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HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

RE: Request of Parkstone Development Partners on behalf of Selden Innovation Center, LLC , to amend Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, *Zoning*, by amending Article XVII, *Zoning District Maps*, Section 50-17-4, *District Map No. 3*, of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance to show an SD2 (Special Development District, Mixed-Use) zoning classification where SD1 (Special Development District, Small Scale, Mixed-Use), R2 (Two-Family Residential District), and PD (Planned Development District) zoning classifications are currently shown for the properties commonly known as 950 Selden Street, 924-974 Frank Street, and 937-955 West Alexandrine Street.

The petitioner is proposing to redevelop the former Jefferson School into a shared artist studio and office building, and develop the lots north of the former school on Frank and West Alexandrine Streets for surface parking.
(RECOMMEDED APPROVAL)

BACKGROUND

Before this Honorable Body is the request of Parkstone Development Partners on behalf of Selden Innovation Center, LLC to rezone properties commonly known as 950 Selden Street, 924-974 Frank Street, and 937-955 West Alexandrine Street. The proposal is to rezone properties from R2, PD and SD1 to an SD2 district. The rezoning is being requested in order to allow for the redevelopment of the building formerly known as Jefferson School into a shared artist studio and office building, and, to allow for supportive parking.

The development team for the project, known as Industry Detroit, consists of Invest Detroit, Midtown Detroit Inc., and QFactor. Their plan is to transform 110,000 square feet (sf) of what currently exists as a school at 950 Selden into artist studios and office space with supporting training room, café, event center and conference rooms. Of this, 20,000 sf will be reserved for “mission driven businesses and education to career pathways.” The building is planned to be a workplace for “social impact businesses and organizations”. The social impact focus will be geared towards businesses led by women, immigrants, people of color, as well as small businesses.

The unimproved properties commonly known as 924, 940, 946, 960, 968, & 974 Frank are planned to be redeveloped into a 114-stall surface parking lot. Forty-seven parking spaces are

slated to be located at the current City Sculpture Park (which is relocating) to serve as an accessory use to the Jefferson School building.

The project estimates that 375+ new FTE jobs will be created with the following goals as it relates to the employees and workforce:

- 75+ emerging businesses
- 300+ in non-targeted space
- 75% jobs with benefits
- 80% with living wage
- Workforce training for youth
- Quarterly tenant surveys to measure impact

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC HEARING RESULTS

At the CPC public hearing for this matter, the development team gave a detailed presentation on the full scope of the project. The team also provided detail on the community engagement that was carried out during the months leading up to the public hearing. Two virtual community engagement meetings were held on July 15, 2020 and August 4, 2020. Invitations were sent to all addresses within the boundary of Forest, Cass, Temple and Trumbull avenues (See below).



Twenty people from the community spoke at the public hearing. Approximately nine people spoke in support of the project, four in opposition, and seven other speakers gave remarks with specific concerns; how the project could be improved; or, asked questions. Some of the remarks included concerns about the impact of the proposed parking lot, traffic increases, and possible loitering due to the redeveloped building.

The development team has summarized those concerns and presented the responses found below based on the engagement that was held by the team during the summer months and feedback given during the public hearing.

Community Concerns from Engagement and Public Hearing

1. Increased traffic on residential streets
2. Increased traffic on Alexandrine Street
3. Visitor parking on residential streets
4. Metered parking on residential streets
5. Intrusive lighting from new surface parking lot

6. Market study to validate demand
7. Impact of COVID-19 on project feasibility
8. Alcohol-serving establishments permitted without space requirements

Developer Response

1-2. TRAFFIC IMPACTS.

Midtown Detroit, Inc. (MDI) commissioned Giffels Webster Engineers, Inc. to conduct a traffic impact assessment to identify future traffic patterns and volumes, and proposed mitigation measures to minimize the impact on residential streets. The report concluded that the proposed development would not be detrimental to the surrounding community as “the trip generation comparison indicates that the future use (office) of the building will produce less peak hour trips than the previous use (school).” The following recommendations were made by Giffels Webster:

- After project completion, review traffic flow around the project area to identify any concerns and document their impact (if any) on the neighborhood.
- Install “No Right-turn for Through Traffic” signs along Third Street and John C Lodge Service Drive ahead of Alexandrine Street, Willis Street, and Calumet intersections if concerns arise.
- Install signs at the access points of the parking lot directing drivers to use Forest Avenue to head north, east, or south when exiting.

3-4. PARKING IMPACTS

The development team has provided the City of Detroit with a proposed parking strategy for the neighborhood surrounding the Jefferson School which is being integrated into the City’s overall parking plan for Midtown. Residential permit parking is proposed by MDI for local residents, and, metered parking on Selden only, in support of existing/future commercial uses. Metered parking is not proposed on residential streets. MDI also plans to locate Industry Detroit parking along the Lodge Freeway, to minimize impact on residential streets, by placing ingress and egress on the service drive. Lastly, MDI plans a Frank Street closure with alley/service access and a pedestrian zone along the building entrance.

5. PARKING LOT LIGHTING

MDI is working with the Industry Detroit team to develop a strategy for visually separating existing residential properties from the future surface parking area. MDI/Industry will integrate an opaque parking lot screen wall along the residential sites and lighting that will meet City standards.

APPROVAL CRITERIA

Pursuant to Sec. 50-3-70 Approval Criteria, recommendations and decisions on an amendment of a zoning map in Article XVII of chapter 50 of City Code are based on consideration of all of the following criteria:

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

The proposed amendment complies with the Master Plan of Policies by expanding on the mixed-use opportunities for the site. The proposed zoning map amendment will also meet a changing condition in that it is supporting the adaptive reuse of Jefferson School. Many schools in the city have fallen into disrepair due to their abandonment since closure. Schools of this size often remain vacant because of the extraordinary costs necessary to bring them back online. This rezoning will facilitate preserving an architecturally significant structure by bringing it back to active use.

(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 Lower Woodward area of Neighborhood Cluster 4 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies (MP). The Future Land Use map for this area shows *Mixed-Residential Commercial (MRC)*. According to the MP, MRC areas consist predominantly of medium-to-high density housing developed compatibly with commercial and/or institutional uses. This classification is well suited to areas proximal to existing centers of major commercial activity, major thoroughfares, transportation nodes, or gateways into the city.

The Master Plan-Zoning Table which identifies the correlation between MP designations and zoning districts classifies the SD2 zoning district as consistent with the MRC designation.

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

The proposed amendment to SD2 will be in alignment with the Master Plan of Policies for the Midtown area and subject to the protections of the Zoning Ordinance. The developer has also committed to additional protective measures. One measure in response to community concerns is the provision of an aesthetically pleasing green buffer wall to beautify the perimeter of the parking lot. A rendering has been provided to show what this treatment will look like.



Provided by Midtown Detroit Inc.

It should also be noted that the developer has submitted a COVID-19 mitigation plan to respond to current conditions caused by the global pandemic and to outline procedures and protocols to maintain safety for users of the building.

(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;

Adequate public facilities and services have been considered during the process for this proposal and there are no foreseen difficulties in providing necessary services.

- (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 proposed rezoning is not expected to have any significant adverse impacts on the natural environment. The developer will be adhering to City ordinances, including the mandatory Post Construction Stormwater Management Ordinance, as well as parking and screening requirements. The developer plans to beautify the parking area with green screening to mitigate impacts.

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

The proposed amendment will have some level of impact on the surrounding area since it will generate a certain amount of traffic that currently does not exist due to the inactivity in the Jefferson School for some time now. However, the project should not have significant adverse impacts as the traffic analysis has concluded that the amount of traffic will be less than what was generated by the former school use. The repurposing of Jefferson School is likely to be a catalyst for continued revitalization in the area and a positive impact on surrounding properties. Most former school buildings in the city have gone unused since the closing of many schools due to population loss and other factors. The cost of rehabilitation of these buildings, especially due to years of being unmaintained, deters many developers.

Midtown Detroit Inc. hired Giffels and Webster to address possible impacts and has also been working with City departments, such as the Municipal Parking Department and the Department of Public Works, to create a plan, including the Residential Parking Permit program implementation, street flow, kiosk parking, and street vacations. Future feedback from this process will inform those plans. There will be additional opportunities for input from surrounding neighbors.

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

The proposed zoning classification of SD2 is appropriate and will facilitate the proposal that otherwise might not be possible due to parking and other constraints.

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

This rezoning will not create an illegal spot zone largely because the proposal is consistent with the Master Plan.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The proposed parking lot is a departure from what currently exists at the current Sculpture Park. However, the developer is working with City agencies to properly address this by providing green buffering and creating a parking and traffic plan.

Overall, the proposed rezoning will facilitate the preservation of a significant building. The project also plans for inclusionary housing for people of color and immigrants. This is important because Midtown is a place that is becoming increasingly more challenging for people to live and work, due to rising costs. This rezoning will also help to support the revitalization of this building by increasing parking capacity.

Based on the aforementioned criteria in this report, the amount of support expressed during the public hearing, and the developer's strategy to address the concerns laid out by those who spoke in opposition or with concern, on November 5, 2020 the City Planning Commission **voted to recommend approval** of the proposed rezoning.

Lastly, CPC will relay the items that the developer has committed to through this process to the Planning and Development Department and Buildings and Safety Engineering Environmental Department, who are responsible for reviewing final site plans. The concerns expressed through the rezoning process will also be shared with these departments.

Respectfully submitted,



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Kimani Jeffrey, City Planner

Attachment:
Plans

Cc: Katie Trudeau, Deputy Director
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