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**TO:** Detroit City Council

**FROM:** David Whitaker, Director   
Legislative Policy Division

**DATE:** February 7, 2025

**RE:** Resolution Requesting the Historic Designation Advisory Board to Conduct an Eligibility Study of the Renaissance Center

The Legislative Policy Division (LPD) has been requested by Council Member Angela Whitfield Calloway to draft a resolution requesting the Historic Designation Advisory Board to Conduct an Eligibility Study of the Renaissance Center for historic designation.

Please call upon us if we can be of further assistance.

**RESOLUTION REQUESTING THE HISTORIC DESIGNATION ADVISORY BOARD  
TO CONDUCT AN ELIGIBILITY STUDY OF THE RENAISSANCE CENTER**

**BY COUNCIL MEMBER ANGELA WHITFIELD CALLOWAY**

**WHEREAS,** The Renaissance Center Also affectionately known as the Ren Cen was conceived by Henry Ford II and a twenty-six-member coalition of business leaders known as the Detroit Renaissance. The development of the Ren Cen was primarily financed by the Ford Motor Company. The groundbreaking ceremony was on May 22, 1973, for Phase I, the first five towers, and was opened on July 1, 1976. The cost was approximately \$350 million, the equivalent of \$1.8 billion today; and

**WHEREAS,** The Ren Cen was developed following a turbulent period for the city of Detroit. Just six years prior to the Ren Cen groundbreaking, the racial strife of the country resulted in the Detroit uprising in 1967. Facing economic hardship, disinvestment and a declining population, the Ren Cen was intended to be the catalyst to reverse this trend; and

**WHEREAS,** For the past forty plus years, including the purchase of the Ren Cen by the General Motors Corporation (GM) in 1996 and the infusion of approximately \$500 million by GM in renovations, the Ren Cen has been an iconic symbol of Detroit and its riverfront skyline; and

**WHEREAS,** Pursuant to the Detroit City Code, Chapter 21, *History*, Article II, *Historic Districts and Landmarks*, Division 2, *Historic Designation Advisory Board*, Section 21-2-31 *Establishment of historic districts*. The Detroit City Council:

Upon the receipt of a request to City Council from any person residing, doing business, or owning property in the City to designate an area, a resource, or resources as an historic district, the City Council, after making a determination that there are reasonable grounds for such a request, may adopt a resolution directing that the Historic Designation Advisory Board make a study to determine whether the proposed district meets the criteria for designation under the provisions of this article.

through which the determination of whether the Ren Cen should be designated a historic district; and

**WHEREAS,** Understanding, the engagement of the Historic Designation Advisory Board (HDAB) to conduct a study pursuant to the City Code, Section 21-2-31(a) would provide HDAB the authority to conduct a study of eligibility, Section 21-2-31(c) provides in pertinent part:

Upon receipt of substantial evidence demonstrating definite historical, architectural, archeological, engineering or cultural significance in a proposed historic district, the City Council may adopt, at its discretion, a resolution of interim historic designation, requiring that all permit applications for work within the proposed historic district be referred to the Historic District Commission as provided for in Division 2 of this

article. For a period of one year after adoption of such a resolution, the Historic District Commission shall review permit applications for work within such proposed historic districts with the same powers which would apply if the proposed historic district were a designated historic district, notwithstanding provisions to the contrary elsewhere in this article.

For an interim historic designation to be assigned to the Ren Cen, the City Council would have to pass a separate resolution, based upon substantial evidence of definite historical, architectural, archeological, engineering or cultural significance, designating the interim status; **BE IT THEREFORE**

**RESOLVED,** That the Detroit City Council upon receipt of a request and the aforesaid Whereas, finds that there are reasonable grounds for a study to determine if the Renaissance Center is eligible for the Historic Designation Advisory Board to conduct a study on whether the proposed Renaissance Center District meets the criteria for designation as a historic district; and **BE IT FURTHER**

**RESOLVED,** That the Historic Designation Advisory Board is authorized to conduct such study in accordance with Section 21-2-31 of the Detroit City Code; and **BE IT FINALLY**

**RESOLVED,** That a copy of this resolution be provided to Mayor Mike Duggan, the Chair of the Historic Designation Advisory Board and the Director of the Historic Designation Advisory Board Staff.