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Detroit Historic Commission

Planning and Development Department

Coleman A Young Municipal Center

2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 808

Detroit, MI 48226

March 9, 2021

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing as a concerned resident of Corktown about the proposed demolition of the historic building at 1551 Church Street for the construction of a parking deck. The current proposal neglects the historic nature of this building and how it is embedded in the neighborhood fabric.

This late 19th Century triple brick building is one of the few remaining undeveloped historic buildings in the neighborhood. The current use as a storage facility means that its potential has been covered for the purpose of function. These buildings are irreplaceable. Both the dating of the building and the characterization of its materials in the current application are questionable at best.

I appreciate the efforts of the developer to minimize traffic that will utilize the 10th Street entrance to the proposed parking structure. I also appreciate their concern for sight lines and views in proposing a low-rise garage. That said, I do not support the current proposal to build between 1501-1567 Church. I would support a taller garage at the corner of Church and Trumbull that would not pull parking into the neighborhood. There are no residences on that section of Church Street, one on Trumbull and only a few on Leverette.

A modified plan could incorporate the development of this historic building for commercial and/or residential use. Though the upfront costs of restoration can be significantly higher than new construction, the unique character of this historic building can serve as a bridge between the historic neighborhood and the new developments on Michigan Avenue and Church Street. A unique asset for any developer.

The demolition of this building would be a significant loss to the neighborhood both in its history and in its potential.

The extensive proposals and densification of the neighborhood are important developments for Corktown and Detroit, but this development should not come at the cost of the historic structures that distinguish this neighborhood and define its characters. Instead we should encourage developments that recognize this aspect of the neighborhood and the potential of underutilized buildings such as the one at 1551 Church rather than default to the easy path of demolition.

Sincerely,

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