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TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Kimani Jeffrey, City Planner

RE: Request of W-Detroit Property, LLC for Site Plan Review for development proposal on land zoned Special Development District, Riverfront Mixed Use (SD4) property commonly referred to as 240 Meldrum Street (aka 6000 E. Jefferson) for the WNBA Practice Facility to be situated upon approximately 7.2 acres of the former Uniroyal site (**REQUESTING SAME DAY ACTION-RECOMMEND APPROVAL**)

DATE: November 4, 2025



WNBA Practice Facility rendering

BACKGROUND

The subject site has a long history of industry. The site lies just west of the MacArthur Bridge leading to Belle Isle. In the 1800's, numerous heavy industrial facilities operated at the site, including the production of cast iron stoves and later bicycle tires. Uniroyal Tire produced 60,000 tires on a daily basis in the 1940's, giving the site its moniker to this day. The entire

Uniroyal site contains about 42 acres of land. In the mid to late 1990's, the Uniroyal site and most of the near east riverfront was rezoned from intensive industrial zoning to SD4 to foster mixed-use development along the river.



Zoning Map of the subject parcel and surrounding area

PROPOSAL

According to Sec. 50-11-306 of the Zoning Ordinance, in the SD4 zoning classification, City Council shall have sole authority to take final action on all petitions involving sites of three or more acres.

Before the City Planning Commission (CPC) is the request for site plan review and approval of the proposal of the W-Detroit Property, LLC on behalf of the WNBA to establish the WNBA Practice Facility at 240 Meldrum Street (aka 6000 E. Jefferson). The Practice Facility would be developed on 7.42 acres of the Uniroyal Site. This area has already received extensive environmental remediation. Development on the remaining 35 acres will be presented to the CPC and City Council at a later date, when those details are finalized.

The developer seeks to revitalize a long-blighted site by creating a hub for women's professional basketball (and youth sports in future). The site was chosen for its size and potential to support both a WNBA facility and a Youth Development Academy in a future phase—with space for training, growth, and regional tournaments. The program also plans to welcome families and the public with accessibility and connection to the riverwalk and open space. The official uses of the space according to the Zoning Ordinance will be classified as *“office space”* and an *“indoor commercial recreation health club.”*

The 74,315 gross square foot Practice Facility will feature, two full-size basketball courts, locker rooms and recovery spaces, strength and conditioning areas, media and content production space,

administrative offices, meeting rooms, conference rooms and 192 secured and screened parking spaces. The estimated opening is 2029.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

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

North: SD4; Multi Family & Commercial development

South: SD4 Detroit Riverwalk

East: SD4 Gabriel Richard Park

West: SD4 vacant land and PR Mt. Elliot Park

Current Zoning

SD4

Sec. 50-11-281. Description; purpose.

(a) The SD4 Special Development District, Riverfront Mixed Use is intended for areas indicated in the Master Plan as appropriate for high intensity residential and commercial mixed-use development due to regional significance and unique locational attributes and amenities, such as the riverfront. While recognizing that, although it may be desirable to retain in such areas a mix of existing uses, such as offices, lofts, and certain industrial establishments, due to the local ambience it provides, increased industrialization of such areas by very intense and abrasive land uses is considered inappropriate.

(b) SD4 regulations are intended to promote the public health, safety and general welfare, to encourage the use of the land in accordance with its character and adaptability, to avoid the overcrowding of population, to control congestion of the public roads and streets, to reduce hazards to life and property, to facilitate land use and development, and to encourage innovative, high intensity developments while simultaneously protecting those attributes and amenities which make such areas unique. These objectives shall be accomplished by a system of flexible regulations, performance requirements, and review procedures.

Master Plan

The future general land use for this site is designated as Mixed Residential Commercial and is located in Cluster 4 of the Near East Riverfront area of the Master Plan. Mixed Residential Commercial consists predominantly of medium-to-high density housing developed compatibly with commercial and/or institutional uses. This classification is well suited to areas proximal to existing centers of major commercial activity, major thoroughfares, transportation nodes, or gateways into the city.

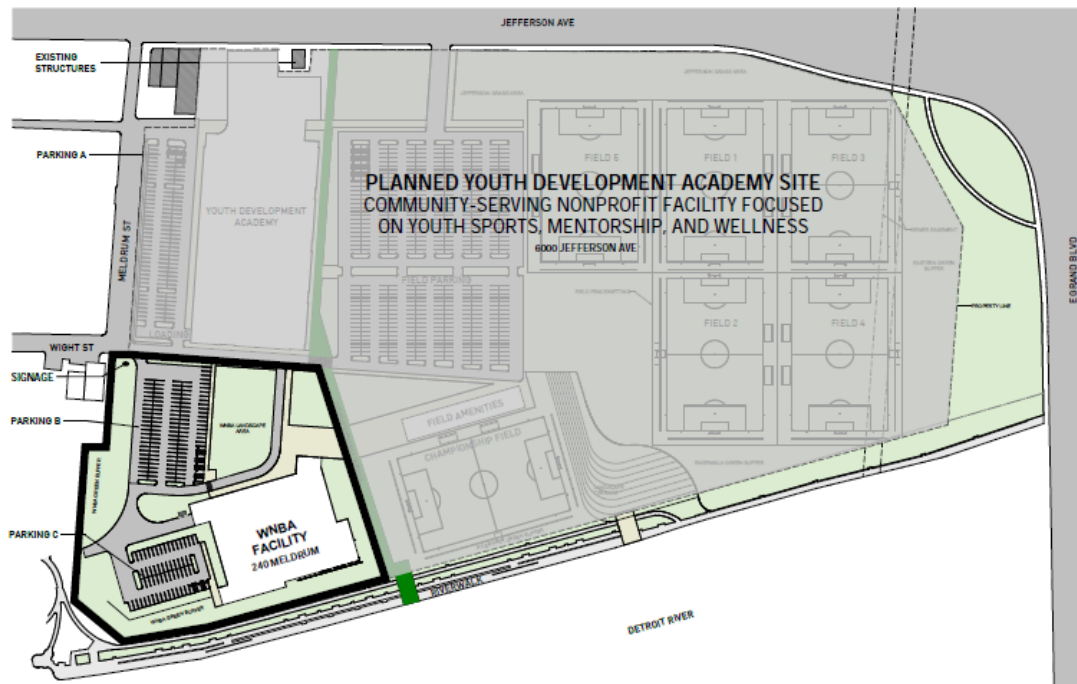


Map of Master Plan of Policies

Propoosed Site Plan and Rendering

Below are images of the proposed site plan and renderings.





Site plan

Sec. 50-11-310. Site Plan Approval Standards.

In addition to the site plan approval criteria specified in Section 50-3-96 of this Zoning Ordinance, the following provisions shall apply for projects in SD4:

(1) That the proposed development reflects the applicable policies stated in the Master Plan, both text and maps, as applied to the geographic area in question;

The development is generally consistent with the mixed residential commercial designation of the Master Plan. The development will be used as “office space” and an “indoor commercial recreation health club” that will serve the WNBA team, as well as for some community use. The outdoor green areas will function as recreational spaces that are accessible to the public.

(2) That the natural features of the landscape, particularly views of the Detroit River, are retained where they enhance the development of the site, or where they furnish a barrier or buffer between the project and adjoining properties, or where they assist in preserving the general safety, health, and appearance of the area or district. Removal of existing trees should be minimized;

The development has worked to take into account the potential of a future greenway to the east of the site and also the existing riverwalk. The project seeks to allow integration and access to and from the future greenway and riverwalk seamlessly. The public will have access to traverse the site which will benefit the accessibility of the river. This site has been well known for its contamination. The remediation efforts that are bringing the land back to productive use for the user and community at large will be an asset for the city as a whole. No major natural features of the site are expected to be negatively impacted and the natural landscape and views are largely kept intact and minimally impacted by the low density building height of the proposed

practice facility building elevation at approximately 45 feet. The entire southern facing portion of the building is glass panel, taking advantage of views of the river front.

(3) That buildings are designed to create a pedestrian-friendly setting that relates a building's active uses to the street;

For the proposed building, the nearest street is Meldrum, which is not a particularly active street. As a result, CPC staff encouraged the design team to place emphasis on how the building frontage would interact with the riverwalk. Particularly, staff inquired if the building would be screened off or open. In working with the developer, they designed a landscape for the building frontage that creates a space where they envision pedestrians of the riverwalk being able to recreate in the green space of their "front yard". The development also creates other connections for interactions and future activities.

(4) That new buildings are constructed to the lot line with no setback, except for a setback not to exceed ten feet from the lot line for a permitted outdoor seating area only;

(5) That new buildings establish a uniform street wall by establishing a building base a minimum of two stories or 20 feet in height; that new buildings taller than three stories establish a uniform street wall or building base (a podium) not to exceed 40 feet; and that the taller section of the building should be on top of the podium and set back a minimum of ten feet horizontal distance from the parapet of the main façade facing a street;

Due to the uniqueness and orientation of this site, and the site does not front a major street, but instead is oriented towards the riverwalk, staff recommend that the setback and street wall requirements not be enforced in this instance and that the setbacks and general dimensional standards in the attached plans be permitted.

(6) That to the fullest extent possible, the hours of operation shall not create any adverse effect upon owners or occupants of adjacent and surrounding properties. This subsection shall not be construed or interpreted to define the operating hours of businesses established prior to the property's reclassification to a SD4 District as either nonconforming, or as creating an adverse effect upon the owners and occupants of adjacent and surrounding properties; and

Hours of operation are not expected to have any adverse impacts on surrounding properties and will generally be business hours per activities that have been outlined.

(7) That the proposed landscaping and other site amenities are appropriate to the development and to the adjoining and surrounding properties

Proposed landscaping plans and amenities have been provided in the package and are appropriate for this site and surrounding area. Staff will continue working with developer regarding the final landscaping plan.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

The developer indicates it has received in general support from the City and surrounding community. The following is a list of some of the community groups that the developer has engaged regarding this project:

Ford Motor Company
General Motors
Ally Bank
Huntington Bank
Remington Group
Henry Ford Health
Rossetti
Summit Academy North
Detroit Charters – MAPSA
Jalen Rose Leadership Academy
Home School Community
Youth Sport Organizations
Church of the Messiah
Rivertown Detroit Association
East Village Association
West Village Association
Franklin Wright Settlements

Eastside Community Network
Lofts @ Rivertown
Cred Café
Ivy Kitchen
Brix Wine
Randolph
Law Group
Farrow Group, Inc.
YMCA Detroit
SAY Detroit
Merit Park
DCFC Youth Soccer
DPSCD
Detroit Charters Engage Detroit
Amateur Athletic Union
Boys and Girls Club of SE Michigan
Detroit PAL

RECCOMENDATION

Based on the analysis provided in the report and review of the SD4 criteria, outlined above, the CPC staff is recommending approval of the general site plan and elevations for this proposal. However, CPC staff would like to continue working with the developer to solidify remaining details of the site plan in consultation with other City departments, such as the Planning and Development Department (PDD), Department of Public Works (DPW), General Services Department (GSD), and other agencies as necessary before signing off on final site plans, elevations, signage and other plans for this site. In conclusion, CPC staff recommends **APPROVAL** with that condition that the final site plans, elevations, lighting, landscaping, and signage plans be submitted by the developer to the staff of the CPC for review and approval prior to making application for applicable permits.

Attachment:

cc: Alexa Bush, Director, PDD
Greg Moots, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
Jayda Philson, BSEED
James Foster, BSEED
Hasson Beydoun, Group Executive Economic Development
Brandon Lockhart, JET
Conrad Mallett, Corporation Counsel
Bruce Goldman, Law Department
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