

City of Detroit

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September 24, 2021

HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

RE: Request of Araneae Inc. on behalf of 455 Associates, LLC for PCA (Public Center Adjacent) Special District Review of a proposed super advertising sign at 455 West Fort Street (**RECOMMEND APPROVAL**)

REQUEST

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has received a request from Araneae Inc. on behalf of 455 Associates, LLC for PCA (Public Center Adjacent) Special District Review of a proposed super advertising sign to be located at 455 West Fort Street. This request is being made consistent with the provisions of Section 50-3-222 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance.



Subject premises – 455 W. Fort St.

PROPOSED PROJECT

The updated sign ordinance that was enacted in 2020 allows for new advertising signs in the Central Business District (CBD). The specific regulations governing these signs are located in Chapter 4, Article IV, Division 5 of the 2019 Detroit City Code. Because this site is zoned PCA, all exterior changes require review by Your Honorable Body.

The petitioner proposes to erect a 100' wide by 50' high (5,000 square feet) vinyl mesh sign on the east side of the building. The sign meets the regulations in the ordinance including:

- Must be constructed as a wall sign
- No more than one advertising sign per premises
- Area must be greater than 700 square feet, not exceed 80% of the area of the façade, and a maximum of 5,000 square feet
- Height cannot exceed the height of the roof line or parapet
- Clearance must be at least 10 feet (distance between the bottom of the sign and the ground)
- May be externally illuminated but not internally illuminated
- May not be dynamic (electronic)



Proposed Sign Location

As part of the review process for advertising signs in the CBD, findings by several City departments are required including:

- Department of Public Works – placement of the advertising sign on the premises will not impair the traffic safety of motorists and pedestrians
- Chief Financial Officer – neither the applicant nor the owner of the premises to which the sign is sought to be placed is in arrears to the City for any unpaid, outstanding, or delinquent property tax, income tax, personal tax, or special assessments
- Buildings, Safety Engineering, and Environmental Department – neither the applicant nor the owner of the premises to which the sign is sought to be placed is the subject of any outstanding violations of the Detroit City Code
- Fire Marshall – the premises are not in violation of Chapter 18, *Detroit Fire Prevention*

and Protection Code and that the placement of the advertising sign on the premises will not cause any such violation

- Any other federal, state, or local governmental agency that may be necessary for construction, erection, or operation of the sign, including, but not limited to, approval by the Michigan Department of Transportation or the Detroit Historic District Commission

This review process has not concluded, but is being conducted concurrently with the PCA Review. However, all findings are required before a permit can be issued.

REVIEW & ANALYSIS – PCA District Review Criteria

There are eighteen PCA District Review Criteria listed in Section 50-11-97 of the Zoning Ordinance. The relevant criterion follows with staff analysis in italics:

(2) Scale, form, massing and density should be appropriate to the nature of the project and relate well to surrounding development. *The proposed sign is located on a blank wall and appears appropriate.*

(11) Signage and graphics should be tastefully designed to be visually appealing and in character with surrounding development; they should provide needed information, direction and orientation in a clear and concise manner. *The proposed sign meets the standards and spirit of the ordinance. The proposed location is appropriate as does not cover any architectural details, is not located on a primary façade, and does not detract from the appearance of the building.*

Design

The Planning & Development Department has reviewed the proposed signage and supports approval. The full recommendation is attached.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Consistent with the above, the City Planning Commission staff recommends approval of the proposed sign.

Respectfully submitted,



Marcell R. Todd, Jr., Director
Jamie J. Murphy, Staff

Attachments: 455 W. Fort drawing
PDD Recommendation
Resolution

cc: Antoine Bryant, Director, PDD
Katy Trudeau, Deputy Director, PDD
Greg Moots, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
Eric Johnson, BSEED
Tonja Long,

**A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING ALTERATIONS IN A PCA ZONING DISTRICT
AT 455 W FORT ST.**

BY COUNCIL MEMBER _____:

WHEREAS, Aranae Inc. on behalf of 455 Associates, LLC, proposes a new super advertising sign at 455 West Fort Street; and

WHEREAS, 455 West Fort Street is located within an established PCA (Public Center Adjacent) zoning district; and

WHEREAS, work to be performed within a PCA zoning district requires Special District Review and the purpose of the PCA zoning district classification is provided for in Section 50-11-81 of the Zoning Ordinance as follows:

This district includes property in close proximity to the Public Center (PC) District, and the controls specified in this division are designed to prevent any uses or structures within the district from having a deleterious effect upon the public center. Uses in this district shall include, to the maximum extent possible, ground-floor commercial space or other space oriented to pedestrian traffic, to enhance the public streetscape and street-level activity; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Development Department has provided favorable review; and

WHEREAS, the City Planning Commission staff has, on behalf of the City Planning Commission, reviewed and recommended approval of the proposed alterations in accordance with Section 7.5 of the City Planning Commission bylaws;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Detroit City Council hereby approves the proposed signage depicted in drawings by Aranae Inc. and dated 3/29/2021, referenced in the staff report, with the following condition:

1. That final signage plans be submitted to and reviewed by CPC staff for consistency with this approval prior to application begin made for applicable permits.



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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Marcell R. Todd Jr., Director
Detroit City Planning Commission
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September 14, 2021

Dear Director Todd:

Following is the review by the Planning and Development Department (PDD) of an externally illuminated 5,000 square foot wall-mounted advertising sign proposed for the eastern wall of 455 W Fort Street. (BSEED Permit numbers SGN2021-00068). As the property is zoned PCA (Public Center Adjacent), this review is required under Sec. 50-11-96.

The relevant PCA criteria from Sec. 50-11-97 of the Zoning Ordinance are followed by our analysis in italics:

Criterion 2: Scale, form, massing and density should be appropriate to the nature of the project and relate well to surrounding development; *The proposed sign is located on a portion of the wall that is now blank, due to the windows having been previously filled, and appears appropriate.*

Criterion 11: Signage and Graphics should be tastefully designed to be visually appealing and in character with surrounding development, they should provide needed information, direction and orientation in a clear and concise manner; *The location of the advertising sign is generally in character with the building, as it is located on a now blank wall, and does not cover any architectural features.*

The PDD supports the requested installation of an advertising sign on the building at 455 W. Fort Street. We conclude that the proposed advertising sign will not significantly negatively impact the character of the surrounding downtown area adjacent to the Public Center. The sign must of course meet all Federal, State, and City regulations.

Respectfully submitted,

Gregory Moots
Lead Planner-Design and Developer Innovation
Planning and Development Department

CC: Karen Gage
Russell Baltimore

