

Donovan Smith
Chairperson
Melanie Markowicz
Vice Chair/Secretary

Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director

City of Detroit
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-6225 Fax: (313) 224-4336
e-mail: cpc@detroitmi.gov

Kenneth R. Daniels
David Esparza, AIA, LEED
Ritchie Harrison
Lauren Hood, MCD
Gwen Lewis
Frederick E. Russell, Jr.
Rachel Udabe

City Planning Commission Meeting

MINUTES
January 18, 2024
5:00 P.M.

I. Opening

A. Call to Order – Chairperson Donovan Smith called the meeting to order at 5:24 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Attendees: Kenneth Daniels, David Esparza, Gwen Lewis, Melanie Markowicz, Frederick Russell (5:48 p.m.), Donovan Smith and Rachel Udabe (remote)

Excused: Lauren Hood

A quorum was present.

C. Amendments to and approval of agenda

Commissioner Daniels moved to remove unfinished business from the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Markowicz. Motion approved.

Commissioner Markowicz moved to approve the agenda as amended, seconded by Commissioner Harrison. Motion approved.

II. Meeting minutes of November 17, 2022

Commissioner Daniels moved to approve the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Markowicz. Motion approved.

III. Public Hearings, Discussions and Presentations

A. **5:15 PM PUBLIC HEARING** – The request of Parkstone Development Partners on behalf of Corktown Historic Developments, LLC to show a PD (Planned Development) zoning district where an R2 (Two-Family Residential) zoning district is currently shown on four parcels commonly known as 2099, 2087, and 2075 Vermont Street. **(JM)** **60 mins**

Present: Jamie Murphy, CPC Staff

Petitioners: Tonja Stapleton, Nicole Rittenour and Drake Filippis

Jamie Murphy, CPC Staff member gave a brief overview via PowerPoint of the rezoning request based on CPC report of January 12, 2024. This request is to rezone four parcels from R2 to PD for the construction of a multi-residential unit. The CPC report describes that the site is located in District 6 in western Corktown, “At the southwest corner of Dalzelle and Vermont Streets which is south of Michigan Avenue and west of Rosa Parks Boulevard.” The site is near a train station, a park to the south, and a vacant lot (owned by Ford Motor Company) across Vermont Street to the east. There are three historic houses on the site, and the proposal is to construct a new building along the back alley. The new building will be five townhouse units, and three stacked apartment units at the corner. Ms. Murphy reviewed and displayed the zoning classifications, existing zoning map, Sanborn map (1958 rendition), and proposed site plan. Also, she described the Master Plan future general land use designation map. The Planning and Development Department (PDD) stated this rezoning is generally consistent with the Master Plan, and it does not change the character of the neighborhood. Ms. Murphy acknowledged since the developers’ last CPC appearance, there has been more community engagement. Ms. Murphy said that this public hearing will be adjourned until a later date for publishing of proper notice via Legal News, and a CPC Staff recommendation will be given at that time.

Nicole Rittenour, architect, explained the details of the proposed project and floor plans.

Tonja Stapleton described a three-year community engagement effort including discussions about Historic District Commission (HDC) standards and other concerns raised and resolved, i.e., fire pit issue. Also, Ms. Stapleton mentioned that since zoom hosted public meetings were not well attended, they proactively changed their engagement process to one on one calls with neighbors. Also, she indicated there was an information board displayed on the site for neighbors.

The developer team stated the development will be offered as market-rate housing. This was in response to Commissioner Udabe’s questions regarding affordable housing.

Public Testimony

Vermont Street expressed his support for the project.

Kelly Larsen, property owner, expressed concerns about parking inefficiency, a 0.75 space requirement for parking spaces per unit, and free parking.

Ms. Stapleton stated that this development plan exceeds the parking space requirement, and every unit has its own dedicated parking spot. She explained this parking meets code requirements, and there would be no need for residents of the new townhouses to park on the street.

Arnold Carpen commented that he is opposed to the proposed project. He expressed concerns with inadequate parking, no setbacks on the buildings, and size of the buildings. He stated the Sanborn map presented is inaccurate.

Commissioner Smith confirmed and stated on the record that there are eight units being constructed, and CPC’s receipt of Mr. Carpen’s letter of opposition.

Ms. Rittenour replied that there is off-street parking and there are setbacks. She explained it is not directly on the alley and the façade aligns with the façade of the

adjacent building. This was in response to Mr. Carpen's public comment.

Scott Lowell stated he is in support of the project.

Sydney Magowski expressed her support for the project.

Ms. Rittenour answered there is an error on the submitted drawing. She described that each townhouse can park under, so there are five parking spots under the building. There is one parking spot on the south portion on the site. There is vacant land and street parking that is always available. This was in response to public comments and Commissioner Smith's parking questions.

Commissioner Markowicz shared her concerns on the length, massing, and view of the buildings. She requested more comments on storm water management issues.

Commissioner Udabe expressed concerns with the density in the space, with another apartment complex across from this development and all being so close to the historic homes seems cramped. She is concerned with this development not offering affordable housing nor many sustainable measures.

Commissioner Esparza expressed concerns about sufficient stormwater management of this development and its effects on existing properties.

Ms. Rittenour stated that in Corktown the sewers are traditionally in the rear of the property, and this site benefits from being on the corner. She believes that there are existing sewers in the alley and on Dalzelle Street. She mentioned developers are expected to sign an agreement with the City that they will maintain the alley. This was in response to the inquiries of Commissioner Udabe and Commissioner Esparza.

Ms. Stapleton commented that there have been notifications of this project, a Special Land Use (SLU) hearing, HDC hearing and community meetings. She mentioned nearly all of the community's concerns have been addressed. Further, she explained that architect, Ms. Rittenour, is a part of the Train Station Neighborhood Block Club, and this will be key to maintaining positive community relations in the neighborhood. This was in response to Commissioner Harrison's questions about additional outreach to property owners.

Mr. Drake Filippis mentioned that one of the community's concerns was dust, and developers committed to use a solid barrier to stop or contain dust and block visibility during construction. He said the neighbors enjoyed that proposed provision. This was in response to Commissioner Harrison's questions.

Commissioner Smith requested a comparison that shows requirements in R2 and requirements as proposed in this PD, i.e., height of the building. Also, he requested to see a form of intended parking capacity, a more definitive provision of a handicap parking spot, a maintenance plan for the alleyway, and clear views for traffic safety.

Commissioner Markowicz asked that in the R1 and R2 comparison there would be extra language about ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Unit).

**B. 6:15 PM INFORMATIONAL PRESENTATION – City of Detroit Solar Initiative
(EF) 45 mins**

Eric Fazzini, CPC Staff member via PowerPoint presented an informational overview of the June 2023 formally announced Mayor’s Office Solar Initiative project. He mentioned that the Solar Initiative project’s goal is to convert the City’s municipal buildings to solar power. The Solar Initiative is anticipated to reduce the City’s power expense of approximately \$8 million per year, and it will put the City in line with State and Federal efforts to combat climate change and provide community benefits to home owners. The solar site selection process includes neighborhood groups and block clubs that applied by the first deadline of October 2023 to host a solar array. The community benefits are tied to those chosen neighborhoods, which could range from \$20,000 to \$25,000 per home in energy efficiency phased upgrades (remediates high pollutants). Initially, there were 27 neighborhood groups; however, after review nine neighborhoods were designated as finalists. Ultimately, there will be six neighborhood finalists selected by March 2024. These neighborhoods will be able to provide the needed 250 acres towards generating 33 megawatts of solar array power. The finalists were chosen based on support and ability to connect to the electric grid. The neighborhood selection process and community engagement is still ongoing. There is a January 31, 2024 deadline for groups to provide evidence of support within the boundary area.

Mr. Fazzini described each of the nine groups that are being considered as possible hosts as follows:

1. Gratiot/Findlay
2. Greenfield Park/I-75-McNichols
3. Grixdale
4. Houston Whittier/Hayes (Outer Drive Hayes)
5. I-96/Plymouth (O’Shea)
6. Mount Olivet
7. State Fair
8. Trinity Pickford
9. Van Dyke/Lynch

Mr. Fazzini explained that homeowners or renters within each blue solar array boundary would be required to relocate to accommodate the solar array.

Mr. Fazzini said the City will offer double fair market value for owner occupied residences with a minimum of \$90,000, based on State guidelines. This was in response to Commissioner Smith’s questions.

CPC requested (1) a full detailed formal presentation of the solar project, (2) a solar energy cap that the State requires, (3) a list of the City buildings and their current energy usage that would be involved in this solar project, (4) information on what will happen with the environment (trees), air quality, and wellbeing of local wildlife in these areas, and (5) a more detailed street map of the impacted areas of the Solar Initiative.

Mr. Fazzini discussed that property owners and renters will receive benefits. There will be a relocation benefit program that follows the State’s guidelines. The program provides a resident with 18 months free rent, relocation services (within the boundaries of the City of Detroit), and market rate property. This was in response to Commissioner Daniels’ questions.

Mr. Fazzini stated this matter will return to City Council in March or April 2024.

C. 7:00 PM DISCUSSION – CPC Committee Assignments

45 mins

This matter was heard at 7:44 p.m. after agenda item IV. Public Comment.

Director Todd gave a brief overview of the Bylaws Committee, Goals and Objectives Committee, Citizens Review Committee (CRC), and Zoning Innovation Committee (ad hoc). He expressed that Commissioners should contemplate which committees they would like to participate in serving.

Further, Director Todd stated CPC's subcommittee plans to meet to further discuss details of the CRC Committee and invite a representative of the Housing Revitalization Department (HRD).

Commissioner Smith polled CPC for any committee chair interests and recited the following results:

- Bylaws Committee—Commissioner Lewis
- Agenda Committee—Commissioner Harrison
- Nominating Committee—Commissioner Esparza
- Citizen Review Committee—To Be Determined
- Zoning Innovation Committee—Commissioner Markowicz

IV. Public Comment –

This agenda item was heard before Item III. Discussion.

There was no public comment.

V. Unfinished Business – There was an approved motion to remove this item from the agenda. (*see Amendments to Agenda*).

VI. New Business – There was no new business.

VII. Committee Reports – There was no committee reports.

VIII. Staff Report – There was no staff report.

IX. Member Report –

Member Reports was informally heard after agenda item X. Communications.

Commissioner Smith gave a recap of a Redistricting meeting for District 2, and he requested further explanation on Redistricting Detroit.

Director Todd gave an update on Redistricting Detroit, and explained City Council will discuss and vote on the Redistricting Detroit matter in a formal session. He clarified that Redistricting Detroit is to facilitate the 2025 election. The full effect of the redistricting will be in January 2026.

Director Todd and Commissioner Markowicz provided an update regarding the Commissioners' stipend payment status in response to Commissioner Russell's questions.

X. Communications – Director Todd announced the final time and place of the Gordy Howe Bridge Tour and dinner.

Director Todd informed CPC that the City of Dearborn rezoning meeting was cancelled.

XI. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 8:27 p.m.