

City of Detroit

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TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: George A. Etheridge, Staff

RE: Request of the City of Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to amend Article XVII, District Map No. 24 of the 1984 Detroit City Code, Chapter 61, Zoning, by showing an M3 (General Industrial District) zoning classification where an R2 (Two-family Residential District) zoning classification currently exists on three-hundred and twelve (312) parcels commonly identified as the former Kettering High School located at 6101 Van Dyke Avenue and the former Rose Elementary School located at 5800 Field Avenue, generally bounded by the I-94 Edsel Ford Expressway and Medbury Avenue to the north, Van Dyke Avenue to the east, Hendrie Avenue to the south and Townsend Avenue to the west. (RECOMMEND APPROVAL)

DATE: July 31, 2019

RECOMMENDATION

The City Planning Commission (CPC) staff has completed its review of the above captioned request from the Detroit Brownfield Redevelopment Authority to amend Article XVII, District Map No. 24 and recommends approval.

PROJECT PROPOSAL

The proposed map amendment is being requested to allow for the establishment of a “high/medium-impact manufacturing facility” specifically an “automobile accessory manufacture (not including tires, heat treating, or foundry work) at the former Kettering High School, located at 6101 Van Dyke Avenue and the former Rose Elementary School located at 5800 Field Avenue.

This rezoning request is being sought in order to allow the development of a 632,500 square foot automobile accessory manufacturing facility. Dakota Integrated systems is a joint venture with Rush Group LLC and Magna International Inc., that will manage the complete assembly and sequencing of interior components and suspension for the soon to be expanded FCA Jeep Plant in the area of St. Jean between E. Warren Avenue and Kercheval Avenue.

PUBLIC HEARING, COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & OTHER COMMUNITY MEETINGS

On July 18, 2019, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on this request. There were thirteen members of the public in attendance to address the rezoning request. Those in attendance spoke in support of the proposed rezoning.

The Commission requested that staff report back with information pertaining to the ownership of vacant parcels adjacent to the project area; the administration's overall vision for industrial development on the east side of Detroit, particularly along with I-94 industrial corridor; and well as what impacts if any would the pending development have on emergency services. It is anticipated that representatives from Planning and Development, Department of Public Work – Traffic Engineering as well as Police and Fire will be attendance at the meeting of August 1, 2019 to address the specifics questions and concerns within their purview.

In response to Commissioner Andrews' questions regarding the ownership of the vacant parcels adjacent to the Kettering/Rose – Dakkota site in order to determine the feasibility of establishing an infield housing strategy in close proximity to the subject site, staff presents the following:

There are 105 adjacent parcels along the periphery of the subject site.

Van Dyke Avenue

Of the thirty (30) adjacent properties located on Van Dyke Avenue five (5) are identified as City Owned, while seventeen (17) are identified as Detroit Land Bank owned. Of the twenty-two publicly held parcels, all are vacant.

Sheridan Avenue

Of the six (6) adjacent properties located on Sheridan Avenue three (3) are identified as Detroit Land Bank owned. Of the three (3) publicly held parcels, two (2) are vacant. One has vacant structure.

Townsend Avenue

Of the forty (40) adjacent properties located on Townsend Avenue three (3) are identified as Detroit Board of Education properties. Eighteen (18) properties are identified as Detroit Land Bank Owned. Of the forty (40) public held parcels, only one has a structure. The remaining thirty-nine (39) parcels are vacant.

Field Avenue

Of the twelve (12) adjacent properties located on Field Avenue six (6) are identified as Detroit Land Bank owned. Of the twelve (12) public held parcels, all are vacant.

Hendrie Avenue

Of the fifteen (15) adjacent properties located on Hendrie Avenue two (2) are identified as Detroit Land Bank owned.

Baldwin Avenue

There is one parcel located on Baldwin Avenue which is adjacent to the subject site, which is owned by the Detroit Board of Education. There are no structures present on that site.

Conger Avenue

There is on parcel located on Conger Avenue which is adjacent to the subject site, which is owned by the Detroit Land Bank. There are no structures present on that site. There is one vacant lot and one lot with a structure on the site.

ANALYSIS

The proposed zoning classification of M3 would permit the requested use of a “high/medium-impact manufacturing facility” specifically an “automobile accessory manufacture (not including tires, heat treating, or foundry work) on a by-right basis.

The proposed M3 zoning classification would permit 113 by-right public, civic, institutional, retail, service, commercial and other uses. The most intensive uses in the M3 zoning classification include “Trucking terminals, transfer buildings, truck garages, recreational vehicle storage lots, and open areas for the parking of semi-trailers, buses, and other operable commercial vehicles, not including limousines and taxicabs” and “Storage or killing of poultry or small game for direct, retail sale on the premises of for wholesale trade.”

The following analysis details how the proposed rezoning either meets or fails to meet the eight approval criteria of Section 61-3-80 of the Zoning Ordinance, which must be considered in making recommendations and decisions on standard rezoning requests.

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

With the dramatic decline in population of the City of Detroit over the past 20 years, several of the city’s neighborhood schools have closed and have fallen into disrepair. Among them are the former Kettering High School and the former Rose Elementary School. In 2012 to City of Detroit adopted an adaptive reuse ordinance for the city’s former school sites, however, the level of capital reinvestment in these properties has be nominal to nonexistent. The challenge remains what to do with these properties which have since become a blighting influence on our communities. The city of Detroit has taken the approach of re-energizing the manufacturing segment of our economy. Many publicly held properties have been and are being sought for this purpose. The rezoning request before you for your consideration is in line with this stated purpose.

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

The proposed rezoning of M3 is not consistent with the Master Plan of Policies, however the Planning and Development Department is proposing a Master Plan Amendment to accommodate this rezoning request as well as to address other concerns raised by members of the public at the July 18, 2019 hearing regarding the potential for commercial frontage along the east side of Van Dyke Avenue between I-94 and Hendrie Avenue.

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

Given the nature of the proposed development and the impact that the operations are anticipated to have on the adjacent community, mitigating factors are being implemented to minimize the negative impacts of noise, light and fumes, which may emit from the premises. There are approximately 14 residential properties along Townsend Avenue which will be impacted directly as a result of this development. The vast majority of the adjacent parcels are vacant and primarily publicly owned. The subject site located directly south of the I-94 Expressway and west of a Major Corridor (Van Dyke Avenue). In general, an intensification in zoning adjacent to residentially zoned properties is not the preferred approach. However, the inclusion of 20 foot setbacks from residentially zoned land as

required by the zoning ordinance as well as the implementation of landscaping and elevated berms along the perimeter of the property will aid in the goal of protecting the health, safety, and general welfare of the adjacent residents.

- (4) 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 physical characteristics of the subject property will change significantly as a result of the proposed rezoning. Preliminary site plans have been presented which show the layout of the proposed development. Given the anticipated consolidation of the subject parcels as well as the potential for street and alley vacations which will not be disruptive to the traditional street grid, disruption to city services is not anticipated.

- (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 storm water management;

The proposed development is anticipated to create a vast amount of hard surface, where pervious green space currently exists. This was taken into account with the planning of the site, hence the inclusion of the detention basin on the former Rose Elementary School site, to address stormwater management concerns.

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

The vast majority of the uses in the immediate area are residential. Given that the truck traffic will primarily be internal to the site, adjacent to Townsend Avenue, design elements are being implemented to mitigate any negative impacts which may occur.

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

As noted previously, the existing R2 zoning classification is not conducive for the proposed uses which are industrial in nature. Before making the recommendation to pursue an M3 zoning classification CPC staff evaluated all zoning classifications and determined that the M3 zoning classification was the least intensive zoning classification that would allow for the proposed use.

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

Given the commercial/industrial nature of the corridor in which this rezoning has been requested along with the size and proposed rezoning’s consistency with the pending Master Plan amendment, staff is of the opinion that the proposed rezoning would not constitute an illegal “spot zone.”

Master Plan Consistency

The subject site is located within the Kettering area of Neighborhood Cluster3 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The Future Land Use map for this area shows “Institutional” for the subject property. An amendment will be forthcoming to show “Light Industrial” as the future intended land use.

Suitability of the Property

One of the aforementioned criteria for rezoning states, “The suitability of the subject property for the existing zoning classification and proposed zoning classification.” Zoning Map No. 24 generally shows R2 zoning to the north, south, east and west of the subject property. This section of the Kettering subsector is primarily developed with residential and institutional uses. The existing residential properties along Townsend Avenue and Hendrie Avenue were primarily built between 1900 and 1921. The newer infield housing along Hendrie Avenue was built in 2011.

As previously stated, the M3 zoning classification allows for a variety manufacturing type uses. Historically, the manufacture of automotive related uses necessitated the demand for parking for employees as well. Given the automation of many of the manual positions and the implementation of the third shift, the parking demand for this use and similar uses has drastically declined since the advent of the current parking requirements, circa 1968.

The current parking standards for a Schedule A use would require the greater of either 1 space per every 800 square feet, or 1 per 3 employees. With this current formula the petitioner would be required to provide 790 off-street employee parking spaces, although they will only have approximately 200 employees per shift. The current site plans, which show approximately 230 off-street parking spaces will require the petitioner to appeal to the Board of Zoning Appeals for a parking variance. A possible alternative would be for the City Planning Commission to propose a text amendment to allow the Planning and Development Department to make the determination on the number of spaces needed, similar to what was done in 2016 for “Recreation, indoor commercial and health club.” In that situation, much like what is anticipated to occur with Dakkota Integrated Systems, and likely any other automotive supplier looking to break ground in the City of Detroit, the usable floor area is greater than the number of individuals occupying the space at any given time.

It would be staff’s recommendation that language similar to that adopted in 2016 be crafted for manufacturing uses moving forward. As a point of reference the existing language for the aforementioned use is included below.

“Because Schedule C uses have widely varying parking demands, it is difficult to specify a single requirement. The off-street parking requirement for such uses shall be established by the Planning and Development Department based on estimates of parking demand, which may include recommendations of the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE), data collected from uses that are the same or comparable to the proposed use, or other relevant information. The Planning and Development Department may require that a parking study be prepared at the applicant’s expense. Said study shall provide analysis and justification for the proposed number of spaces to be provided. Parking studies shall document the source of data used to development the recommendations. The Planning and Development Department shall review the submitted study along with any other traffic engineering and planning data that are appropriate and establish the off-street parking or loading requirements for the use proposed.”

Such a text amendment could benefit future developments by allowing the applicant to move straight towards permitting, rather than applying to the BZA for a parking variance.

In general, CPC staff looks favorably on the rezoning of the subject parcel to accommodate the establishment of an automobile manufacturing supplier.

Land Use

CPC staff is of the opinion that an M3 zoning classification is an appropriate designation consistent with the characteristics of the adjacent properties, which will allow for the establishment of industrial related uses.

Significant Impact on Other Property

CPC staff is of the opinion that the rezoning of this property from an economic development standpoint will add to the sustainability of the surrounding community by allowing the establishment of an economically viable, job creating, tax revenue generating development. Given the landscape of the City of Detroit, wherein educational institutions are nestled in the midst of residential communities, an M3 zoning classification would not typically be ideal for such a site. However, given the sites adjacency to the I-94 Expressway as well as its adjacency to Van Dyke Avenue, along with the stated buffering and landscaping along Townsend Avenue and Hendrie Avenue, staff is of the opinion that the any adverse impacts associated with locating an M3 zoning classification alongside an R2 zoning classification can be addressed.

CONCLUSION

Based on the above analysis and consistent with the approval criteria of Sec. 61-3-80 of the Zoning Ordinance, CPC staff has no objections to the rezoning request.

Attachment

cc: Maurice Cox, Director, PDD
Karen Gage, PDD
Esther Yang, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
Wyatt Banks, BSEED
Lawrence Garcia, Corporation Counsel
Kimberly James, Law Department