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TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Eric Fazzini, City Planner

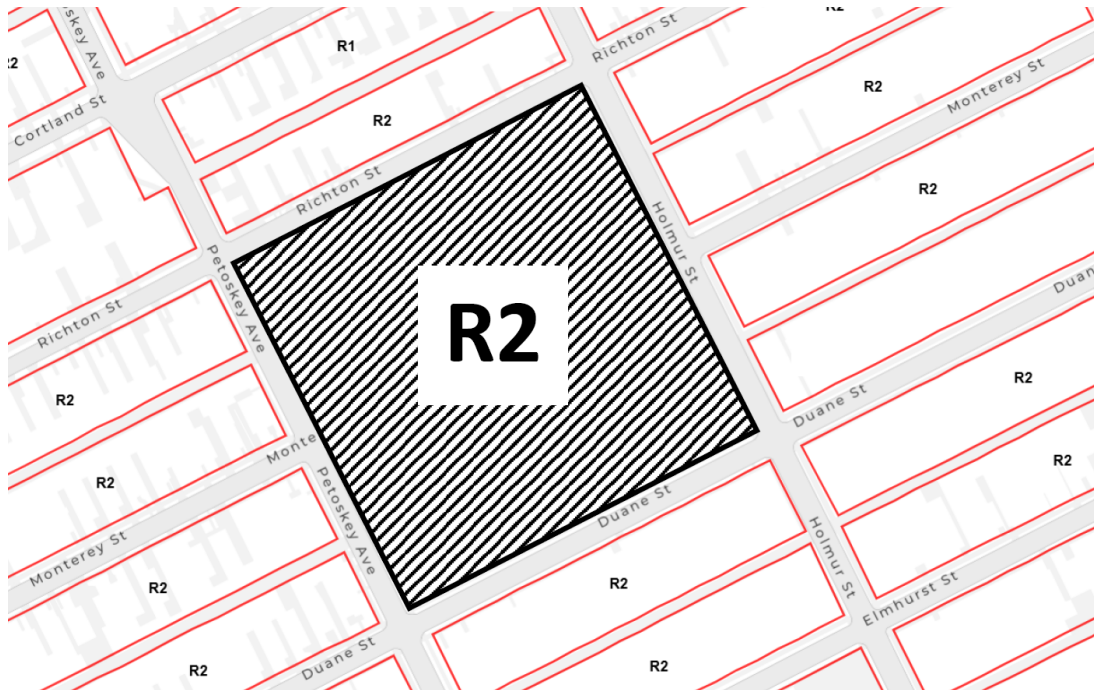
RE: Request of Wallick Development, LLC, to rezone land located at 4094 Duane Street, being the block bounded by Richton Street to the north, Petoskey Avenue to the west, Duane Street to the south, and Holmur Street to the east, from the current R2 (Two-Family Residential District) zoning classification to the SD1 (Special Development District, Small-Scale, Mixed-Use) zoning classification. **(RECOMMEND APPROVAL)**

DATE: June 25, 2025

RECOMMENDATION

City Planning Commission (CPC) staff has completed its review of the requested rezoning and recommends approval based upon the below analysis and findings.

On June 5, 2025, the City Planning Commission (CPC) held a 5:15 p.m. public hearing on the subject zoning map amendment (rezoning) request. Below is a map indicating the area proposed to be rezoned.



Hatched area is proposed to be rezoned from R2 to SD1

BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

Request

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has received a request from Wallick Development, LLC, to rezone the block located at 4094 Duane Street from R2 to SD1 to permit the development of multiple-family dwelling units. The existing R2 zoning classification does not allow for the amount of dwelling units proposed. The property is currently owned by the City of Detroit, and the City's Housing and Revitalization Department (HRD) has selected a Request for Proposal response submitted by Wallick Communities and Presbyterian Villages of Michigan for the acquisition and development of 4094 Duane Street for multiple-family housing.

Background – 2024 HRD Request for Proposals

Alice Birney Elementary School first opened in 1964. The main section of the school was added in 1969 inclusive of a gymnasium, library, and auditorium. In the 1990's, Birney Elementary School served 500 students at its peak before the neighborhood succumbed to decline and disinvestment. It was scheduled to close in 2007 but remained open until 2009. Several plans for rehabilitation had been considered but the decision was made to ultimately demolish the building in March of 2016.

Located at the heart of the Russell Woods Nardin Park neighborhood, the former Alice Birney Elementary School site is currently a "blank slate" with minimal topography, no built structures, and minimal existing vegetation. The Birney site was selected for this transformational opportunity as it is the largest parcel of vacant land that could act as an anchor for the revitalization of the neighborhood and retuning this land to productive use. For pictures of the school, see <https://detroiturbex.com/content/schools/birney/index.html>.

Proposed Development

The applicant has submitted a conceptual site plan dated May 20, 2025, that includes the following site improvements proposed over two development projects (a copy of the site plan is included for reference):

Phase 1

Phase one includes the south half and northwest quarter of the block. A total of 11 multiple-family buildings are proposed in phase one. The conceptual site plan indicates that each building would have a range of three to six units per building for a total of 52 units (13 one-bedroom units, 28 two-bedroom, and 12 three-bedroom). The design of the 11 multiple-family buildings would be varied, using three proposed building types indicated on the conceptual elevations sheet as follows: four Type A buildings, four Type B buildings, and three Type C buildings.

	Buildings	Stories	Units per Building	Total Units per Type
Building Type A	4	2 to 3	6	24
Building Type B	4	1 to 3	5	20
Building Type C	3	1 to 2	3	9



Building Type A



Building Type B



Building Type C



Clubhouse

Section 50-12-431 of the ZO states that not more than one principal detached residential building shall be located on a zoning lot (parcel) in the R2 district. Therefore, under the existing R2 zoning, only one multiple-family building, with no more than eight dwelling units, would be permissible on the 5.47-acre zoning lot (parcel).

Additional improvements proposed in phase one include a one-story clubhouse community building fronting Holmur Street, a playground, two resident mail boxes, dumpster enclosures, and stormwater management areas. Landscaped walkways are proposed to provide access through the site from the surrounding streets. Additional typical development details such as fencing, lighting, etc., are not yet indicated on the conceptual plans.

Phase 2

Phase two would occur in the northeast quarter of the block and includes a three-story senior apartment building with 52 units. A small commercial space is also proposed at the front of the senior building near the intersection of Holmur Street and Richton Street. Three sample building elevations have been submitted instead of elevations, likely due to this building being proposed for a later phase. The senior building is proposed to front the northeast corner of the block with a setback of 20 feet. A 39-space parking lot is proposed to the rear of the L-shaped building, and parking access would be provided from Monterey Street as requested by residents of Richton Street. The Zoning Ordinance (ZO) permits a reduced required parking ratio of 0.75 spaces per dwelling unit for multiple-family buildings for the elderly.

Zoning District Descriptions

Below are the Zoning Ordinance descriptions for the applicable zoning districts.

R2 Two-Family Residential District (Current)

The R2 Two-Family Residential District is designed to protect and enhance those areas developed or likely to develop with single- or two-family dwellings. The district regulations are designed to promote a suitable environment for homes and for activities connected with family life. The only principal uses permitted by right are single- and two-family dwellings. Additional uses are conditional.

SD1 Special Development District, Small-Scale, Mixed-Use (Proposed)

This SD1 Special Development District is designed to encourage a complementary mixture of small-scale pedestrian and transit-oriented uses that are compatible in a neighborhood setting. It is intended to ensure a neighborhood character and place a proper balance of activities within walking distance of one another while serving the day-to-day needs of residents. Parking requirements are reduced in certain circumstances to promote use of transit and non-motorized transportation; shared parking and a district approach to parking are encouraged to lessen demand for off-street parking spaces. Certain establishments that serve alcohol for consumption on the premises are permitted without spacing requirements in order to attract increased pedestrian traffic to the area.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Surrounding Zoning and Land Uses

North (across Richton St): R2 – Primarily vacant lots, possibly 2 to 4 occupied homes
East (across Holmur St): R2 – Greater Love Missionary Baptist Church and one apartment building
South (across Duane St): R2 – Primarily vacant lots, possibly 1 occupied home
West (across Petoskey Ave): R2 – Single-family homes and one duplex

Master Plan Consistency

The Planning and Development Department's (P&DD) has submitted a master plan interpretation letter that is attached and includes the following:

The site is located in the Winterhalter neighborhood and is designated Low Density Residential (RL). These districts "...should have an overall density of up to 8 dwelling units per net residential acre. The areas are often characterized by single family homes with front yard setbacks and driveways with garage or off-street parking." The residential classifications allow for neighborhood-scale commercial development. While the proposed SD1 zoning doesn't specifically align with the RL designation, it is generally consistent, as the small size of the rezoning doesn't change the overall character of the area and the Master Plan anticipates some limited-scale commercial development on residentially designated sites.

Community Engagement

The applicant has provided a letter summarizing community outreach that is attached to this report. Past outreach includes an April 2, 2025, meeting of the Russell Woods Sullivan Neighborhood Association where the applicant presented and engaged in questions with community members. The letter states that residents expressed support for the project and rezoning and no residents spoke in opposition at the April 2nd meeting. The letter includes additional outreach efforts that have occurred or are planned, and the applicant will provide more details regarding engagement as a part of their presentation for the public hearing.

June 5 CPC Public Hearing

Discussion at the June 5 meeting included the option for Planned Development zoning, the Housing and Revitalization Department's control of site development, the estimated cost or budget for the project (approx.. \$32 million), perimeter site improvements for fencing and sidewalk replacement still being considered, the impact of tariffs, building contractors planned to be used, and the applicant pursuing tax credits as a part of their financing plan. One neighboring resident/business owner from Richton Street spoke during general comment with some concerns about the project's impact on Richton Street and past engagement efforts.

CONCLUSION

Section 50-3-70 of the ZO provides the approval criteria by which all recommendations and decisions on rezonings shall be based. Rezoning approval criteria are provided below in italics with staff analysis.

Rezoning Approval Criteria

- 1) *Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or meets the challenge of some changing condition, trend, or fact.*

Staff Analysis:

The rezoning would help meet the challenge of developing city-owned property that has been vacant since the former elementary school was demolished in 2016. Development of the school site may also support other recent city efforts along the Dexter Avenue corridor one block to the east, including the recent streetscape improvements and the development of other city owned property for housing.

- 2) *Whether the proposed amendment is consistent with the Master Plan and the stated purposes of the zoning code.*

Staff Analysis:

The Planning and Development Department has submitted a letter that states the rezoning is generally consistent and that the Master Plan anticipates some limited-scale commercial development on residentially designated sites.

- 3) *Whether the proposed amendment will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public.*

Staff Analysis:

The rezoning will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public through the development of vacant, underutilized property. Development agreements required between the city and the developer would help ensure the city has control over the development should the rezoning be approved.

- 4) *Whether the city and other service providers will be able to provide adequate public facilities and services to the subject property, while maintaining adequate levels of service to existing development.*

Staff Analysis:

It is expected that the city and other service providers will be able to provide adequate public facilities and services to the site.

- 5) *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.*

Staff Analysis:

No significant adverse impacts on the natural environment are anticipated as the site was formerly developed as a school and is currently vacant property.

- 6) *Whether the proposed amendment will have significant adverse impacts on other property that is in the vicinity of the subject tract.*

Staff Analysis:

The proposed multiple-family buildings have been oriented around the perimeter of the site and would follow the existing block pattern that results in homes facing north and south. The proposed rezoning and investment in housing on this site should have a positive impact on property surrounding the site.

- 7) *The suitability of the subject property for the existing zoning classification and proposed zoning classification.*

Staff Analysis:

The zoning lot (parcel) is approximately 5.4 acres in area, which likely represents one of the larger singular development sites within the city zoned R2. However, the ZO does not permit the development of more than one principal detached residential building per zoning lot in the R2 district, which would be a severe underutilization of the current zoning lot. The property is suitable for the SD1 Special Development District as it would be development primarily with a mixture of small-scale residential buildings within a neighborhood setting and within close proximity to the Dexter Avenue corridor.

- 8) *Whether the proposed rezoning will create an illegal "spot zone."*

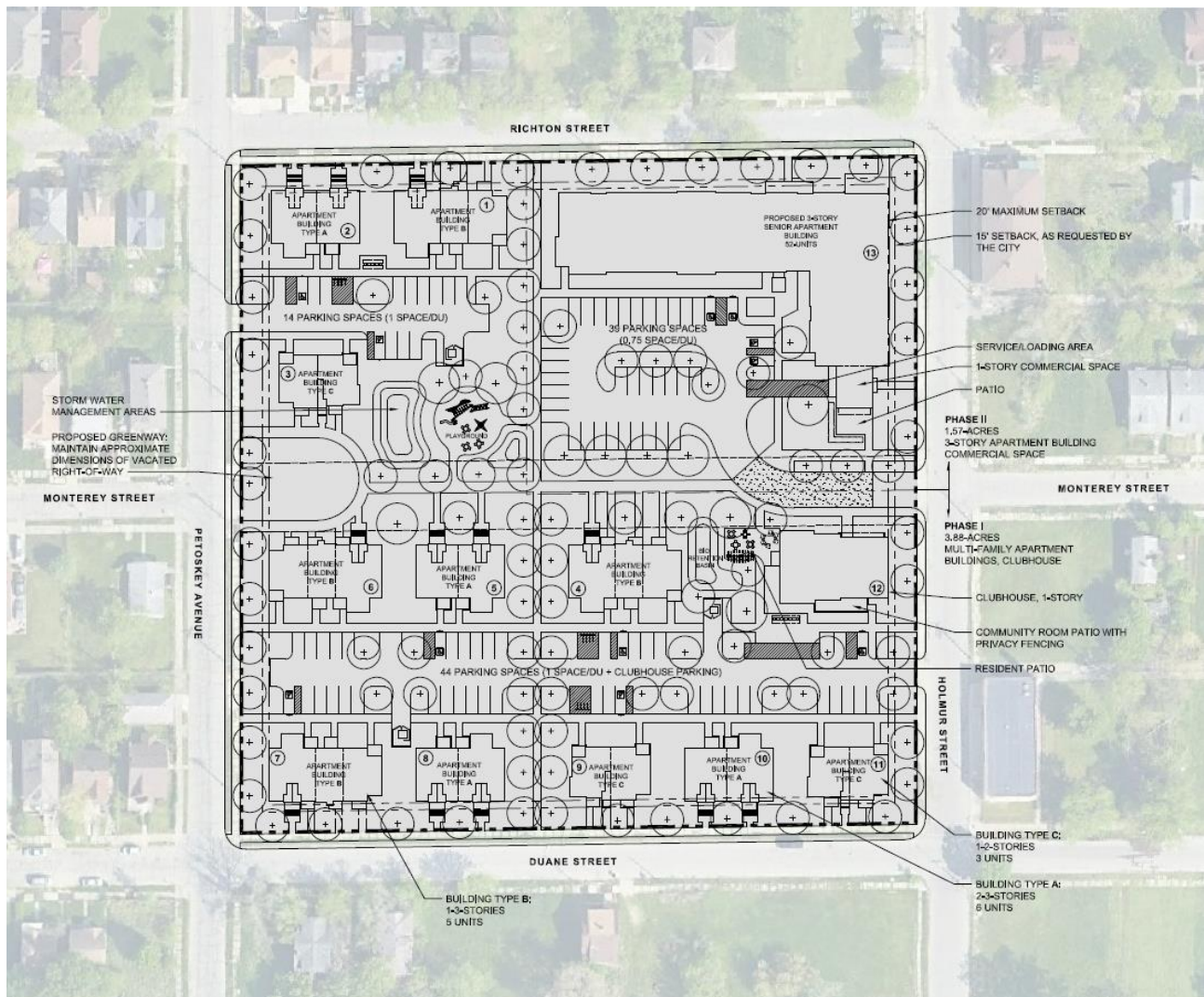
Staff Analysis:

The rezoning would not create an illegal spot zone as the rezoning is generally consistent with the Master Plan and denial of the request would not preclude the property from redevelopment.

Based on the above analysis, CPC staff finds that the proposed rezonings satisfy the approval criteria of Chapter 50, Article III, Division 3, Sec. 50-3-70 of the 2019 Detroit City Code and recommends approval of the rezoning.

Attachments: Conceptual Site Plan 05202025
 Conceptual Building Elevations
 Community Outreach Summary
 Project Overview Sheet
 P&DD Master Plan Interpretation

cc: Alexa Bush, Director, P&DD
 Greg Moots, P&DD
 David Bell, Director, BSEED
 James Foster, BSEED
 Conrad L. Mallett, Corporation Counsel
 Bruce Goldman, Law
 Office of Fred Durhal III, City Council Member, District 7
 Rebecca Labov, Chief Housing Development & Investment Officer, HRD



Conceptual Site Plan 05202025