited to marine- oriented or general recreational facilities.

Mixed Residential-Commercial areas consist predominantly of medium-to-high density housing developed compatibly with commercial and/or institutional uses. This classification is well suited to areas proximal to existing centers of major commercial activity, major thoroughfares, transportation nodes, or gateways into the city.

P&DD is being requested to provide a determination regarding the consistency of this proposal with the Master Plan of Policies.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The project team has listed numerous organizations that have been involved throughout this effort as well as public meetings that have been held. CPC staff has attended a number of the public engagement meetings over the project term and have observed that this plan has been generally well accepted amongst the community, likely because the broad participation of community and the input from those citizens being incorporated into the design.

The entities that have been listed as having participated through this process include:

Larchmont Community Association
Riverfront Towers Community Association
Cass Tech High School
Western High School
Cristo Rey High School
Buildings Sustainable Communities Coalition
The Salvation Army

U.S. Post Office
Canadian Pacific Railroad
Detroit Economic Growth Corporation
Bedrock

A full presentation will be provided as part of the public hearing of this matter at your regular meeting of May 2nd.

Attachment

Cc: Maurice Cox, Director, PDD
Arthur Jemison, Director, HRD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
Melvin Hollowell, Corp. Counsel
Detroit Housing Commission