

STAFF REPORT: 10-08-25 REGULAR MEETING

PREPARED BY: G. LANDSBERG

APPLICATION NUMBER: HDC2025-00542

ADDRESSES/HISTORIC DISTRICTS: PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY/SIDEWALKS ADJACENT TO 2934 RUSSELL – EASTERN MARKET HD, 600 WOODWARD AVE – VINTON BUILDING HD AND FINANCIAL DISTRICT HD, 1501 WASHINGTON BLVD – GRAND CIRCUS PARK HD, 1450 WASHINGTON BLVD – WASHINGTON BOULEVARD HD, 1435 RANDOLPH – MADISON-HARMONIE HD, AND 1883 WOODWARD (GRAND CIRCUS PARK) – GRAND CIRCUS PARK HD

APPLICANT: ELISE FIELDS/DOWNTOWN DETROIT PARTNERSHIP (DDP)

PROPERTY OWNER: CITY OF DETROIT

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 09-05-2025

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISITS: 09-24-2025

SCOPE: INSTALL INFORMATION KIOSKS IN PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY/PARKS



Example view of an installed kiosk at Cadillac Square near Campus Martius (this location happens to be just outside of a historic district, though surrounding conditions are typical to many proposed installations). Staff photo, September 24, 2025).

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The subject kiosks are proposed to be installed at six (6) locations within several historic districts, as described above. Existing conditions for each installation area are described in the photographs below. With the possible exception of the sixth kiosk proposed for location in Grand Circus Park proper, the proposed installation locations are all positioned on public sidewalks among a dense, pedestrian-oriented commercial character amidst busy streetscapes.



Location #1 at 2934 Russell in the Eastern Market HD (wide view to the north). Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #1 at 2934 Russell (detail view showing exact location proposed (arrow/circle). View to the southeast. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #2 at 600 Woodward in the Vinton Building and Financial District HD (wide view to the northeast). The Vinton Building is the corner structure. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #2 at 600 Woodward (detail view showing exact location proposed (arrow/circle). View to the west. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #3 at 1501 Washington Blvd at Park Avenue in the Grand Circus Park HD (wide view). View to the west. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #3 at 1501 Washington Blvd in the Grand Circus Park HD (detail view showing exact location (arrow/circle). View to the east. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #4 at 1450 Washington Blvd at Clifford in the Washington Boulevard HD (wide view). Staff photo, September 24, 2025..



Location #4 at 1450 Washington Blvd in the Washington Boulevard (detail view showing exact location (red arrow). Staff photo, September 24, 2025..



Location #5 at 1883 Woodward (i.e., northwest limits of Grand Circus Park, at West Adams) in the Grand Circus Park HD (wide view). Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #5 at 1883 Woodward (i.e., Grand Circus Park) in the Grand Circus Park HD (detail view showing exact location (arrow/circle), according to project documents. DDP staff has clarified that the location will be revised to be within pavement of the redesigned Grand Circus Park (as previously approved by the Commission). Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #6 at 1435 Randolph in the Madison-Harmonie HD (wide view to the northwest). Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Location #6 at 1435 Randolph in the Madison-Harmonie HD (detail view showing exact location (arrow/circle). View to the southeast. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.

PROPOSAL

The applicant proposes to install “Ike” Smart City wayfinding/informational kiosks in multiple historic district locations. All locations are in the public right-of-way and/or on the edges of city parks or other city properties. These locations are a small subset of a much larger city-wide installation of such kiosks in commercial districts, a project led by the Downtown Detroit Partnership, or DDP.



STAFF OBSERVATIONS

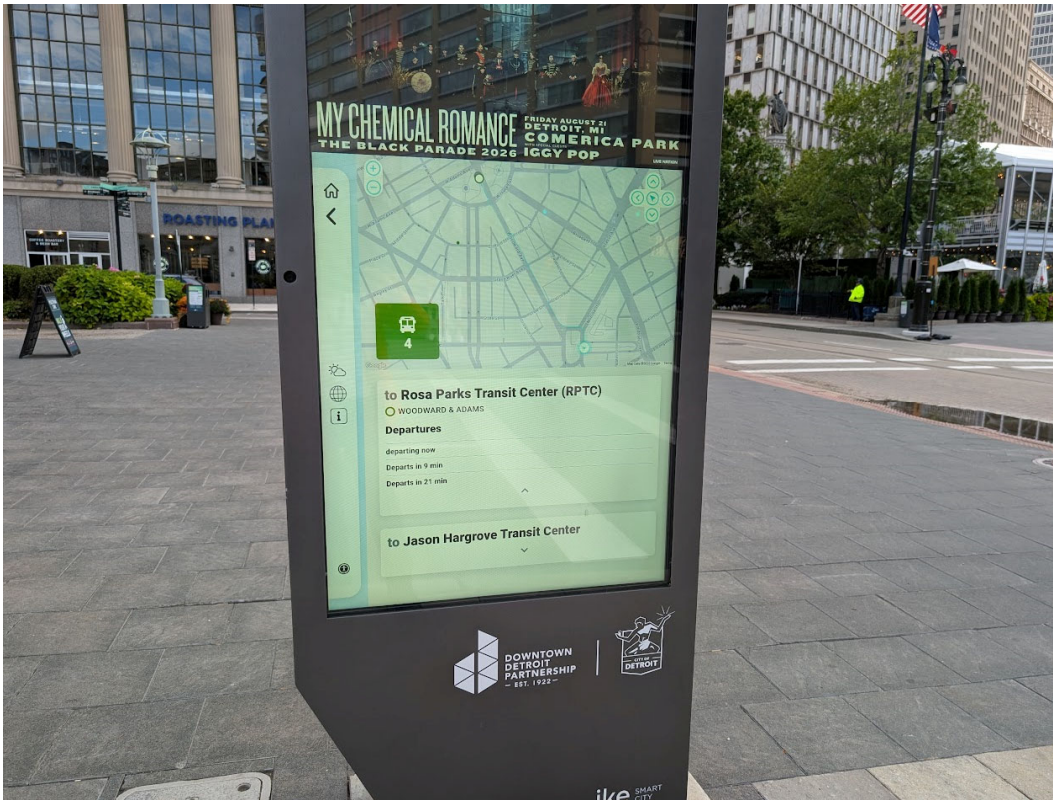
- Per the submitted materials, the applicant describes a community-driven process which led to the proposed design. During period of design development for the kiosks, DDP led a community vision for design of downtown's static wayfinding, separately approved by the Commission in 2023. The final design for the kiosks "brought in elements that respected the historic elements of Detroit's building landscape. These design elements have been carried over into the digital kiosk through simple vinyl graphics." The DDP additionally states that the kiosks "enhance public spaces by promoting awareness of community resources and nearby businesses and events and by encouraging pedestrian activity."
- The kiosks appear to be sensitively located in vicinities that are commercial in nature, or adjacent thereto. The proposed locations are at active and varied commercial streetscapes. There are no kiosks located in traditionally residential areas or districts.
- In researching this report, staff visited the locations of several wayfinding kiosks, assessed their integration into the landscape, and reviewed the content and usability of the devices. See photos and captions below.
- Overall, staff assesses that the kiosks, both existing and proposed, are integrated into busy commercial streetscapes where they will not detract from historic character. Though they serve as advertising devices, they also appear to provide a legitimate public and community service by providing information (in multiple languages) to those Detroiters without access to a smartphone, including locations of public services, shelters, and how to find assistance.



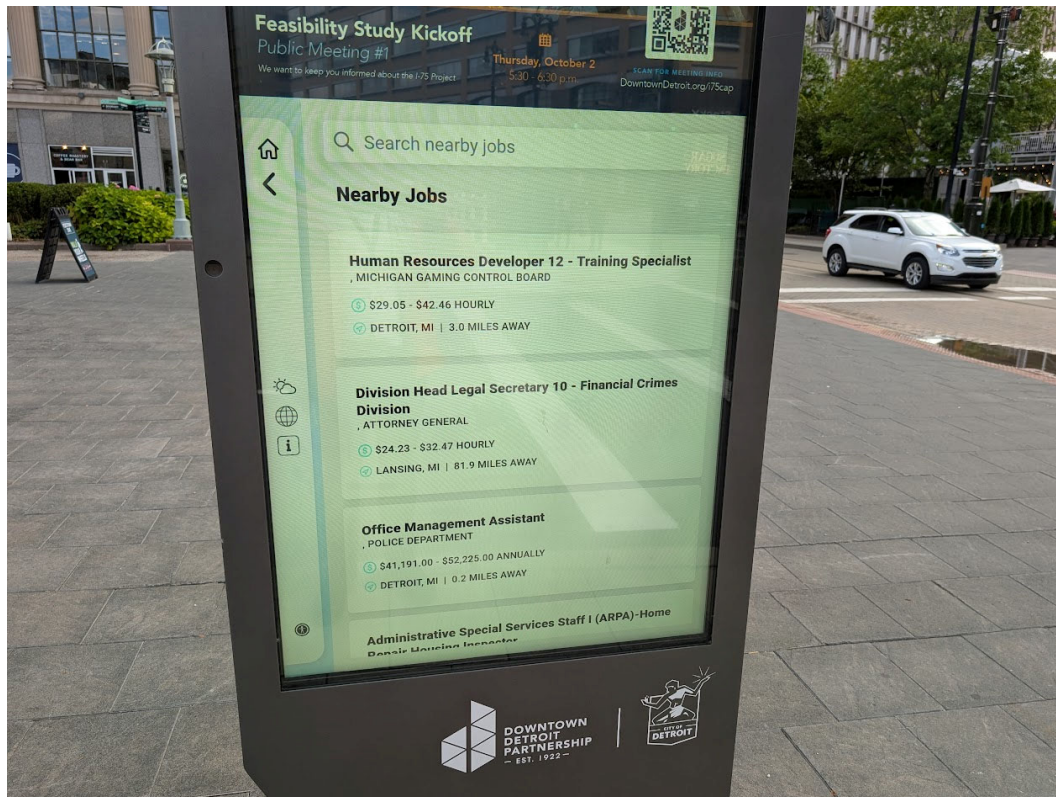
Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, looking south towards the adjacent historic district. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



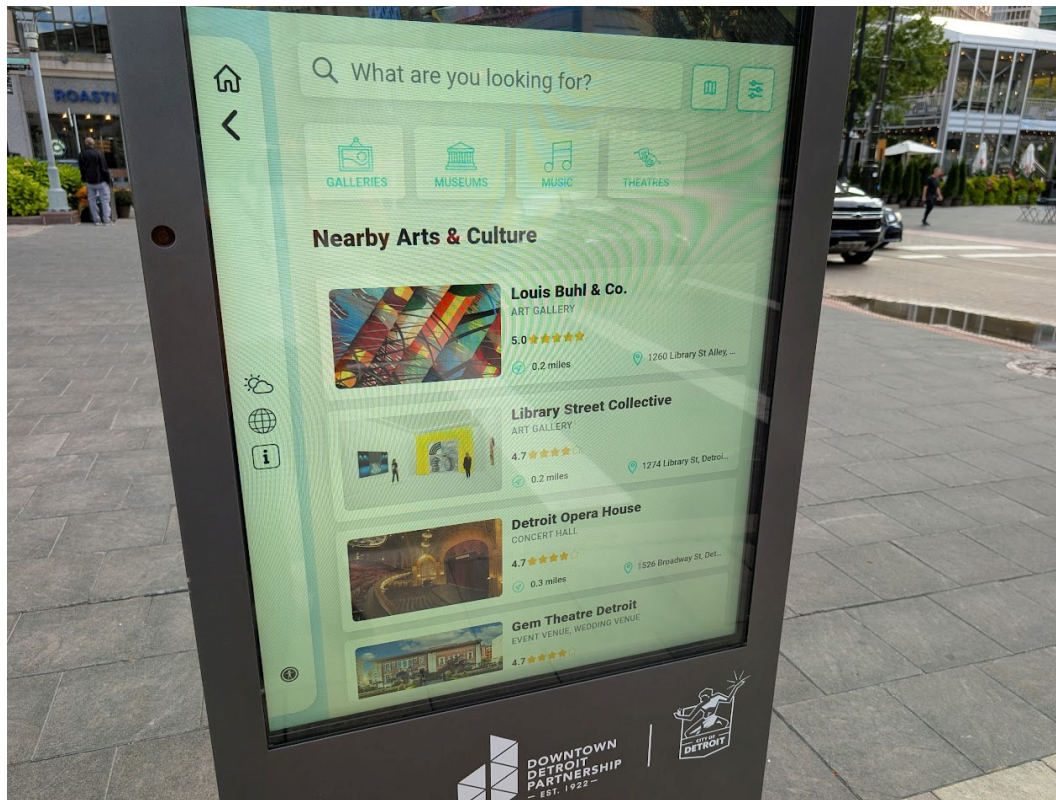
Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, looking east showing thickness of units. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, showing information concerning transit access. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, showing job openings nearby. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



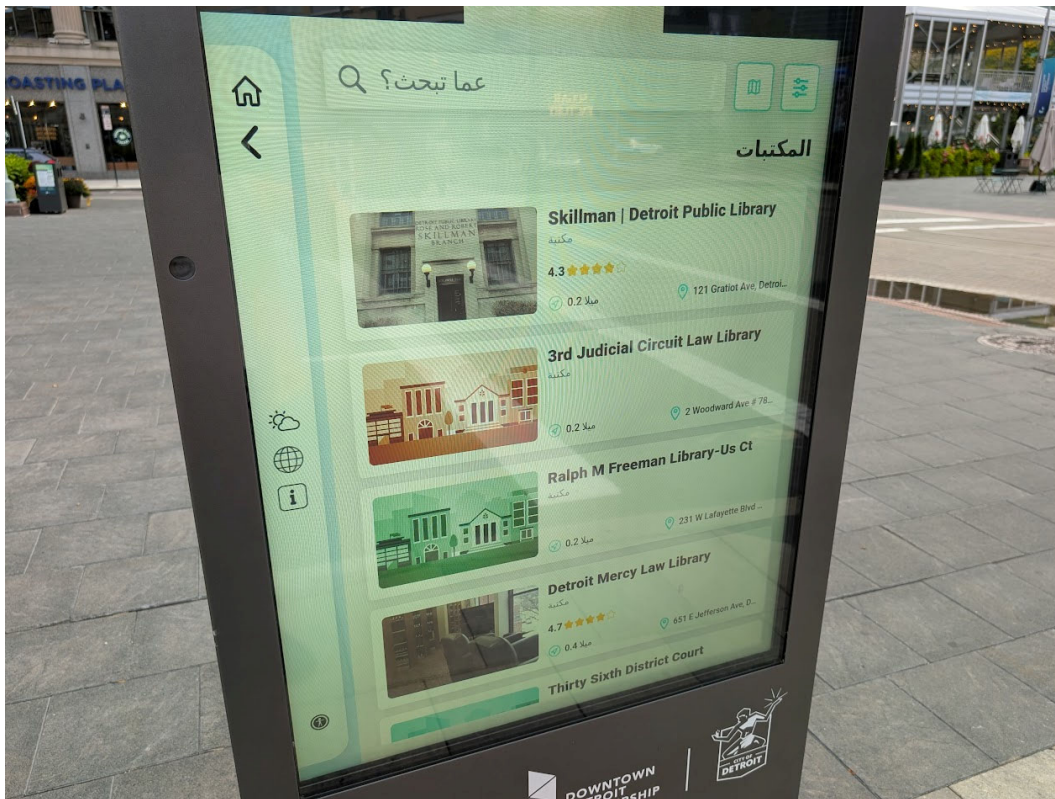
Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, showing nearby arts and cultural information. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, showing range of options available. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, showing ability to call up information on city services. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



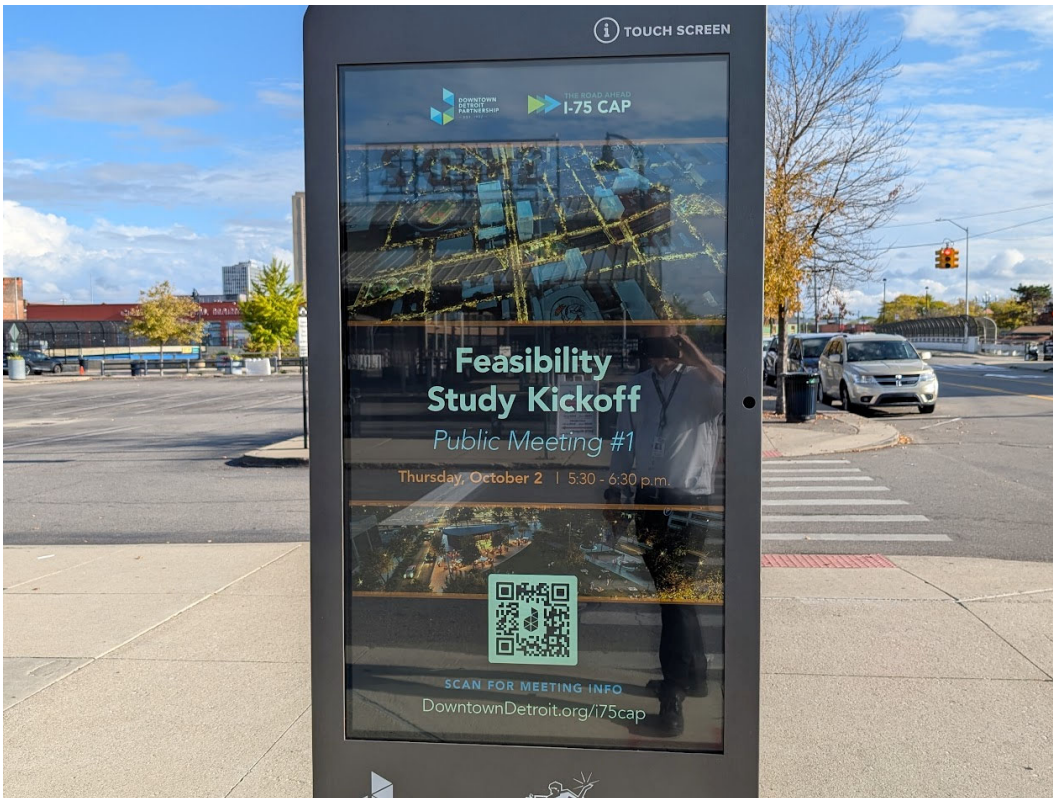
Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, showing availability of different languages. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Cadillac Square, showing availability of different languages. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Eastern Market, south of Winder at Russell showing advertising copy. This location is just across the street from the historic district. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Eastern Market, showing upcoming public meeting. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Eastern Market showing civic and neighborhood news. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Eastern Market, showing public health information. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Eastern Market, showing advertising copy/cultural events information. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.



Existing kiosk at Eastern Market, showing available languages. Staff photo, September 24, 2025.

ISSUES

- No issues with the six locations proposed.
- HDC staff suggests the following criteria to guide future locations (all criteria must be met). Accessibility, dimensional, engineering, and other criteria reviewed by other jurisdictions are specifically excluded. Interpretations would be delegated to HDC staff:
 - Within or immediately adjacent to historically commercial uses, properties or corridors
 - Not blocking the location of an entrance to a historic building (including closed off locations)
 - Not close enough to affect the physical condition of a historic resource (buildings, trees, or other historic elements) through either initial construction or continued use.
 - Not unusually conspicuous; installed in the context of a varied and active commercial streetscape containing other elements typically found in a commercial district, including but not limited to traffic light control boxes, streetlights, signals, benches, bus stops, bike racks, public trash cans, street art/sculpture, newsstands, kiosks, advertising and other signage, etc. Not all listed items must be present to establish the presence of a “varied and active” commercial streetscape.
 - No more than one kiosk unit per commercial block
 - No installations on historically residential blocks excepting those that have been legally adapted to commercial uses and non-residential zoning classifications

RECOMMENDATIONS

Section 21-2-78, Determinations of Historic District Commission

Staff recommends that the proposal for installation of six (6) kiosks as proposed in locations in several commercially-oriented historic districts should qualify for a Certificate of Appropriateness, as it meets the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and the multiple Historic District’s Elements of Design.

Additional Approval Recommendation

- The Commission hereby approves via a Certificate of Appropriateness future installations of wayfinding kiosks consistent with the design/operation of the six units approved in HDC2025-00542, and approves previous installations of kiosks, in commercial historic districts, subject to the following criteria, as interpreted by HDC staff:
 - Within or immediately adjacent to historically commercial uses, properties or corridors
 - Not blocking the location of an entrance to a historic building (including closed off locations)
 - Not close enough to affect the physical condition of a historic resource (buildings, trees, or other historic elements) through either initial construction or continued use.
 - Not unusually conspicuous; installed in the context of a varied and active commercial streetscape containing other elements typically found in a commercial district, including but not limited to traffic light control boxes, streetlights, signals, benches, bus stops, bike racks, public trash cans, street art/sculpture, newsstands, kiosks, advertising and other signage, etc. Not all listed items must be present to establish the presence of a “varied and active” commercial streetscape.
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