

City of Detroit

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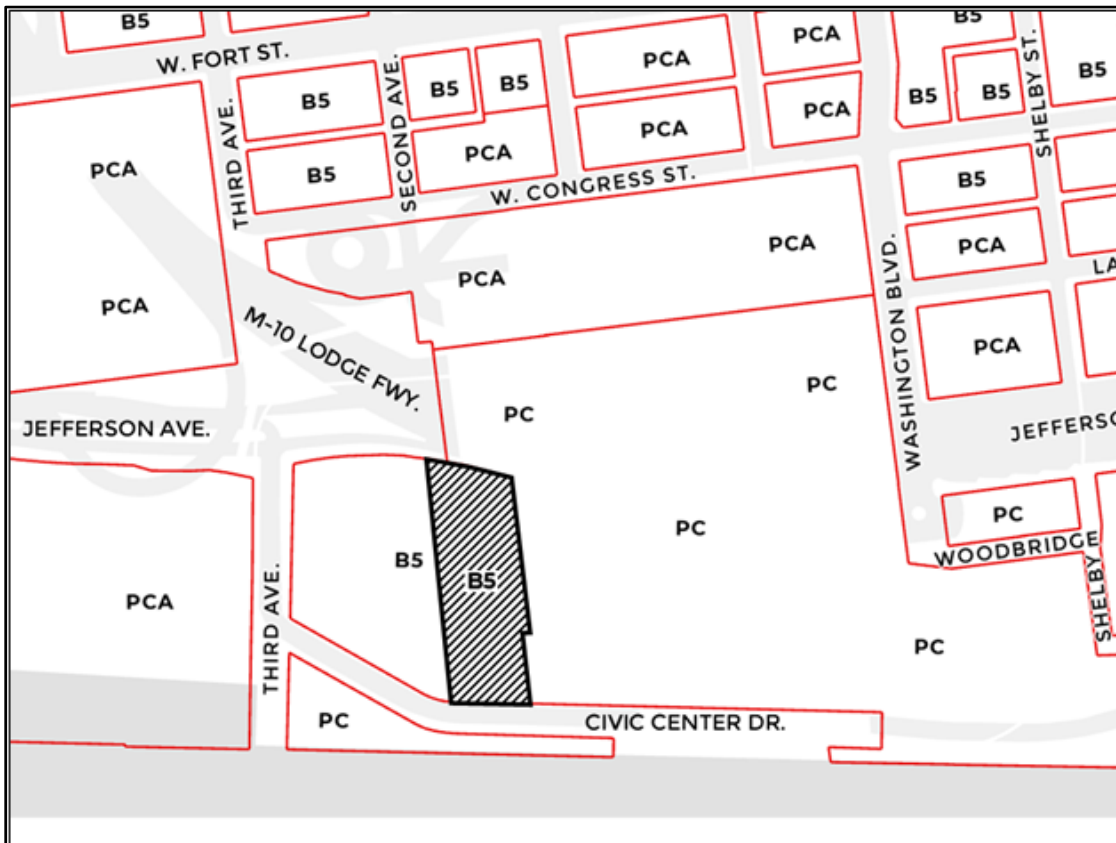
TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Jamie Murphy, City Planner

RE: **Request of the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority to show a PC (Public Center) zoning district where a B5 (Major Business) zoning district is currently shown on two parcels commonly known as 560 and 580 Civic Center Drive. Additionally, a PC District review of a proposed addition to the Huntington Place Convention Center.**

DATE: April 11, 2025

On April 17, 2025, the City Planning Commission (CPC) will hold a 5:15 PM public hearing on the subject rezoning. Below is the current zoning map of the subject area with the proposed rezoning highlighted.



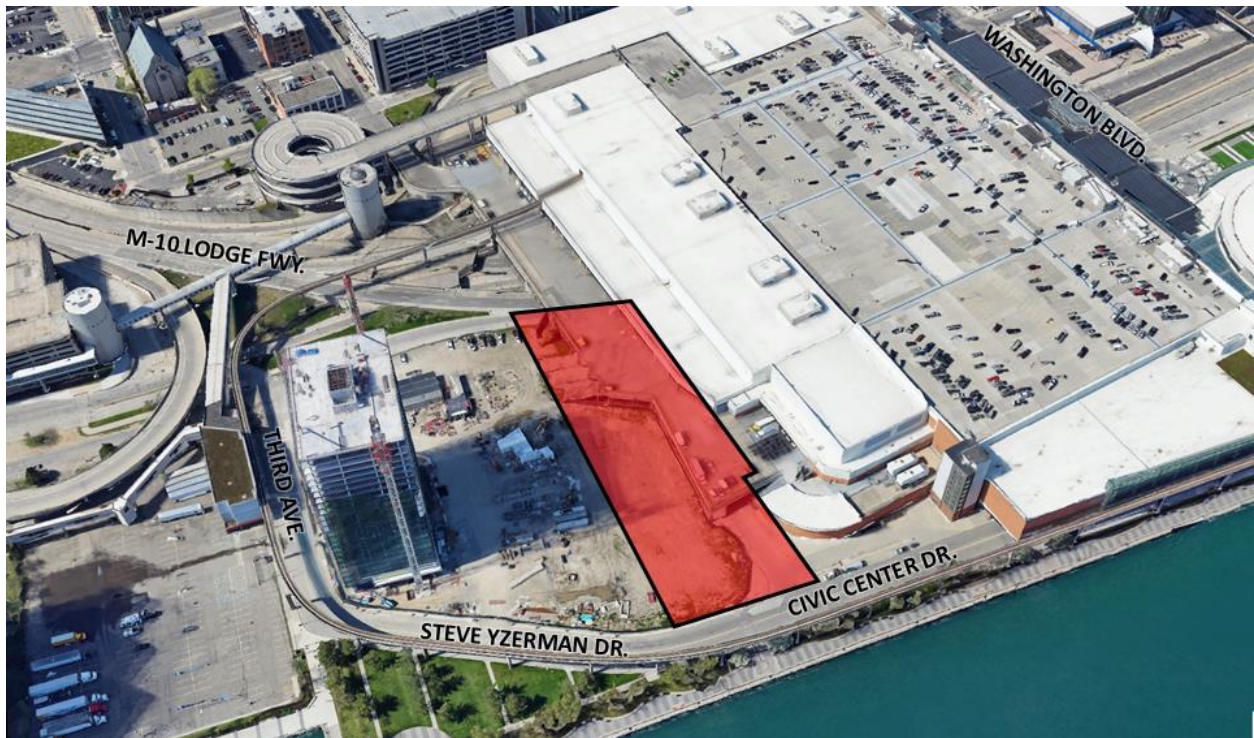
BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

The CPC has received a request from the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-2, District Map No. 1 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, by showing a PC zoning district where a B5 zoning district is currently shown on two parcels commonly known as 560 and 580 Civic Center Drive (also known as Steve Yzerman Drive). The PC also requires exterior design and appearance review by City Council.

The proposal is to build an addition to the rear (southwest) side of the Huntington Place convention center facing the River in order to provide a direct pedestrian connection to the new hotel currently being constructed to the west. This will allow people to walk from the hotel to the convention center without having to go outside; providing a more comfortable experience regardless of the weather. The rezoning is necessary because the existing B5 zoning classification does not allow “convention or exhibit buildings” while the proposed PC zoning classification allows the use on a by-right basis. Additionally, the parcels under consideration are proposed to be combined with the rest of the convention center and having consistent zoning for the entire parcel would reduce confusion.

The site is located within City Council District 6 and measures 1.922 acres. The area under consideration was previously part of the Joe Louis Arena prior to its demolition in 2019. In order to facilitate the redevelopment of the Joe Louis Arena site, in 2020, it was rezoned from the PC district to the B5 district as the PC district allows only 24 uses and the B5 district allows 144.

The western portion of the proposed rezoning will include the new Second Avenue extension which the Commission reviewed last summer.



Aerial view of proposed rezoning

The addition to Huntington Place is proposed to be three levels with the lowest level providing an entrance at grade and the third level containing the connection between the hotel and the existing convention center. A small plaza area with seating, landscaping, and bike racks is proposed at the main entrance from outside. An open-air terrace occupies part of the third floor overlooking the river.

The majority of the south and west facades of the addition are proposed to be white ceramic tile panels and glass with a dramatic grille pattern. Smaller areas of metal panels in a gold/bronze color are proposed around the entryways and wood for the soffit area near the roof. The north and east facades, which face the existing convention center, will be clad in dark gray metal panels and white EIFS (exterior insulation and finish system).



Rendering of proposed addition to Huntington Place – looking northeast



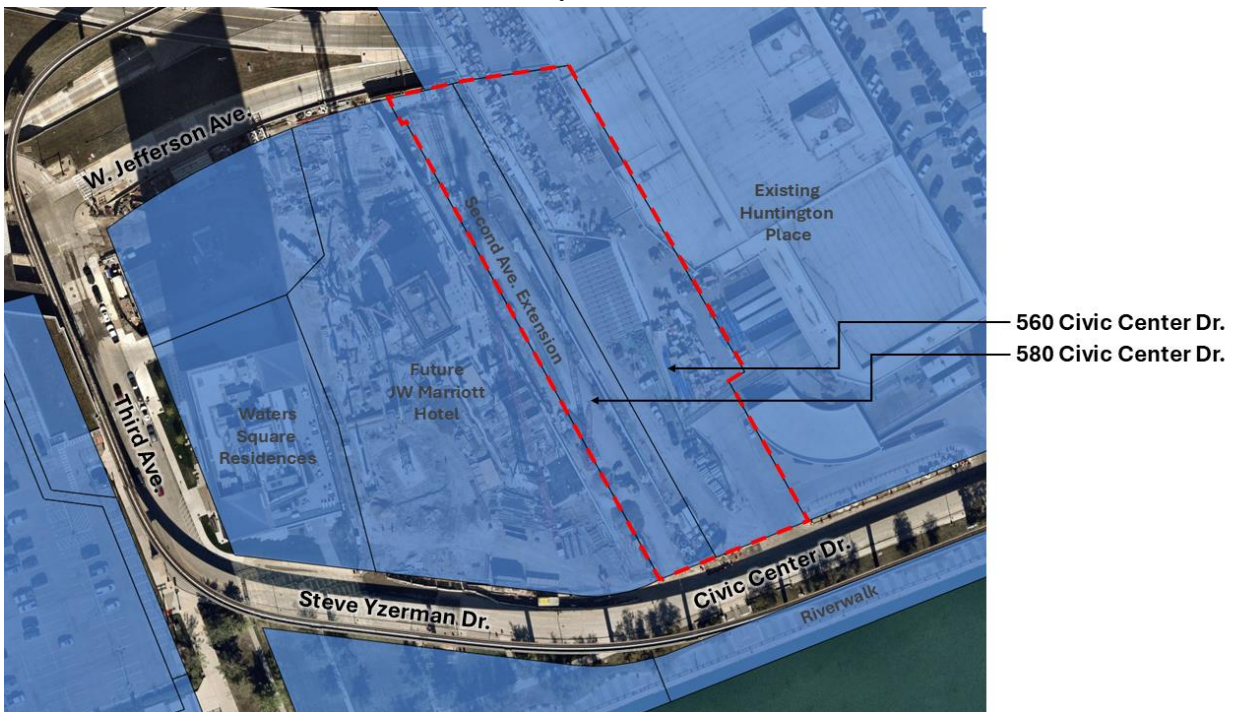
Rendering of proposed addition to Huntington Place – looking east along Civic Center Dr.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

The zoning classification and land uses surrounding the subject area are as follows:

- North: PC – Existing Huntington Place convention center
- East: PC– Existing Huntington Place convention center
- South: PC– Detroit Riverwalk
- West: B5– JW Marriott hotel (currently under construction)



Aerial view with parcel overlay

PC District Review Criteria – Sec. 50-11-67

There are eighteen PC District Review Criteria listed in Section 50-11-67 of the Zoning Ordinance. The relevant criteria follow 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 addition complies with this standard by creating a street wall along the new Second Avenue. It also fills in the void between the new hotel and the existing convention center along Civic Center Drive while still providing space for pedestrians. The building will provide an attractive screen to block views of the back of the convention center and loading docks.
- (3) The proposed development should be compatible with surrounding development in terms of land use, general appearance and function and should not adversely affect the value of adjacent properties.
The adjacent land uses, other than the convention center, are the hotel (under construction) and the riverwalk. Each of these will be enhanced by the proposed development as it will provide a connection to both the convention center and the rest of downtown.
- (9) Appropriate buffering and screening of service, loading, refuse collection, mechanical and electrical equipment and parking areas should be provided.
The building itself will screen the loading and service areas that are currently visible.
- (13) Barrier-free access and public safety features should be carefully planned.
The addition will be barrier-free and compliant with all ADA requirements.
- (15) Urban design elements of form and character should be carefully considered; such elements include, but are not limited to: richness/interest of public areas through the provision of storefronts, window displays, landscaping, and artwork; color, texture and quality of structural materials; enclosure of public spaces; variations in scale; squares, plazas and/or "vest pocket parks" where appropriate; continuity of experience, visual activity and interest; articulation and highlighting of important visual features; preservation/enhancement of important views and vistas.
The dynamic form of the building with both the cantilever and the curve along the southern elevation creates a visually interesting facade. The dramatic pattern of the grillwork and the ceramic panels provide texture. Although the proposed addition has several solid walls at ground level, a large proportion of the façade is glass.
- (16) Special attention should be given to amenity and comfort considerations such as provision for outdoor seating, restrooms for public use, bicycle storage, convenience of access points and protection from harsh weather through such features as enclosed walkways and arcaded pedestrian areas.
Public amenities are incorporated into the project including restrooms, seating, and bicycle racks. The design of the building provides a covered plaza over the main entrance from Civic Center Drive. The secondary entrance from Second Avenue is also inset to provide shelter.

Map Amendment Approval Criteria – Sec. 50-3-70

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 preliminary analysis in italics:

- Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or meets the challenge of some changing condition, trend or fact.
The proposed amendment is necessary due to the land being transferred to Huntington Place. The zoning of the entire convention center should be consistent.
- Whether the proposed amendment will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public.
The proposed amendment meets this standard by providing a connection between the future hotel and the convention center.
- 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.
No adverse impacts on the environment are anticipated as the site is not currently a natural area. The glass areas of the façade are divided into smaller parts which will make it more bird friendly.
- The suitability of the subject property for the existing zoning classification and proposed zoning classification.
Although the property was previously rezoned from the PC district to promote redevelopment, both the existing and proposed zoning districts are suitable for properties in the Central Business District.

Master Plan Consistency

The subject site is located within the Central Business District area of Neighborhood Cluster 4 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies. The Future Land Use map for this area shows “CS – Special Commercial” for the subject property. CPC staff has requested that the Planning and Development Department (P&DD) comment regarding the consistency of this proposal with the City's Master Plan.

Community Input

The adjacent hotel development required a Community Benefits Ordinance (CBO) process prior to construction and while this development was not technically included, it was discussed in conjunction with those meetings. Also, the Detroit Regional Convention Facility Authority is managed by a board which holds public meetings to conduct business.

Attachment: Public Hearing Notice
Application
Plans – Skybridge Connector, Preliminary Design Review

cc: Alexa Bush, Director, PDD
Russell Baltimore, PDD
Greg Moots, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
James Foster, BSEED
Conrad Mallett, Corporation Counsel
Daniel Arking, Law Department