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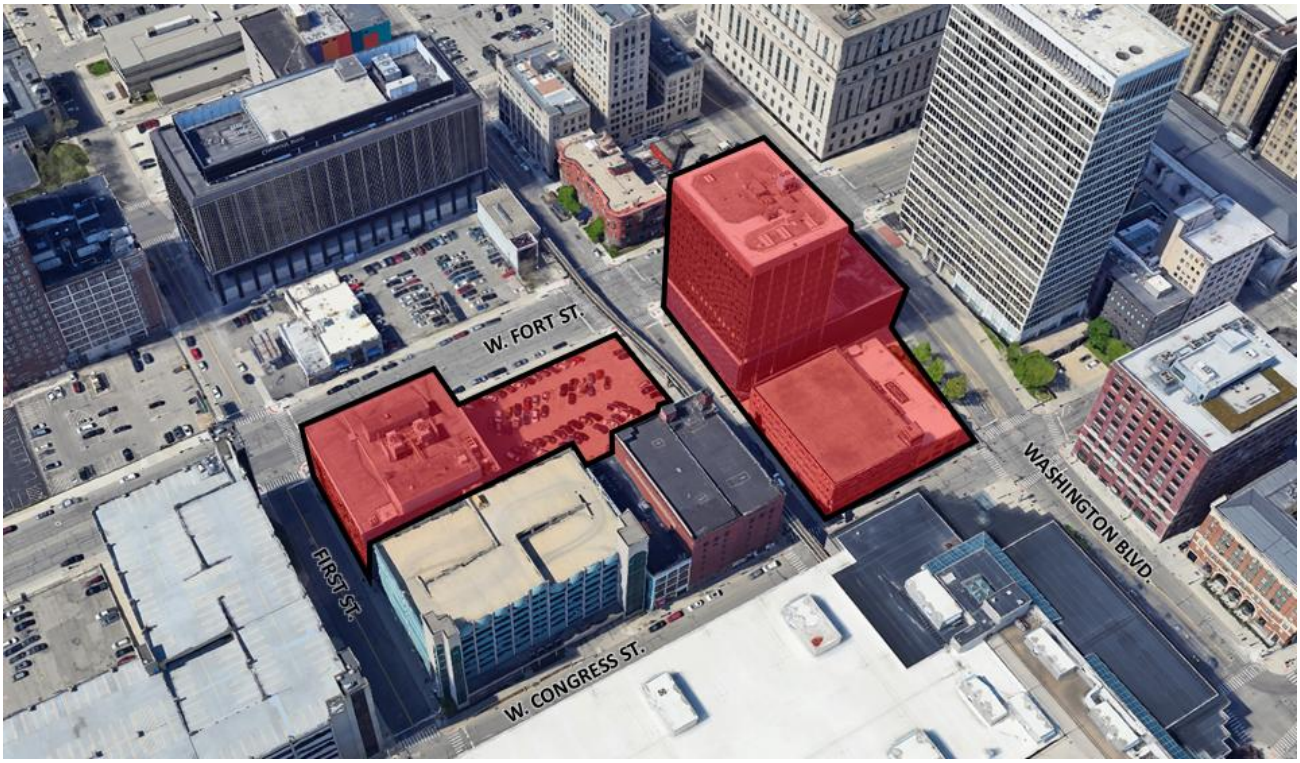
TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Jamie Murphy, City Planner

RE: **Request of Congress Associates, LLC to show a B5 (Major Business District) zoning classification where a PCA (Public Center Adjacent District) zoning classification is currently shown on eight parcels bounded by Washington Boulevard, West Fort Street, First Street, and West Congress Street.**

DATE: November 13, 2026

On November 19, 2026, the City Planning Commission (CPC) will hold a public hearing on the request from Congress Associates, LLC to amend Article XVII, Section 50-17-2, District Map No. 1 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Chapter 50, Zoning, by showing a B5 zoning district where a PCA zoning district is currently shown on eight parcels commonly known as 300, 304, 328 W. Congress Street, 333, 337, 421, 455 W. Fort Street, and 601 Washington Boulevard. Below is an aerial view and on the next page is the current zoning map with subject area highlighted.



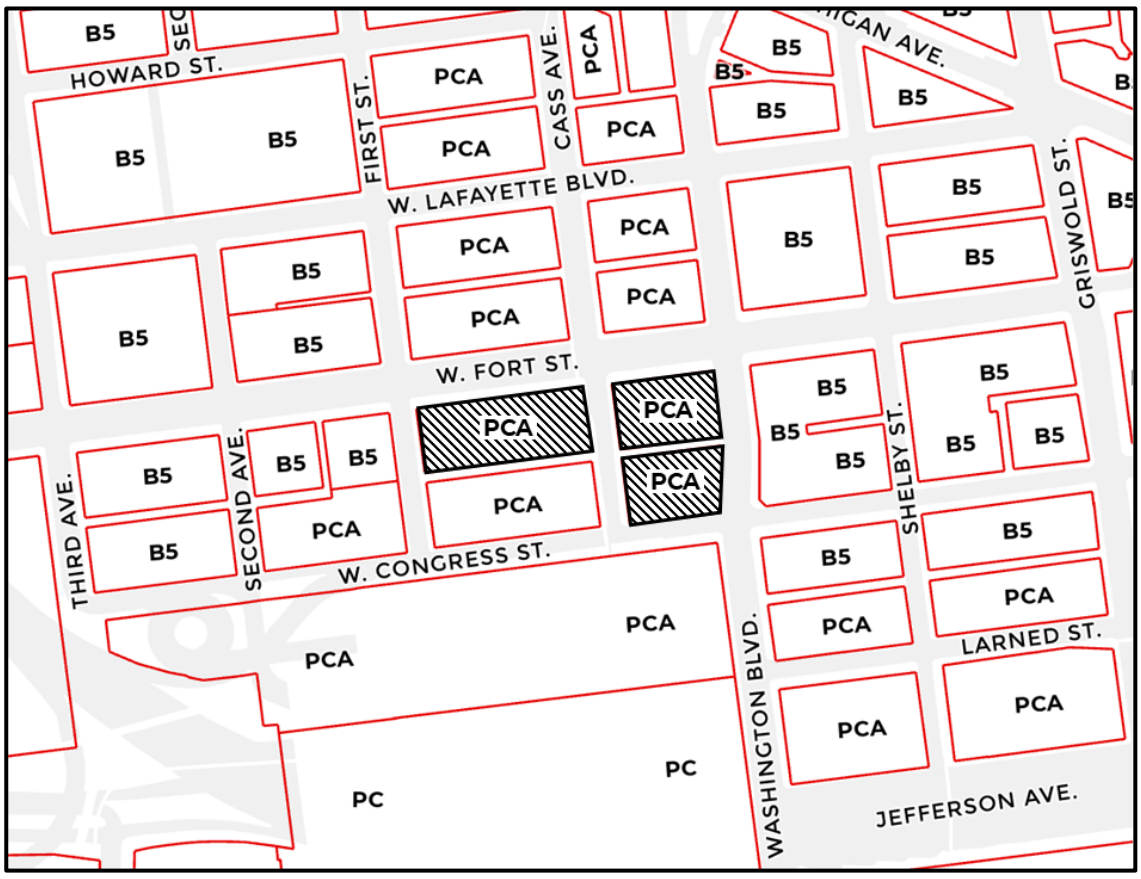
Aerial view of proposed rezoning

BACKGROUND AND PROPOSAL

The petitioner is proposing to redevelop the site with a new hotel and parking structure. The vision is to meet the demand for additional downtown hotel space, especially in close proximity to Huntington Place. The developer is presently finishing the JW Marriott Detroit Water Square 25-story luxury waterfront hotel located on the former Joe Louis Arena site along the Detroit River just west of Huntington Place. The proposed hotel would be strategically located at the northeast corner of Huntington Place.

The proposed uses are allowed in both the existing and proposed zoning districts. The rezoning has been requested to provide a more predictable site plan review process than the Special District Review process which includes the CPC and City Council. The petitioner suggests that an extended and uncertain timeline for design review could disturb financing for the project.

The site is located within the downtown area in Council District 6 and measures approximately 2.5 acres (split into two sites by Cass Avenue). Four buildings currently occupy the site and are all proposed to be demolished. Each building is described in more detail below. None of the properties are located in a local historic district, but the Financial District historic district is located directly to the east across Washington Boulevard.



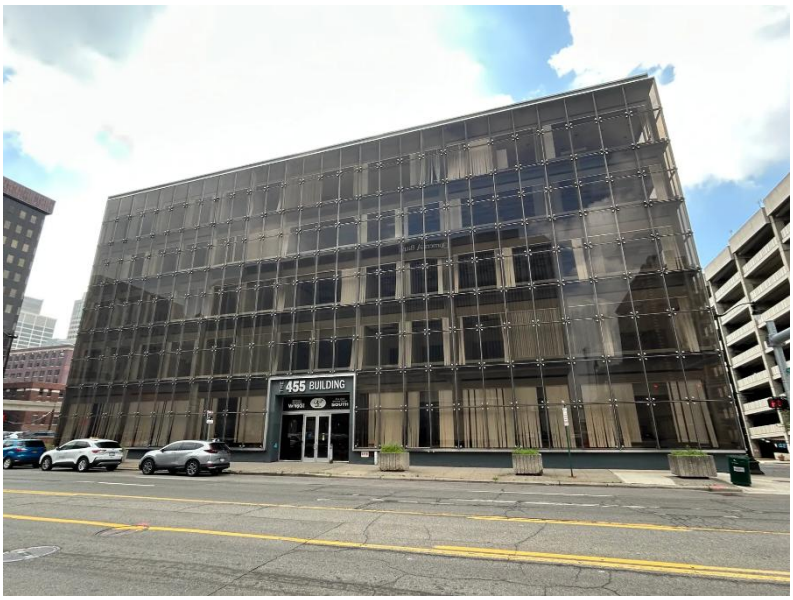
Zoning Map of proposed rezoning



328 West Congress Street
- Five story parking garage
- Currently operating as "Downtown Garage"
- Built in approximately 1927

601 Washington Blvd.
- Three story office building
- Currently occupied by Health Management Systems of America (HMSA)
- Built in 1974





455 West Fort Street

- Five story office building
- Currently vacant
- Originally built 1910-1913
- Major renovation in 1971 when the original masonry façade was removed and replaced by glass
- Significant as the first building to use silicone sealant in a four-sided structurally glazed application (see attached article for additional information).

333 West Fort Street – Fort Washington Plaza

- Sixteen story office building with integrated parking structure
- Ground floor commercial space
- Currently occupied by deli on first floor and offices on upper floors
- Built in 1969



PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

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

North: PCA – Gas Station, Multiple-Tenant Building (bar, hookah lounge, offices), Parking Lots, People Mover Station, Private Club

East: B5 – Office Building

South: PC (Public Center)/PCA – Huntington Place Convention Center, Parking Garage, Storage/Warehouse, Vacant Bar/Restaurant

West: B5 and PCA – Commercial buildings and Parking Garage

Zoning History of the property

The properties were originally zoned BC (Central Business) in 1940. When the zoning ordinance was updated in 1968, the BC district was converted to B5. In 1969, Ordinance No. 419-G rezoned the properties to PCA along with several other blocks along Cass Avenue.

Zoning Categories

Below is a summary of the two subject zoning categories. The primary difference between PCA and B5 is that Special District Review is required in the PCA but not in the B5. This is to ensure that developments complement the surrounding Public Center and conform to the City's planning objectives and policies. The B5 district also permits 144 uses while the PCA permits just 80 under the premise that fewer uses are appropriate for the areas near the heart of downtown. The Petitioner seeks to be unencumbered by the provisions of the PCA zoning District.

PCA – Public Center Adjacent District (existing)

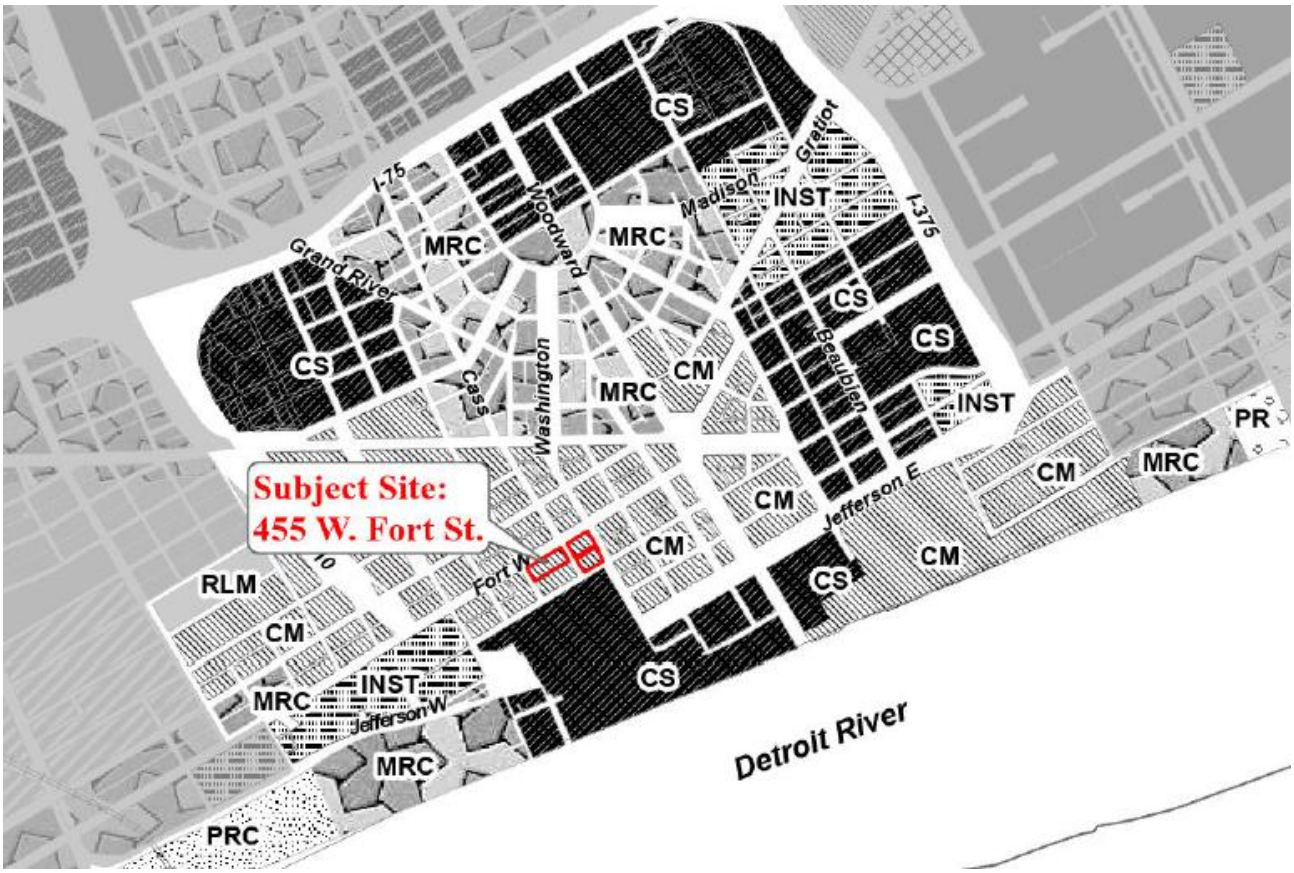
This district includes property in close proximity to the Public Center District, and the controls specified in this division are designed to prevent any uses or structures within the district from having a deleterious effect upon the public center. Uses in this district shall include, to the maximum extent possible, ground-floor commercial space or other space oriented to pedestrian traffic, to enhance the public streetscape and street-level activity.

B5 – Major Business District (proposed)

This district is designed to provide adequate regulations within the Central Business District, the New Center Area, and may be successfully utilized in other regionally oriented shopping and office areas.

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 "Major Commercial" for the subject property. The Planning and Development Department (PDD) has reviewed this proposed rezoning and determined that it is generally consistent with the Master Plan and would not change the overall character of the area. The full report is attached for reference.



Community Outreach
The petitioner has reached out to several neighboring properties and has submitted letters of support from Huntington Place and Visit Detroit which are attached for reference.

Staff will provide a recommendation incorporating the results of the public hearing at a future meeting.

Attachment: Public Hearing Notice
Application
PDD Master Plan Interpretation
Support letters from Huntington Place and Visit Detroit
455 W. Fort St. article

cc: Dara O'Byrne, Deputy Director, PDD
Russell Baltimore, PDD
Greg Moots, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
James Foster, BSEED
Conrad Mallett, Corporation Counsel
Daniel Arking, Law Department