

Donovan Smith
Chairperson

City of Detroit

Adrian-Keith Bennett
Kenneth R. Daniels
David Esparza, AIA, LEED
Ritchie Harrison
Gwendolyn A. Lewis, MBA
Frederick E. Russell, Jr.
Rachel M. Udabe

Vice Chair/Secretary

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

Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director
Christopher Gulock, AICP
Deputy Director

TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Kimani Jeffrey, City Planner

RE: Request of Patrick Lynch to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-9, District Map No. 8 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, to show a B4 (General Business District) zoning classification where a R3 (Low Density Residential District) zoning classification exists at the property commonly known as 656 and 662 Melbourne Street, generally bounded by Melbourne Street, Oakland Avenue, Mt. Vernon Street and Kingsley Street . The proposed rezoning is being requested in order to allow for the installation of an HVAC system and outdoor lounge expansion to the adjacent Schvitz Health Club (**RECOMMEND APPROVAL**).

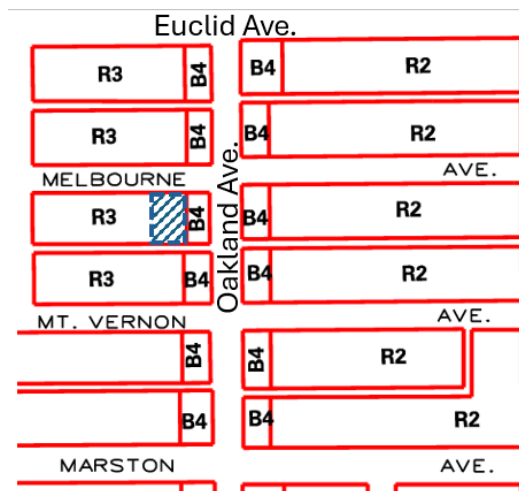
DATE: June 25, 2025

RECOMMENDATION

The staff of the City Planning Commission (CPC) has completed its review of the requested rezoning and based upon the below report recommends **APPROVAL**.

REQUEST

A public hearing was held on May 1st before the CPC regarding the petition of Patrick Lynch to show a B4 (General Business District) zoning classification where an R3 (Low Density Residential District) zoning classification exists at the property commonly known as 656 and 662 Melbourne Street, generally bounded by Melbourne Street, Oakland Avenue, Mt. Vernon Street and Kingsley Street (shown in map below).



Rezoning from R3 to B4



Historical and recent photos

BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

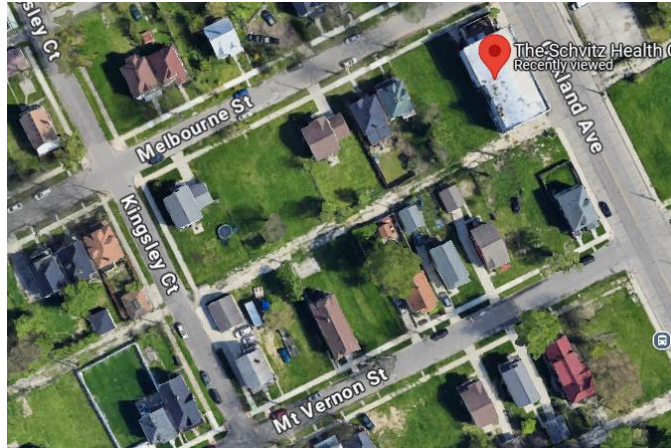
Patrick Lynch presently operates the Schvitz Health Club in the North End neighborhood; the ownership of the subject building has coined this site as the only historic bathhouse in Detroit. The Schvitz Health Club (Yiddish for sweat) was established in 1930 as the Oakland Bath House and has a very unique history. In its past it was known for being a frequent gathering place for the notorious Purple Gang and later was used for swinger parties. It has also been known as a place of cleansing and restoration throughout its history for Russian Jews. The current ownership is bringing this historic building back to its origins as a place for restoration as a sauna and bath house. The proposed rezoning is being requested in order to allow for the installation of an HVAC system and outdoor lounge expansion to the adjacent Schvitz Health Club at 8295 Oakland Ave.



Rendering of proposed expansion

The subject parcels being petitioned for rezoning are presently vacant and located just west of the Schvitz building. The parcels proposed to be rezoned are currently R3, and the petition is to rezone them to B4 in order to allow the Schvitz to install an outdoor lounge area and HVAC system. The rezoning of these parcels would essentially expand the B4 zoning of the Schvitz further into

Melbourne Street. Mr. Lynch indicates his team recently purchased the single-family house directly west of the proposed expansion and plans to rent the property for residential use.



Aerial view

PUBLIC HEARING RESULTS

On May 1st, the City Planning Commission held a public hearing for the subject proposal. No members of the public spoke at the hearing. However, many questions were raised by the Commission and were answered satisfactorily at the hearing and, leaving no outstanding questions or concerns.

Letter of opposition

Subsequent to the meeting, CPC staff received a letter from a nearby homeowner that lives on Mt. Vernon Street (see attached letter). The homeowner expresses objections to the proposal based on claims that the business is exclusive and does not incorporate people from the neighborhood.

The letter also speaks about parking issues, such as patrons of the business parking too close to the intersection which interferes with visibility of oncoming traffic. Lastly, the same homeowner expressed an issue with the potential sound of the proposed HVAC system and noise concerns that may arise from the patrons of the proposed new outdoor lounge expansion.

Schvitz Response letter

In response to the letter of opposition from the neighbor, the Schvitz ownership provided the attached letter that asserts the following:

- The intention is to create a quiet, lounge-like environment - one that addresses and remediates concerns about potential noise pollution from large HVAC units.
- We are committed to using the highest level of acoustic treatment possible to mitigate sound. This includes, but is not limited to, acoustical duct silencers and exterior acoustic paneling on the units.
- The Schvitz currently features a walled-in outdoor patio that has been used by patrons for as long as the establishment has existed. No noise complaints from anyone in the neighborhood.
- We close at 10 p.m. and do not operate as a “late-night” venue.

- We are willing to pursue parking ordinances for the surrounding public streets to address the blind spot issue raised by the neighbor.
- The Schvitz is a welcoming and inclusive space¹ for people of all races, ethnicities, and genders. It is not a private club, and the majority of our guests are Detroit residents. While the reputation built under prior ownership may have been warranted, the current iteration of the bathhouse has become a nationally recognized story of transformation - from a dilapidated business once associated with illicit activity into a vibrant center of community and culture that reflects the spirit and diversity of Detroit.
- We invite anyone from the neighborhood to come and investigate these claims for themselves free of charge, and we are committed to open discussion and compromise to achieve our shared goals of a more vibrant North End neighborhood.

Attempts at further dialogue

CPC staff corresponded with the opposing property owner and attempted to have further dialogue regarding their stated concerns. Multiple attempts were made to either facilitate a meeting with the developer or discuss the proposed solutions with staff. All of these attempts were rejected for unknown reasons. Therefore, CPC staff continued to work with the petitioner to get responses to the concerns, which are presented above.

ANALYSIS

Recommendations and decisions on a zoning map amendment shall be based on consideration of Sec. 50-3-70. After review of the project with the City staff, it has been determined that the project is consistent with the subject criteria:

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

The proposed amendment will meet a changing condition. The subject site has operated as a bathhouse for many years. The proposed HVAC system is needed in order to fully rehab the entire building and make it functional. The proposed outdoor lounge is an expansion, but is in alignment with what has already existed, as there is currently an outdoor lounge at the building, albeit not as large.

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

The subject rezoning site is located within the Middle Woodward area of Neighborhood Cluster 4 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies (MP). The Future Land Use map for this area shows Neighborhood Commercial (CN). The Planning and Development Department has submitted a letter stating that the proposal is generally consistent with the Master Plan.

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

[PBS Start-up - The Schvitz Detroit](#)

[Wall Street Journal - How This 1930s Detroit Bathhouse Went from Gangster Den to Neighborhood Hotspot](#)

The issues that the nearby neighbor has raised are valid concerns. However, cpc staff was not able to facilitate a discussion, because the neighbor is not willing to meet with the developer or staff. For that reason staff has requested the developer to respond by providing more detailed information. The developer has made the case that the proposed activities will be in sync with what currently exists. The times of operations, along with the mitigation strategies, in addition to existing activities, indicate that this proposal should not negatively impact the surrounding area.

As it relates to the parking issues, CPC staff has spoken to the Schvitz owner to encourage patrons via signage and other means to abide by parking ordinances. If this effort is not successful, then city staff will seek parking enforcement to ticket violators in order to encourage change in behavior.

As it relates to potential noise from the HVAC system or patrons, the petitioner has stated that they will provide acoustical duct silencers. These systems are designed to reduce mechanical noise and airflow noise. These systems are effective for quieting noise from generators or similar units.

Exterior acoustic paneling is typically used to absorb or block airborne sound and is useful in controlling sound proliferation in open spaces. When panels are height that can block the line of sound paths, these systems can be effective when placed around or between the noise source and areas that are sensitive

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.

The proposed activities will not have a negative impact on public facilities since the primary building currently exists. The additions should not have a major impact on public facilities.

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.

The rezoning is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on the natural environment.

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

The proposed amendment is not anticipated to have adverse impacts on other property in the vicinity based on the history of the operator, plus mitigation efforts that will be implemented as provided in above responses.

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

Staff believes that the subject property is suitable for the proposed zoning classification. The Master Plan foresaw the subject parcels transitioning to be utilized for commercial activity. The owner has also purchased the most immediate neighboring home in order to ensure that there will be a buffer provided between the Schvitz and residential neighbors. The additional acoustic measures should make the site suitable for the new zoning classification and activities and bring it into conformance with the MP.

8) *Whether the proposed rezoning will create an illegal “spot zone.”*

The proposed rezoning will **not** create an illegal spot zone because it extends the existing B4 zoning classification that the Schvitz currently lies on and has been deemed consistent with the Master Plan.

CONCLUSIONS

CPC staff is pleased to see the preservation and revitalization of this former fixture in the community in a more family-friendly oriented manner. While one objection from the community has been presented, the petitioner has worked successfully with the surrounding community to garner understanding and support for the proposal. They have spoken to neighbors along Melbourne Street to solicit feedback and have also worked with the Nazarene Missionary Baptist Church (located northeast of the Schvitz at Melbourne and Oakland Avenues) for support and to partner on a shared parking arrangement for the Schvitz. The petitioner has also been responsive to the concerns of the nearby residents and evidences the desire to work with the community to ensure the mutual success of this expanded historical component of the neighborhood. Having satisfied the approval criteria, staff finds no reason to object to the proposed rezoning.

Attachments: Letters

cc: Alexa Bush, Director, P&DD
Karen Gage,
Greg Moots, P&DD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
James Foster, BSEED
Conrad Mallett, Corporation Counsel
Bruce Goldman, Law Department
Daniel Arking, Law Department