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TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Kimani Jeffrey, 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: June 4, 2019

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

The staff of the City Planning Commission (CPC) has completed its review of the above captioned request. Staff finds the requested amendment to be perfectly in line with the spirit and intent of the PR (Parks and Recreation District) zoning classification and an ideal candidate for rezoning. The property and proposed activities generally satisfy the approval criteria. While the Master Plan of Policies should be amended in order to bring the entire site into compliance more than 50 % of the site is designated for Recreation and has been used for that purpose in recent years.

In light of staff's findings and conclusions we recommend approval of the request. Furthermore, in recognition of the proposed design and intended programing, commercial recreation should also be authorized for the site.

REQUEST

On May 2, 2019, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing to hear the request of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy to amend District Map No. 1 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance to show a PR zoning classification where a PCA (Public Center Adjacent District) zoning classification is currently shown for the properties generally bounded by West Jefferson 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.

PROPOSAL

This request has been made in an effort to support the complete redevelopment of West Riverfront Park, now renamed Ralph C. Wilson, Jr. Centennial Park, as a multi-faceted riverfront recreational venue. (See previous report for more detail). Prior to the State acquisition

of this site, it was home to the former Free Press plant. Now the Riverfront Conservancy seeks to rezone the subject property to the PR zoning classification consistent with ¹“the intent of the classification, which is 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.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC HEARING RESULTS

During the May 2nd public hearing no one provided testimony in regards to this matter. As referenced in staff’s report for the May 2nd public hearing, the Riverfront Conservancy team held several public meetings over the course of the last year regarding the project and also engaged other groups that 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 and others.

ANALYSIS

According to Sec. 61-3-80 of the Zoning Ordinance, certain criteria must be met to facilitate the requested petition. The following are considered for a map amendment petition:

- (1) *Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or meets the challenge of some changing condition, trend or fact;*

The proposed amendment does address a changing condition. The current site has existed as open space for the better part of the last two decades, but has been underutilized and underdeveloped for prime real estate along the Detroit Riverfront. As a result of the vision of the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy and due to the level of investment that is now being concentrated on this property and the significant community input that has been captured in order to design and program the proposed park, it seems appropriate that the land be zoned to match the activity and intent in order to ensure its long term success.

The description of the zoning classification indicates that commercial recreation facilities may be engaged, but City Council approval is required. Given the thoughtful design process and significant public outreach that was conducted to inform the programming of the park, it would seem appropriate grant commercial recreation opportunities as well.

- (2) *Whether the proposed amendment is consistent with the Master Plan and the stated purposes of this Zoning Ordinance;*

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 both Recreation (PRC) and Mixed-Residential Commercial (MRC) for the subject property.

A future Master Plan amendment will be suitable to also reinforce the nature of the proposal. A portion of the subject property is already designated as recreation, but the remainder of land is designated as Mixed-Residential Commercial (MRC) space. CPC has been working with the Planning and Development Department to identify swaths of land that may be suitable for MP amendments to reflect what does or will exist in the near future based on recently approved projects or changed conditions. This item might also be included in that short list of properties to

¹ Per the zoning ordinance zoning classification description.

be amended in the MP to make more consistent with the zoning classification. A determination from PDD is forthcoming.

(3) Whether the proposed amendment will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public;

The PR zoning district is to “*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 development in keeping with the natural amenities of these areas.*” For this reason, it is staff’s opinion that the zoning classification being proposed will help to ensure that this land remains parkland long term.

(3) Whether the City and other service providers will be able to provide adequate public facilities and services to the subject property, while maintaining adequate levels of service to existing development;

The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, during the public hearing, indicated the practices and resources whereby they are able to maintain this park once developed. Some of the funding will come from an endowment, a portion from fundraising and a third portion from regional government sources. The Conservancy currently maintains other riverfront assets and will budget to treat this asset as the others it has maintained for some years now.

(5) Whether the proposed rezoning will have significant adverse impacts on the natural environment, including air, water, soil, wildlife, and vegetation and with respect to anticipated changes in noise and regarding stormwater management;

The subject proposal, is anticipated to have a positive impact on the surrounding environment by providing a world class green space for the public. This redevelopment may serve to displace or greatly reduce less unwanted activity in the area.

(6) Whether the proposed amendment will have significant adverse impacts on other property that is in the vicinity of the subject tract;

It is expected that the proposed amendment will only serve to enhance the properties that surround it. The Conservancy has had discussions with the U.S. post office and other nearby stakeholders to ensure that they are all on one accord. To this point, CPC staff has heard no negative response to this request at meetings staff has attended.

(7) The suitability of the subject property for the existing zoning classification and proposed zoning classification; and

The proposed zoning classification would be considered more suitable for the property as CPC and the City in general are analyzing new opportunities to preserve open space and protect against development pressures. This is a prime opportunity to execute such an agenda.

(8) Whether the proposed rezoning will create an illegal “spot zone.”

The rezoning will not create an illegal spot zone as the land mass itself is 22 acres of in size and appropriate for this context.

Cc: Maurice Cox, Director, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
Lawrence Garcia, Corp Counsel