

City of Detroit

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September 25, 2023

HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

RE: Request of MHT Housing and the Detroit City Planning Commission to amend District Map No. 62 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, *Zoning*, to show a R3 (Low-Density Residential) zoning district where a R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning district is currently show for nine parcels commonly known as 17139, 17204, 17198, 17180, 17132 Oak Drive, 3856 West McNichols Road, 17213, 17181, and 17131 Birchcrest, generally bounded by Santa Maria Street to the north, Birchcrest Drive to the east, West McNichols Road to the south, and Quincy Street to the west. **(RECOMMEND APPROVAL)**

NATURE OF REQUEST

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has received a request from MHT Housing and the Detroit City Planning Commission to amend District Map No. 60 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, *Zoning*, to show a R3 (Low-Density Residential) zoning district where a R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning district classification is currently shown for the property located at 17139, 17204, 17198, 17180, 17132 Oak Drive, 3856 West McNichols Road, 17213, 17181, and 17131 Birchcrest, generally bounded by Santa Maria Street to the north, Birchcrest Drive to the east, West McNichols Road to the south, Quincy Street to the west.

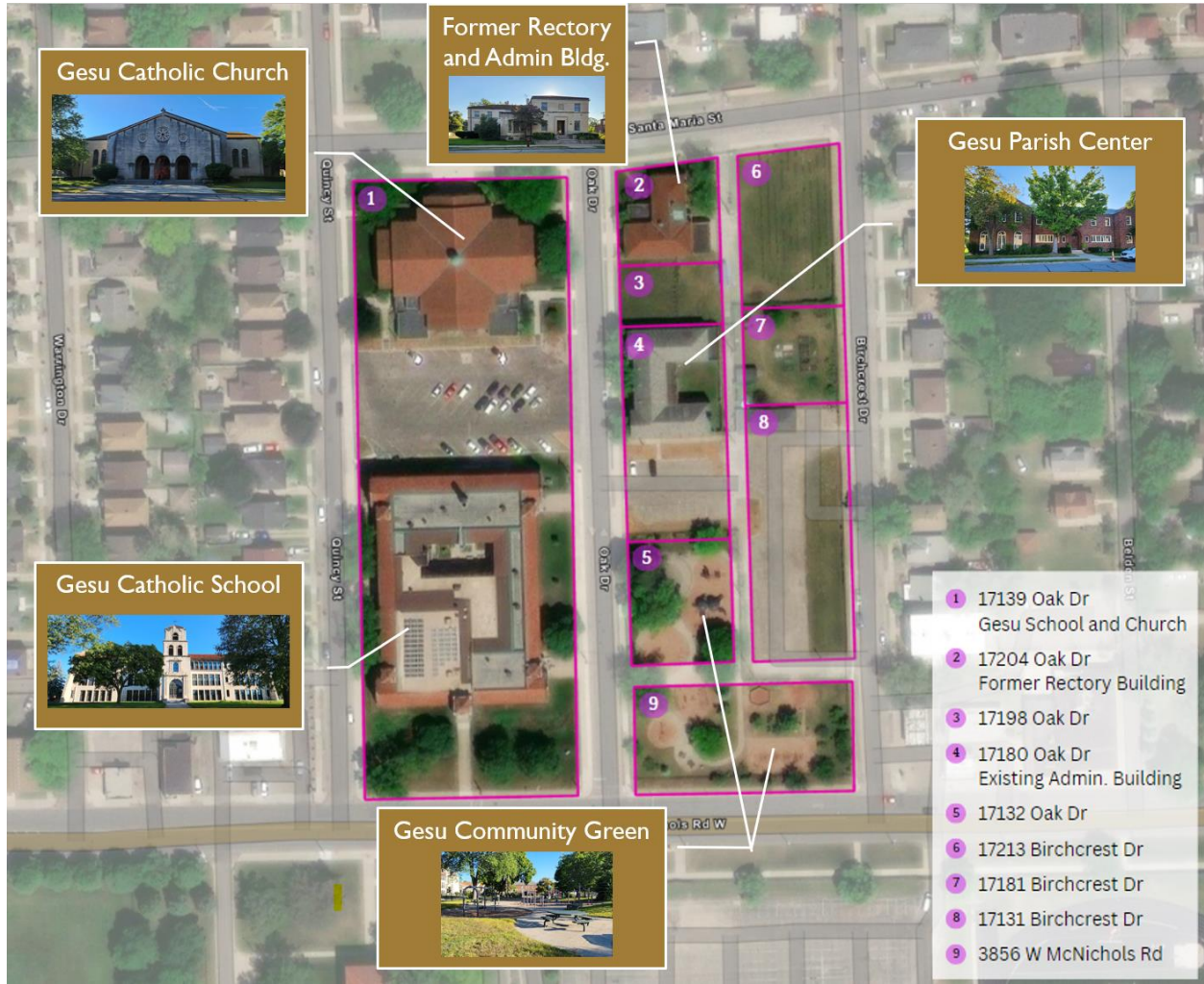
The site is located in Council District 2 and measures approximately 5.8 acres. The site currently contains a school, church buildings, vacant land, and a park. Gesu Catholic Church and the affiliated school have operated on the subject site for close to 90 years, and in Detroit for more than 100 years.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

MHT Housing and Gesu Catholic Church propose to build and operate a forty-six-unit senior housing facility consisting of three buildings, two existing and one new construction. The development will also include a Neighborhood Non-Profit Center to support the housing development, church and school. The proposed housing is intended to meet the need for affordable senior housing in Detroit.

The forty-six-unit development will be mixed income, with all units meeting affordable housing standards. The proposed map amendment is being requested to permit a multi-unit senior housing development comprised of three buildings, two existing and one new construction of 10,794 sq. ft. The development will include 46 units in total, with 44 one-bedroom and 2 two-bedroom units. All units will be considered low-income housing. The existing R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning classification does not allow for multi-family housing developments containing more than eight units, which would prohibit the proposed development from being built. All units in the proposed development will be considered affordable housing, with rents ranging between 30-80% of the Area Median Income (AMI).

This request is time sensitive as the current project schedule requires submission to the Michigan State Housing Development Authority for Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Gap Financing application by December 2023.



Aerial view of proposed rezoning site, with addresses and current uses

COMMUNITY INPUT

MHT Housing indicates that they have been in contact with several community organizations and block clubs that operate in the immediate area, as well as adjacent property owners, businesses and residents, which are listed below. Additionally, MHT Housing will host two community meetings, the first to be held October 10, 2023.

- Community Organizations, Block Clubs, Property Owners,
Businesses and Residents Contacted by the Petitioner**
- Sherwood Forest Neighborhood Association
 - The New Stoepel Curtis / 7 Mile Improvement Association
 - Roselawn Resurgence 7 Curtis Woodingham Block Club
 - Bagley Community Council Inc.
 - Gesu Catholic Church
 - University of Detroit Mercy

Sunoco Gas Station (3720 W McNichols Rd)
Prime Missionaries (17330 Quincy St)
Residents of Birchcrest Drive
Residents of Santa Maria Avenue

CPC staff received two letters of support for the proposed rezoning and senior housing project (see attached). The first from Roger Short, President of the University District Community Association (see attached). Mr. Short stated that he has worked with a committee of members of Gesu Catholic Church as they have explored developing housing for senior residents. Following the September 21, 2023, public hearing before the CPC, Mr. Short sent a communication to CPC staff, clarifying that his letter of support was to indicate his opinion, not that of the University District Community Association.

The second letter was submitted by a resident of District 5, who is also a member of the Gesu Parish and a consultant with the Giffels Webster planning firm. The letter outlines how the proposed rezoning and project would support a number of goals found in the current Master Plan. The letter also points to the need of affordable housing and housing for seniors, and how addressing these needs will improve the stability of families, the neighborhood, and the city as a whole.

CPC staff mailed 215 public hearing notices to property owners and residents within 300 feet of the subject area. Notices were mailed fifteen days prior to the September 21, 2023 public hearing. The notice was also published in the Detroit Legal News.

CPC MEETINGS

Public Hearing – September 21, 2023

On September 21, 2023, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing on this rezoning request. Eight individuals provided public comment, three expressing strong support, five in opposition.

Points in support:

- Meeting the need for affordable senior housing in the city
- Development will provide services for area seniors
- Rents will be affordable, compared to many rental units in the area
- Will allow residents to age in place
- Positive conversations with other community members
- Understanding that this is the beginning of the process, and there will be opportunity to voice opinions throughout the process
- There will be a community board formed related to the project including parishioners, residents, and community leaders throughout the development process and beyond
- Community can utilize space in buildings for meetings and activities
- Gesu Catholic Church has served the community for many years. Some speakers gave personal testimony of the impact that Gesu Church has had on their lives
- Gesu Church will continue to be involved with the project, and are equipped to support the residents

Points in opposition:

- Communication gap between the applicant, the church, and the community
- Public transit in the area is not reliable or safe for senior citizens
- Description of design elements are too broad, not sufficient to state that design will be “complementary” to the surrounding area

- Historically, attempts to create multi-unit developments for similar uses (senior housing, home for wayward girls, group home) have been rejected by the community ***Note: CPC staff was not able to find evidence confirming these claims. No further details were provided by the speaker***
- The project will not accommodate residents when they no longer qualify for independent living
- Current residents of the University District will not be given preference when applying for the new housing units ***Note: Fair housing practices require applications to be accepted on first come first served basis. All applicants must meet the income threshold for affordable housing***

Planning Commissioners expressed overall support for the project and rezoning, citing the need for appropriate and affordable senior housing in the city and region. Commissioners also expressed support based on the appropriateness of the R3 (Low-Density Residential) zoning classification for the site. Finally, Commissioners stated that they were in support of the rezoning, with the caveat that engagement related to design standards and site plan review would continue. Director Bryant expressed concerns regarding materiality, articulation on the façade, and that the color palette compliment what is seen in the surrounding community.

Planning Commissioners also voiced concerns and posed several questions regarding the proposed project and rezoning. A summary of these questions and concerns is provided below, with responses from the applicant and CPC staff in italics:

- Commissioners echoed the concerns of Director Bryant, and strongly encouraged the applicant to continue to engage in the site plan review process. *The applicant expressed their commitment to working closely with P&DD and CPC staff to continue site plan review and design discussions. Following the meeting, the applicant had a productive meeting with Director Bryant and P&DD staff, and are fully committed to meeting the design standards and expectations discussed in that meeting. The applicant will continue to work closely with P&DD.*
- Commissioners expressed concerns with the apparent lack of community engagement expressed during public comment. Commissioners requested that at least two community meetings be held to allow those interested to have their voices heard. *The applicant agreed to hold two community meetings, the first being scheduled for October 10th, 2023. During the community meeting attendees will have opportunity to discuss the proposed project, and give input on design, services, and community impact. CPC staff will attend both community meetings.*
- Commissioners expressed concern over the lack of critical mass of residents on the leadership board. *Father Snow of Gesu Catholic Church stated that he will work to increase community involvement on the leadership board*
- Commissioners inquired about the services they plan to provide to potential residents. *The applicant stated that the offerings will be like those at other MHT Housing developments. The development will have a craft room, community rooms, and a range of scheduled activities to foster community and creativity. Additionally, the following services may be incorporated, based on those offered at other MHT developments and expected expansion of senior services offered by the Gesu Parish: shuttled outings, meals served on site, doctor visits, vaccination clinics, fitness programs, and other services that provide a holistic approach to senior living.*
- Commissioners inquired about the number of units that will be available at each income level and the rents for each income level. *Following the meeting, the applicant provided the following breakdown of the affordable units: 12 units will be at 30% AMI (currently \$400 per month), 5 units will be at 40% AMI*

(currently \$570 per month), 6 units will be at 60% AMI (currently \$906 per month), and 23 units will be at 80% AMI (\$1,174 per month). There will be no units set at market rate.

- Commissioners inquired about when construction was anticipated to begin. Construction is estimated to begin January 1, 2025.
- Commissioners inquired about the advertising of the upcoming community meetings. Following the meeting, the applicant provided CPC staff with a copy of the meeting flyer for October 10th. A second meeting is tentatively scheduled for October 18th. The applicant will go door to door to hand out fliers to residents within a 3-block radius. Additional outreach will occur during events at Gesu Church and School, as well as via social media.
- Commissioners inquired about the square footage of the two-bedroom-units? Following the meeting the applicant confirmed that the two-bedroom-units will be 783 sq. ft.

In response to the CPC public hearing and Roger Short’s letter of support the University District Community Association held an emergency meeting on Tuesday, October 3rd to familiarize themselves with the project and understand the actions of its president. MHT and the Church were invited to present, but they declined in favor of better understanding the community’s concerns and preparing for the developer’s community meeting on October 10th.

STAFF ANALYSIS

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

The zoning classifications and uses surrounding the subject parcels are as follows:

- North: R2 (Two-Family Residential) – Institutional, church
East: R2 (Two-Family Residential) – Residential, two-family homes
South: R6 (High Density Residential) – Institutional, university
West: R2 (Two-Family Residential) – Residential, single- and two-family homes



Current zoning, with subject site hatched

Zoning Ordinance Approval Criteria

Section 50-3-70 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance lists eight approval criteria on which zoning map amendments must be based. Following are the relevant criteria with CPC staff’s analysis in italics:

- Whether the proposed amendment will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public. *Approval of the proposed zoning map amendment will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public, specifically for senior citizens by providing the appropriate zoning classifications to allow for new senior citizen housing.*
- 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. *It is not anticipated that the proposed rezoning will have significant adverse impacts on the natural environment.*
- Whether the proposed amendment will have significant adverse impacts on other property that is in the vicinity of the subject tract. *No adverse impacts are anticipated because of the proposed rezoning. By allow the proposed rezoning, the vitality of the neighborhood is anticipated to be improved.*
- Whether the proposed rezoning will create an illegal “spot zone.” *The proposed rezoning will not create an illegal “spot zone.”*

Master Plan Consistency

The subject site is located within the Palmer Park area of Neighborhood Cluster 10 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The Future Land Use Map for this area shows RL (Low Density Residential) and INST (Institutional) for the subject property. The Planning and Development Department (PDD) has reviewed this proposed rezoning and determined that the proposed rezoning is generally **consistent** with the Master Plan designation, and it is not anticipated to change the character of the area or have a negative impact on the surrounding area.



CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

On September 21st, 2023, the City Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the rezoning request to amend Article XVII, District Map No. 60 of Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, *Zoning*, to show an R3 (Low-Density Residential) zoning classification where an R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning classification is currently shown on nine parcels commonly known as 17139, 17204, 17198, 17180, 17132 Oak Drive, 3856 West McNichols Road, 17213, 17181, and 17131 Birchcrest. This same-day action was only taken by the Commission in order to maintain its viability under the current timeline. Were the Commission to wait until the next CPC meeting, there would not be enough time to process this request through City Engineering and the Law Department, and present it to City Council in enough time to be properly considered and make the December submission date to the State.

Furthermore, the Commission being quite concerned with the project design, the poor communication and the lack of community engagement, also recommends that the City Council public hearing not take place until the design issues have been addressed and the community has been properly engaged.

Respectfully submitted,

DONOVAN SMITH, CHAIRPERSON



Marcell R. Todd, Jr., Director
Timarie Szwed, City Planner

Attachments: Rezoning Ordinance
PDD Master Plan Interpretation
Updated District Map 60
Letters of Support

cc: Antoine Bryant, Director, PDD
Dara O'Byrne, Deputy Director, PDD
Karen Gage, PDD
Greg Moots, PDD
Russell Baltimore, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
James Foster, BSEED
Daniel Arking, Law Department



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 808
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone 313•224•1339
www.detroitmi.gov

TO: Mr. Marcell Todd, Director, City Planning Commission
FROM: Greg Moots, Planning and Development
RE: Master Plan Interpretation for **Rezoning**
DATE: September 19, 2023

RE: **Master Plan of Policies review of the request to show an R3 (Low Density Residential) zoning classification where a R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning classification is currently shown, generally bounded by Santa Maria Street, Birchcrest Drive, West McNichols Road, and Quincy Street.**

Dear Mr. Todd:

Pursuant to the City of Detroit's City Charter (Sections 6-202 and 6-204), the Planning and Development Department (P&DD) submits the following review of the proposed rezoning. The proposed map amendment is at the request of the Detroit City Planning Commission.

Location

Nine parcels are included in the request: 17132, 17139, 17180, 17198, 17204 Oak Drive, 17131, 17181, 17213 Birchcrest Drive, and 3856 West McNichols Road. These are generally bounded by Santa Maria Street to the north, Birchcrest Drive to the east, West McNichols Road to the south, and Quincy Street to the west.

Existing Site Information

The area is approximately 5.8 acres in size and contains a school and church buildings.

Surrounding Site Information

North: R2 - Institutional (Church)
East: R2 – Two-family homes
South: R6 – Institutional (University)
West: R2 – Two and single-family homes

Project Proposal

The proposed rezoning is being requested in order to permit a multi-family development (senior housing) comprised of three buildings, two existing and one new construction of 10,794 sq. ft.

Interpretation

Impact on Surrounding Land Use

The upzoning of the site from the R2 to R3 district will permit the multi-family use as a matter of right. The R3 district permits various lower intensity residential uses and public, civic and institutional uses. The negative impacts from these uses should be minimal.

Impact on Transportation

The higher intensity zoning permits additional uses, but none more intense than the existing church and school or adjacent university. McNichols Road is designated as a "Major Thoroughfare", as is Livernois Avenue three blocks to the west. Bus routes also run on those roads. The senior housing is not anticipated to significantly increase the overall traffic in the area.

Master Plan Interpretation

The site is designated as Low Density Residential (RL) in the Master Plan's Palmer Park neighborhood. Such "... areas are often characterized by single family homes with front yard set backs and driveways with garage or off street parking. The residential classifications allow for neighborhood-scale commercial development.". The proposed rezoning is generally **consistent** with the Master Plan designation, as it is not anticipated to change the character of the area and is not anticipated to have a negative impact on the surrounding area.

Respectfully Submitted,



Gregory Moots

Planning and Development Department

Attachments

Future General Land Use Map: Map 10-3B, Neighborhood Cluster 10, Palmer Park

CC: Karen Gage
Antoine Bryant, Director



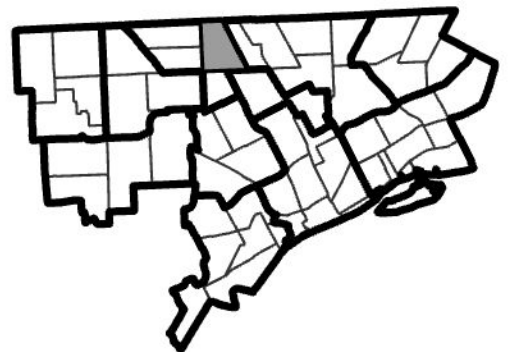
Map 10-3B
 City of Detroit
 Master Plan of
 Policies

Neighborhood Cluster 10 Palmer Park



Future Land Use

Low Density Residential (RL)	Thoroughfare Commercial (CT)	Mixed - Town Center (MTC)
Low / Medium Density Residential (RLM)	Special Commercial (CS)	Recreation (PRC)
Medium Density Residential (RM)	General Industrial (IG)	Regional Park (PR)
High Density Residential (RH)	Light Industrial (IL)	Private Marina (PRM)
Major Commercial (CM)	Distribution / Port Industrial (IDP)	Airport (AP)
Retail Center (CRC)	Mixed - Residential / Commercial (MRC)	Cemetery (CEM)
Neighborhood Commercial (CN)	Mixed - Residential / Industrial (MRI)	Institutional (INST)



SUMMARY

This ordinance amends Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, *Zoning*, by amending Article XVII, *Zoning District Maps*, Section 50-17-62, *District Map No. 60*, to revise the existing R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning classification to the R3 (Low-Density Residential) zoning classification for the parcels commonly known as 17139, 17204, 17198, 17180, 17132 Oak Drive, 3856 West McNichols Road, 17213, 17181, 17131 Birchcrest Drive.

1 **BY COUNCIL MEMBER _____** :

2 **AN ORDINANCE** to amend Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, *Zoning*, by
3 amending Article XVII, *Zoning District Maps*, Section 50-17-62, *District Map No. 60*, to revise
4 the existing R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning classification to the R3 (Low-Density
5 Residential) zoning classification for the parcels commonly known as 17139, 17204, 17198,
6 17180, 17132 Oak Drive, 3856 West McNichols Road, 17213, 17181, 17131 Birchcrest Drive.

7 **IT IS HEREBY ORDAINED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE CITY OF DETROIT THAT:**

8 **Section 1.** Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, *Zoning*, Article XVII, *Zoning District*
9 *Maps*, Section 50-17-62, *District Map No. 60*, is amended as follows:

10 **CHAPTER 50. ZONING**

11 **ARTICLE XVII. ZONING DISTRICT MAPS**

12 **Sec. 50-17-62. District Map No. 60.**

13 For the properties commonly identified as 17139, 17204, 17198, 17180, 17132 Oak Drive,
14 3856 West McNichols Road, 17213, 17181, 17131 Birchcrest, generally bounded by Santa Maria
15 Street to the north, Birchcrest Drive to the east, West McNichols Road to the south, and Quincy
16 Street to the west, and identified more specifically as:

- 17 N W MC NICHOLS RD 204-232 AND VACATED ALLEYS ADJ 194-202 S 14 FT 203
- 18 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W C R 2/136 209.1 IRREG
- 19 E OAK DRIVE 281-279 S 2.37 FT ON W LINE BG S 12.31 FT ON E LINE OF 278 KEANS
- 20 SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W C R 2/136 92.37 IRREG
- 21 E OAK DRIVE 283-282 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W C R 2/136 60 X 100
- 22 E OAK DRIVE 290-294 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W C R 2/136 150' X 100
- 23 E OAK DRIVE 294 THRU 291 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W.C.R. 2/136 120X100

1 N—W MC NICHOLS 295 THRU 301 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, WCR 2/136 214 X
2 106.06A
3 W BIRCHCREST DR S 23.33 FT ON E LINE BG S 13.70 ON W LINE 318 317-314 N 15
4 FT 313 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W C R 2/136 158.33 IRREG
5 W BIRCHCREST DR S 15 FT 313 312-311 N 20 FT 310 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W
6 C R 2/136 95 X 100
7 W BIRCHCREST DR S 10 FT 310 309-302 KEANS SUB L14 P57 PLATS, W C R 2/136 250
8 X 100


9 the existing R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning classification is revised to the R3 (Low-Density
10 Residential) zoning classification.

11 **Section 2.** All ordinances or parts of ordinances in conflict with this ordinance are
12 repealed.

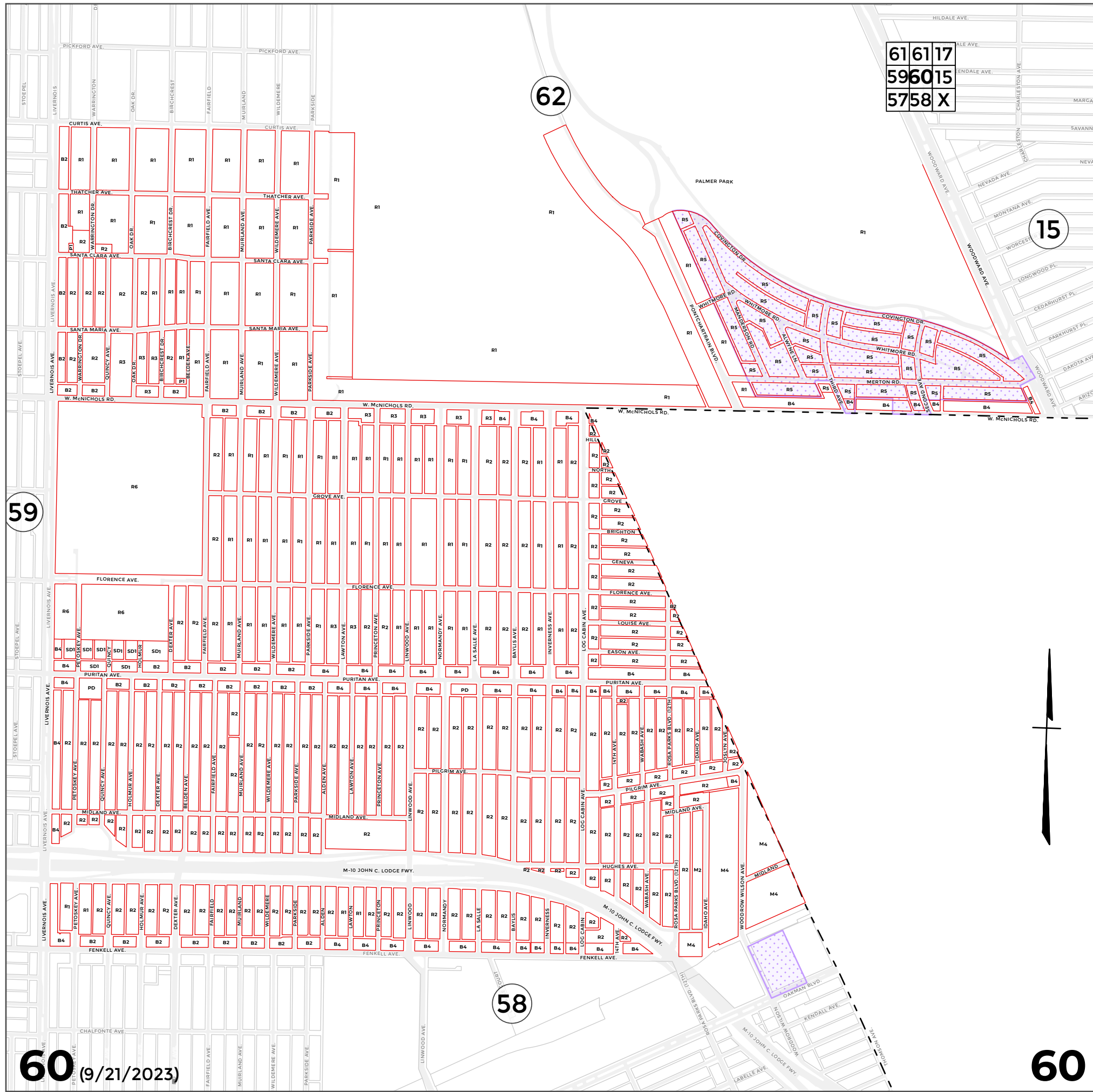
13 **Section 3.** This ordinance is declared necessary for the preservation of the public peace,
14 health, safety, and welfare of the people of the City of Detroit.

15 **Section 4.** This ordinance shall become effective on the eighth (8th) day after publication
16 in accordance with Section 401(6) of Public Act 110 of 2006, as amended, M.C.L. 125.3401(6)
17 and Section 4-118, paragraph 3 of the 2012 Detroit City Charter.

Approved as to Form:



Conrad Mallett
Corporation Counsel



61	61	17
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57	58	X

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60 (9/21/2023)

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September 20, 2023

Detroit Planning Commissioners:

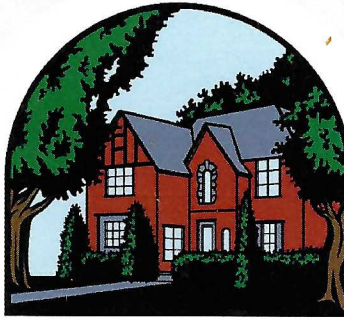
I am writing in support of Gesu's request to rezone from R-2 two-family residential to R-3 low density residential. I am a member of the parish, a Detroit resident, and work as a planning consultant for Giffels Webster. This rezoning is a first step towards meeting many master plan goals related to neighborhoods and housing, such as increasing and improving rental opportunities (Goal 4), providing supportive housing (Goal 5), and coordinating community development efforts (Goal 7), as the current plan for the site is to become mixed-income senior housing. I believe this project would benefit not only the parish, but the neighborhood and community.

Additionally, within neighborhood Cluster 10, the apartment area to the south and the McNichols commercial corridor were identified as areas for revitalization efforts by the master plan. The site is located within a block of McNichols, a local thoroughfare, which is also a desired characteristic of the R-3 district. U D Apartments on Birchcrest, another multi-family site in the neighborhood, is similarly setback from McNichols Road. This site can help provide a transition between the institutional uses of the church, school, and university and the residential uses to the east and north. The proposed use as well as the other uses permitted by right and conditionally in the R-3 district are not likely to create more traffic, noise, and other nuisances than what would be expected of the permitted and conditional uses of the R-2 district, particularly religious residential facilities, educational and religious institutions, and adaptive reuses of school buildings. The site appears to have the ability to meet the development standards of the R-3 district, and all required infrastructure (water, sewer, electric, roads, etc.) needed to support a slightly more intensive use is present.

There is currently a housing crisis. Throughout Michigan, and throughout the city, more affordable housing and housing for seniors is needed. Rezoning this site R-3 will pave the way to future development that can help address this need, thereby improving the stability of families, the neighborhood, and the city as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal.

Stephanie Osborn, AICP
17204 Shaftsbury Ave,
Detroit, MI 48219



University District
DETROIT, MICHIGAN

August 31, 2023

Mr. Chris Gulock
City Planning Commission
Room 208
2 Woodward
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Dear Mr. Gulock;

First let me say that the University District Community Association(UDCA) and the Gesu Parish has had a positive working relationship for many years. As the former treasurer and current President, I have worked to grow that relationship.

I have been working with a Committee of members of Gesu as they explore developing housing for senior residents of our neighborhood. I am pleased with the committee and their recommendation to move forward with the development of senior housing. In conversations with residents of the UDCA the community response has been positive.

UDCA will continue to work closely with the Parish has they move forward with their development plans.

Sincerely,

Roger Short
President
UDCA

University District Community Association, Inc. P.O. Box 21483, Detroit, Michigan 48221 (313) 318-7498

The University District Community Association, Inc is a 501c3 nonprofit organization, Tax EIN 38-6099931