

# City of Detroit

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**TO:** City Planning Commission

**FROM:** Christopher Gulock, AICP, Staff  
Jennifer Reinhardt, Staff

**RE:** **Request from the City of Detroit General Services Department (GSD) to rezone Historic Fort Wayne from a R1 (Single-Family Residential District) zoning classification to a PD (Planned Development) zoning classification to allow a number of the existing historic buildings at Historic Fort Wayne to be adaptively used**

**DATE:** March 16, 2020

On March 19, 2020, the City Planning Commission (CPC) is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the request of GSD to amend Zoning Map Nos. 41 and 50 to show a PD zoning classification where a R1 zoning classification currently exists at Historic Fort Wayne and adjacent Army Corps of Engineers property. The site is generally located on the south side of West Jefferson Avenue between South Cavalry Street (extended) and South Rademacher Street (extended). The proposed map amendment is being requested to allow for a number of the existing historic buildings at Historic Fort Wayne to be adaptively used. Please see the attached public hearing notice and map showing the location of the subject area.

## **BACKGROUND**

Historic Fort Wayne is a former military facility now owned by the City of Detroit. Historic Fort Wayne contains a number of important features: Native American burial mound (made circa 750-1100 AD), the 1842 star fort, and over 40 buildings that formerly served as residential, office, and storage facilities for the Fort (built between 1890-1942). Please see the attached site plan of Historic Fort Wayne.

In 1949 and 1971 as part of the Historic Surplus Property Program and 1976 as part of the Federal Lands to Parks Program, the federal government transferred various parcels of the Fort to City of Detroit ownership. As part of this land transfer, a number of deed restrictions were placed on the land including: “the land shall not be sold, leased, assigned . . . except to another local government agency, parade grounds used exclusively for public park or public recreation purposes in perpetuity, etc.”

Over the past 45 years, numerous redevelopment plans have been developed for Historic Fort Wayne. In 1975, the Detroit Historical Museum created a plan to remake the property as an

indoor-outdoor living history museum. In 2005, the City adopted the Historic Fort Wayne Master Plan that delineated several concepts for future development including: Fort Wayne Village, Historic Star Fort, the Arsenal of Democracy Museum, a Research/Hospitality Zone, and Expanded Parade Grounds. In 2015, the Michigan Economic Development Corporation drafted a vision document for Fort Wayne as an activity programmed cultural, recreational, and educational destination. To date, none of these plans have come to fruition, and a majority of the buildings have sat vacant for decades and fallen into varying states of disrepair.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers owns property just south of the start fort, with several small buildings, a parking lot, and boat dock. This property is operated by the federal government and operates separately from Fort Wayne.

Regarding zoning, when the City passed its first Zoning Ordinance in 1940, the Fort property along with most of the west riverfront was zoned for heavy manufacturing. It appears sometime in the early 1950's, the Fort property was rezoned to R1, including the adjacent U.S. Army Corps of Engineers property. In 2016, Fort Wayne became a local historic district, subject to review and enforcement by the Detroit Historic District Commission.

## **PROPOSAL**

In 2018-2020, the National Park Foundation and Kresge Foundation, in cooperation with the City, initiated a new strategic planning process including the following:

- Renegotiate federal deed restrictions and replace with a preservation covenant
- Explore new recreational offerings, historical interpretation, and partnerships
- Develop a strategy to revitalize vacant buildings

For this new initiative, the City released a Request for Information (RFI) from February 10, 2020 until March 10, 2020. The purpose of the RFI is to determine if there is interest from the private sector/3<sup>rd</sup> parties, under the guidance of GSD, to lease one or more buildings at the site, renovate the buildings in exchange for reduced rent, and adaptively use the building for select uses. As of the writing of this report, responses to the RFI have not yet been released.

In order to allow this RFI process to move forward, GSD is requesting to rezone the site to PD to allow the buildings to be adaptively used subject to approval by the Director of GSD. The PD application is attached for reference.

GSD is requesting that allowable uses be limited to uses permissible by-right in either the SD1 (Special Development District, Small Scale, Mixed Use) or SD2 (Special Development District, Mixed-Use) zoning classifications. Also, the following uses would be also be allowed:

- bed and breakfast inn,
- hotel,
- motel, and
- hostels.

The following specific uses would not be allowed:

- all group, household, and institutional living,
- parking structures,
- dry cleaning or laundry pick-up stations and laundromats, and
- marinas.

The aforementioned Army Corps' property is not part of the subject Fort Wayne development proposal. However, the Army Corps' property is included in the subject rezoning request,

because it is also zoned R1. The Army Corps has been contacted about being included in the proposed zoning change, but has not yet responded whether it supports or opposes the rezoning.

## **PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

### ***Surrounding Zoning and Land Use***

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

North: M2 (Restricted Industrial), M3 (General Industrial), and M4 (Intensive Industrial); land being cleared to develop the Joe Louis Greenway and Gordie Howe International Bridge  
East: M4; developed with vacant land used for bulk storage  
South: Detroit River  
West: M4; developed with DTE Waterman Substation and Delray public access boat ramp

### ***Master Plan Consistency***

The subject site is located within the West Riverfront area of Neighborhood Cluster 5 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The future general land use designation for this area is “PR” Regional Park. As part of this proposal, the Planning & Development Department (P&DD) is requesting a Master Plan amendment to change the future general land use designation for the site to “INST”, Institutional. A public hearing for the Master Plan amendment is scheduled prior to the subject rezoning public hearing. The INST is being proposed in order to allow the City to lease uses with the Fort.

### ***Community Input***

GSD has provided a list of numerous community groups it has met with over the past two years. Some of these groups include the following: the Historic Fort Wayne Coalition, the Southwest Detroit Business Association, the Detroit Riverfront Conservancy, and several Native American groups. GSD has informed all of these groups of the proposed public hearing.

Attachments: public hearing notice, site map, and application for zoning change

cc: Katharine Trudeau, PDD  
Dave Bell, BSEED