

**Donovan Smith**  
Chairperson  
**Melanie Markowicz**  
Vice Chair/Secretary

**Marcell R. Todd, Jr.**  
Director

**City of Detroit**  
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**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**  
**October 19, 2023**  
**5:00 P.M.**

### I. Opening

A. Call to Order – Chairperson Donovan Smith called the meeting to order at 5:23 p.m.

B. Roll Call

Attendees: Kenneth Daniels, David Esparza (exit 8:20 p.m.), Ritchie Harrison, Gwen Lewis, Melanie Markowicz, Frederick Russell, Donovan Smith and Rachel Udabe

Excused: Lauren Hood

A quorum was present.

C. Amendments to and approval of agenda

Commissioner Russell moved to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Markowicz. Motion approved.

### II. Meeting minutes of June 29, 2023

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

### III. Public Hearings, Discussions and Presentations

A. **5:15 PM PRESENTATION** – Motown Museum Expansion Project and Rezoning (KJ) **60 mins**

Present: Kimani Jeffrey, CPC Staff

Petitioners: Nicole Blocker, Mike Darga, Allen Rawls, and Malcom Davis

Kimani Jeffrey, CPC Staff member gave a brief introduction of the developer presentation of the Motown Museum expansion project.

Ms. Nicole Blocker via PowerPoint discussed the Motown Museum expansion project. Ms.

Blocker described it as a \$65 million development of a full campus project with multiple renovations, an expansion and addition throughout the West Grand Boulevard and Ferry Park Street blocks. The first phase combined the homes (i.e., Gordy, Tamela and Soul) with a basement and it's called Hitsville Next, and it opened in the summer of 2021. It is home to the administrative offices, community and mentoring programs, students and music lovers. The second phase opened last summer, and she played a video highlighting community activities and events held at the Rocket Mortgage Plaza. The new expansion program is a 40,000 square feet addition with a connector going across the alley, and it will have a new 200 seat theater (Ford Motor Company theater), a small café, and retail space. The whole second floor will be dedicated to about 10,000 square feet of exhibit space. Ms. Blocker showed renderings of the project's design, and she mentioned they are currently in the final design phase.

Mr. Darga discussed the rezoning request from B4 and R2 to SD2. He stated SD2 is most appropriate for the museum's expansion since it allows for combined and multiple uses on a site.

Mr. Jeffrey described the community meeting wherein community members asked questions, made comments and expressed support.

Commissioner Markowicz requested a context map with zoning. She would like the Petitioners to describe how they plan to handle more museum visitors and how these aspects will affect the neighborhood.

Ms. Blocker answered that Motown Museum acquired a building that came with over 100 parking spaces, and some visitors may park there and use a shuttle to the Motown Museum. Also, she stated there are 40 spaces in two smaller parking lots that are planned on the site and a bus route drop off. Ms. Blocker mentioned that during community engagement at a public meeting community members gave support, and support letters have been received from neighbors. She explained some in the group home next door sit on the porch to listen to the music, Motown and the funeral home have a great relationship, and Henry Ford Hospital's President sits on the Motown Museum Board. Brazelton's Flowers, organizations and the dentist office across the street are in support. This was in response to Commissioner Markowicz's questions.

The Petitioner's architect stated that the northern side of the site is within the historic district and the southern side, the alley is not historically designated. The museum is local and State designated. The proposed building is 52-54 feet in height overall. The materiality chosen is remnant of the gold record and the golden eras of Motown in terms of the façade treatments and texture, and railings and roof materials resembled records on a shelf, the gold record era. It is an opportunity to showcase Motown and introduce the museum to new audiences and their elders with a balance scale of materiality and nostalgia in response to Commissioner Markowicz's questions.

Mr. Jeffrey mentioned that he understands the concerns of mass in height relating to Historic District Commission (HDC), and effect of noise. These matters will be addressed during the public hearing in response to Commissioner Russell's questions.

Mr. Rawls responded that Motown is respectful of the families and ceremonies of its neighbor, Cole Funeral Home. Motown coordinates activities, so there is no conflict with Motown's noise and Cole Funeral Home funerals or processions during the day. This was in response to Commissioner Russell's questions.

Mr. Rawls mentioned that consultants predict a 30% increase in attendance to approximately 130,000 visitors per year. Also, Ms. Blocker stated a traffic study was completed, and another one is planned after the final design is complete. These comments were in response to Commissioner Harrison's questions.

Mr. Rawls stated regarding properties that are not contiguous to the Motown campus property, they are trying to avoid spot zoning a parcel or two under separate ownership. One zoning classification is the best option for consistency. They desire a contiguous property that is why it is not included in the rezoning plan. Mr. Rawls stated Motown Museum is regularly involved with the West Grand Boulevard Collaborative and communicate with other organizations (i.e., Wayne State University), other fellow museums in the area, and Henry Ford Hospital in response to Commissioner Udabe's questions.

**B. 6:15 PM PRESENTATION – Oakland Ave. Farmway project and rezoning  
(KJ) 45 mins**

Present: Kimani Jeffrey, CPC Staff  
Petitioners: Ms. Jerry Hebron and Natosha Tallman

Kimani Jeffrey, CPC Staff member introduced and provided background information on the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm located in the north end of Detroit.

Ms. Jerry Hebron provided a detailed background on the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm and described the farm, land and the organization's Detroit Land Bank Authority community partnership. She spoke about the Cultivator Community Land Trust and addressing food access, reducing food insecurity, workforce development, quality of housing and education.

Ms. Natosha Tallman discussed via PowerPoint that the Oakland Avenue Urban Farm campus is located on Oakland Avenue to Owen Street and one block over to Cameron. (They own most of the lots on Cameron). There are 27 lots in the Cultivator Community Land Trusts. Ms. Tallman reviewed the organization's projects for Oakland Avenue Urban Farm and Farmer's Market, North End Community Resource Center, Red's Jazz Shoe Shine (historic), the Landing (bed and breakfast) and Agri Art Alleyway. She explained that the urban farm produces on 3.5 -4 acres of land, and it is the only urban farm in the City of Detroit with United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) designation of good agricultural practices and sell to schools, hospitals, restaurants with a clear line of traceability.

Ms. Tallman stated the site is zoned R2, B4, and some R1, and they are seeking rezoning to SD1 to allow them to produce more and expand their current vision. She stated the organization reached out to all the residents and business owners within 300 feet. They held a series of community outreach meetings to gauge the community for feedback and community needs. Ms. Tallman was pleased to report that they only received positive feedback from the community.

**IV. Public Comment –**

Mr. Crowley commented on cluster zones for his neighborhood and asked for a copy of the Master Plan.

Director Todd stated that Staff will provide him access to a copy of the Master Plan.

V. **Unfinished Business** – There was no unfinished business.

VI. **New Business** –

- A. Minor modification to an existing PD (Planned Development) zoning district established for the University Meadows development project. (KJ) 20 mins

Present: Kimani Jeffrey, CPC Staff  
Petitioners: Oren Brandvain and James Pappas

Mr. Kimani Jeffrey, CPC Staff described a request for a proposed minor modification of a PD on a project at University Meadows. The petitioner has completed the first phase and permits have been pulled, but modifications are needed during the project.

Mr. Oren Brandvain, Develop Detroit via PowerPoint discussed University Meadows existing 53-unit senior community on 4.1 acres. It is in the Woodbridge Neighborhood at Forest and Trumbull near Midtown Detroit and Wayne State University. The existing 53 units are completely renovated with added amenities, such as television lounge, kitchen, telehealth center, raised beds and solar panels (contribute to offsetting cost of electricity). Mr. Brandvain stated they have modified plans for the proposed new building from 31 units to add one story to the building and increase the units and density and make it 53-56 units. The benefit of this minor modification will provide additional affordable housing, improve scoring and scoring competitiveness for financing. He expressed that residents are pleased with the renovations, and residents are deeply concerned with safety on the complex. There have been random outside individuals coming in, jumping the fence, and cutting or walking through the site. Mr. Brandvain mentioned that residents expressed that they prefer for the complex to not be open on two sides. Mr. Brandvain showed the second phase site characteristics, conceptual elevations and plans going from three to four stories and keeping it consistent.

Mr. Brandvain stated December 1, 2023 is the submission deadline for financing, and they are striving to get a site plan approval and zoning approval through an updated PD. Therefore, they need the letter by December 1 to increase competitiveness and get points for scoring category in response to Mr. Jeffrey's timeline question.

Mr. Brandvain mentioned the apartment complex is 100% occupied, and there is a very long wait list in response to Commissioner Daniels' question.

**Commissioner Daniels motioned that CPC move forward on the modifications of the planned development of the University Meadows development project, seconded by Commissioner Russell. Motion Approved.**

VII. **Committee Reports** –

Director Todd stated that a committee meeting is needed and one will be scheduled.

VIII. **Staff Report** – Director Todd stated that a request was forwarded to the Budget Department to

instruct and advise on how to facilitate measures for the Commissioners to receive their stipend. He will return with an update once a response is received.

Director Todd encouraged the Commissioners to view the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) I-375 Project presentation before City Council on November 7, 2023.

Director Todd gave a brief status of the Gesu Catholic Church senior housing project, and its recent controversy. There were community meetings held on October 12, 2023 and October 18, 2023. Due to the community's expressed concerns, an additional design recommendation, and the need for more community engagement the University District Community Association Chair, Mr. Roger Short, retracted his letter of support. It was decided that the developers will wait a year to proceed in order to allow for more community engagement. It is expected that MHT Housing and Gesu will be holding at least three or four more community meetings. Thereafter, they plan to come back before CPC. Unfortunately, Staff learned of an email that was circulated among community members which included misquoted inaccurate information from the CPC report.

Mr. Amarteifio discussed the child care facilities ordinance amendment to update definitions in family and group day care homes allowing these uses to exist within zoning on a by-right and conditional basis. He briefly reviewed the June 29, 2023 CPC public hearing which examined how the City zones family and group day care homes and child care centers and aimed to remove restrictions and provide more opportunities and support to child care providers. Commissioners raised concerns over concentration of these type of uses in neighborhoods, spacing and regulations. During the September 21, 2023 CPC meeting, Staff came back with a status update and presentation. Attorney Dan Arking of the Law Department provided a new alternative process, wherein an individual would pay an initial fee for a notice and hearing to express their concerns. The recommended new alternative process was received by Commissioners with mixed viewpoints. Some Commissioners viewed it as a new, novel and innovative way to reduce restrictions, yet other Commissioners expressed major concerns with equity of community members being required to pay money only to voice their comments and provide feedback. Therefore, CPC Staff and the Office of Early Learning decided to seek more public feedback and created a survey for neighbors to complete. CPC Staff is working on over 1800 city addresses of neighbors that live within the same block of a currently licensed day care home, and the survey will be mailed out to neighbors. CPC Staff plan to review analyze the returned (digital or paper) surveys and compile a recommendation to present to Commissioners.

Director Todd stated that Staff attended and participated in the 2023 American Planning Association Michigan Chapter (MAP) Conference.

## **IX. Member Report –**

Commissioner Smith expressed his pleasure in attending the 2023 MAP Conference. He stated he is anticipating Detroit hosting the 2026 American Planning Association Conference, and he encouraged other Commissioners to attend.

Commissioner Markowicz provided an update on the I-375 Reconnecting Communities Project. The Local Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for October 24, 2024, from 5:30-7:00 p.m. at 1010 Antietam Avenue. MDOT will define the design, maintaining traffic during construction, traffic data collection, analysis and impact of intersections, and a revised plan for future community engagement.

Commissioner Russell recommended an urban agriculture tour and the Detroit Water and

Sewerage Department (DWSD) green infrastructure tour as part of the experience for the 2026 APA Conference.

Commissioner Smith commented there is a process of establishing committees for the 2026 APA Conference (i.e., planning and sessions committees and mobile workshop tours). He said it is anticipated that approximately more than 50 tours may be created for attendees.

Director Todd stated a draft of the 2024 CPC meeting schedule will be provided at the next meeting in response to Commissioner Udabe's inquiry.

**X. Communications** – There was no communications.

**XI. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 8:36 p.m.