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TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Marcell R. Todd, Jr., Director

RE: MotorCity Casino Hotel art installation Oversight Committee report

DATE: February 18, 2020

BACKGROUND

As Your Honorable Body will recall in the Spring of 2019 the City Planning Commission (CPC) received and processed a request to modify the SD5 (Special Development District, Casinos) zoning district for the MotorCity Casino Hotel. The modification being requested to facilitate the construction of an 8 level, 700 space expansion of the casino parking deck with an art installation. The Commission, finding the request consistent with the criteria for a minor modification, granted approval with conditions (attached).

Per the second condition of the Commission's August 1, 2019 approval, a seven member oversight committee was to be established to review parameters for the art installation and offer guidance to the Casino. The committee that was established was comprised of three CPC members (Alton James, Lauren Hood and David Esparza), a representative of the Entertainment Commission (Chairperson Gwen Scales and former Chair/Commissioner Herman Jenkins shared the seat), the Director or a representative of the Planning and Development Department (Sue Burrows, Julio Cedano and Russell Baltimore filled the seat at different times), the Director of Arts and Culture, Rochelle Riley, and finally the CPC Director. The Committee was supported by CPC staff and casino representatives Jacci Woods, Cheryl Scott-Dube, Brian Deming and designer Ivan Petrovic. The Committee convened on six occasions from September to December, meeting on:

- September 20, 2019 at Casino
- October 4, 2019 at Casino
- October 18, 2019 at Casino
- November 1, 2019 at CPC
- November 8, 2019 at CPC
- December 6, 2019 at CPC

This Committee report, recommendation and corresponding presentation to the Commission are components of the conditional approval granted the SD5 modification, following which CPC staff has been authorized to issue approval of the installation.

MEETING PROCEEDINGS

The Committee's work began with reviewing the project, the possibilities and extent of the art installation, the media and means of display. Direct applications of original and reproduced art along with projected imagery were considered. While a projected image presented the greatest flexibility and opportunity, it was found to be cost prohibitive, both in terms of the initial investment and ongoing maintenance of equipment. As a result traditional means of installation were considered going forward.

The Committee looked at various examples of similar projects locally and around the world including painted graphics, computer generated images, applied metals and other materials and three dimensional sculptural applications. The casino determined that it was not feasible to support the direct application of original artwork due to the time, expense, potential liability exposure and disruption associated with a hand painted graphic on such a large scale, for example. The application of art that is prepared offsite or reproduced on a series of panels or applied to a substrate affixed to the parking deck were identified as the preferred approaches.

The application of the art to the surface of the parking deck was also more deeply explored. When the casino initially presented before the Commission, the thought was that some sort of panelized substrate could be affixed to the building surface creating the canvas to receive the art. It was subsequently found through the Committee efforts and the work of the Casino representatives that a heavy metal mesh or grate could form the canvas to which both 2D and 3D elements could be affixed within weight limitations. This would still accommodate the art and afford the flow of air through the deck. An option with the mesh or grate applied only to the open areas of the parking deck was also reviewed. Finally, the Committee looked at the application of art directly to the surface of the deck without benefit of a substrate.

The Committee also looked at adding lighting to the structure in some artistic manner. However, taking into account some of the public comments received by the Planning Commission, it was agreed that a solution deploying LED lighting, like the face of the hotel tower, was not only cost prohibitive like the projection systems, but may contribute to light pollution. For these reasons, Committee members felt only limited external lighting should be used, in order to call attention to the art or enhance it.

The Committee also devoted time in discussion of the artists. Broad awareness and participation of local artists was a priority for all. It was deemed a necessity to have some form of open call to secure artists' submissions. Because the size and scope of the installation appear to lend themselves best to a two-dimensional solution, the Committee hopes that the creativity of responding artists will conform to that framework and expand upon the vision, while still being economically and logistically feasible to implement.

CONCLUSIONS

Following two months of exploratory and deliberative sessions hearing from City staff, casino representatives and considering its collective expertise the Committee completed its efforts. The committee recommends that two-dimensional solutions be sought utilizing a canvas formed by

the precast panels of the façade of the parking garage, without utilizing metal mesh or some other substrate, thereby facilitating maximum flow of air and light through the structure.

The attached images provide a sampling of the example art viewed and considered. Option C-2 represents the preferred approach for the façade of the parking garage. The casino has accepted these recommendations and is developing a “call to artists” program around them.

cc: Katy Trudeau, Deputy Director, P&DD
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