

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 reused**

DATE: June 15, 2020

On June 18, 2020, the City Planning Commission (CPC) is scheduled to hold a public hearing on the request of the General Services Department (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 the 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 reused. 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 (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 along the riverfront, with several small buildings, a parking lot, and boat dock. This property is operated by the federal government 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/3rd 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 reuse the building for select uses. No new structures or demolition are proposed. CPC staff understands the City received three inquiries regarding the RFI.

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 reused subject to approval by the Director of GSD. Existing buildings, open space, and sensitive archaeological sites will be subject to additional protections via a preservation covenant between the City and the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). 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. Additionally, the following uses would be also be allowed:

- bed and breakfast inn
- hotel
- motel
- 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
- 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 was contacted via email in March and June 2020 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 designation 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 regularly over the past two years through the creation of a Historic Fort Wayne Advisory Council. 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. To-date our office has not received any feedback from community stakeholders.

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

cc: Katharine Trudeau, PDD
Dave Bell, BSEED