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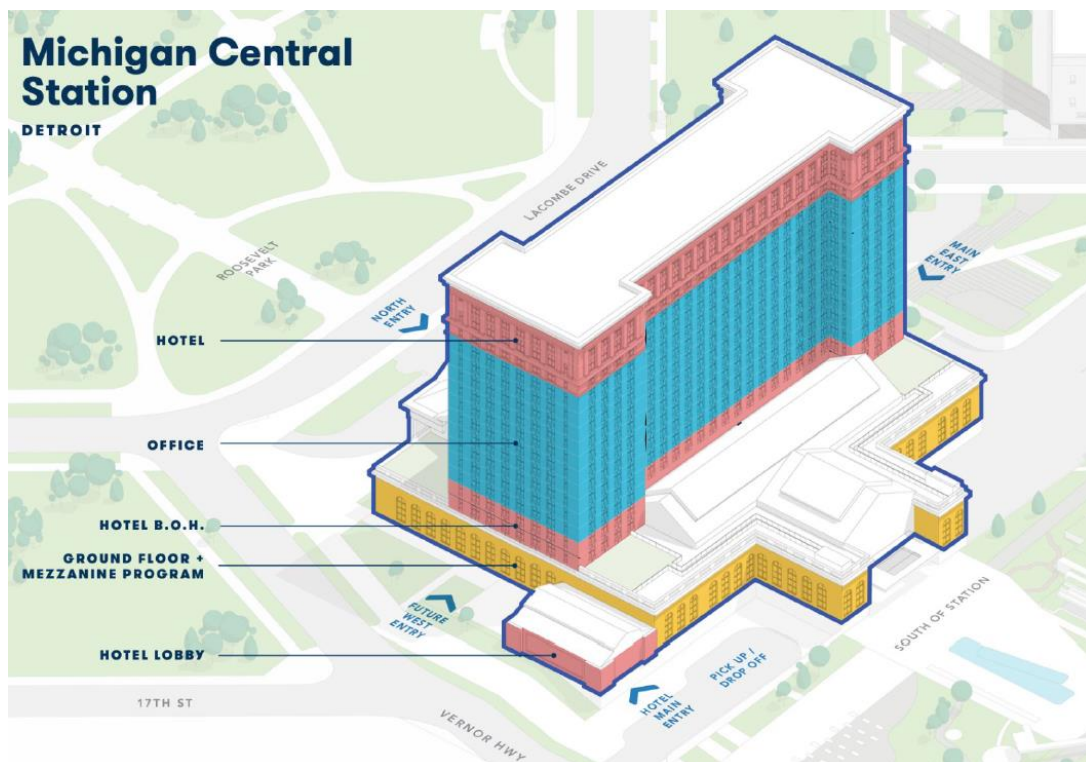
TO: City Planning Commission

FROM: Kimani Jeffrey, Staff
Eric Fazzini, Staff

RE: Request of New Investment Properties 1, LLC, on behalf of Michigan Central Development, to amend Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Zoning, by amending Article XVII, Section 50-17-44, District Map No. 42 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, to show a B5 (Major Business District) zoning classification where an M4 (Intensive Industrial District) zoning classification is currently shown on land generally bounded by Lacombe Drive, 15th Street, Bagley Avenue, 16th Street, Newark Street, and Vernor Highway (formerly 16th Street), more commonly known as 2001 15th Street and 2091 15th Street.

DATE: February 20, 2024

On February 22, 2024, the City Planning Commission (CPC) will hold a 5:15 p.m. public hearing on the subject zoning map amendment (rezoning) request. Below is a map containing the area proposed to be rezoned from M4 to B5.



PROPOSAL

The property known as 2001 15th Street and 2091 15th Street are the site of the historic Michigan Central Station. The proposal for the development is for it to be used as a mixed-use office, retail and hospitality space. Much of these goals have been communicated and planned for throughout the entities recent planning efforts that have been done in conjunction with the community. The proposed rezoning entails the parcel that the train station sits on plus an adjacent irregularly shaped parcel, but does **not** include the abutting southern parcel that is immediately adjacent to the rail line. The hotel use requires the rezoning in order to be permitted. Supportive parking will be provided for the site as well.

BACKGROUND

¹“Michigan Central Station, located in Detroit’s Corktown neighborhood, was the city’s primary railway depot from 1913 to 1988. Prior to the new station’s construction, the Michigan Central Railroad operated out of a depot located near the river and Third Street, about where Joe Louis Arena currently stands. Michigan Central Station was built partially to accommodate rail traffic from the Detroit-Windsor rail tunnel, which opened in 1910, and an increase in passenger business. The station was put into use before formal dedication in December 1913 due to a fire destroying the Third Street station.

The structure was designed by New York hotel architects Whitney Warren and Charles D. Wetmore, along with Charles A. Reed and Allen Stem, designers of New York City’s Grand Central Station. The building consists of a three-story depot with 10 gates for trains, and an 18-story tower with more than 500 offices. The depot’s waiting room was the highlight of the station, with marble floors, high vaulted ceilings, bronze chandeliers, and many other details indicative of Beaux Arts style. It also featured restaurant, lunch counter, barber shop, florist, bathing facilities, and other amenities.

Rail travel saw a sharp decline beginning in the 1950’s due in part to the proliferation of highways and air travel, and ridership from the station sagged. Ownership changed hands several times beginning in 1968, with portions of the station closing and facilities disappearing until the final train departed on January 5, 1988, bound for Chicago. Redevelopment plans for the structure came and went, and much of its lavish features were destroyed by vandalism and neglect. The structure was saved from the threat of demolition several times thanks to pending plans and its listing on the National Register of Historic Places, achieved in 1975.

The station has often been cited as a symbol of Detroit as a whole – a remarkable achievement eclipsed by decades of decline – and was frequently photographed as a prime example of “ruins photography.” In June 2018, Ford Motor Company announced their purchase of the building, and their plans to transform the station and nearby buildings into their mixed-use Corktown campus.”

Specific Land Use History

The zoning-specific land use that reflects the historic train station use of the site is “Passenger transportation terminal”. In staff’s review of historic zoning ordinances, it appears that this specific land use was first added to the city code as part of the 1968 zoning ordinance (Ord. No. 390-G). The 1968 zoning ordinance (ZO) permitted Passenger transportation terminals as a by-right use in the PCA Public Center Adjacent District (Restricted Central Business).

¹ ***Encyclopedia of Detroit***- From the Detroit Historical Society’s Encyclopedia of Detroit

The addition of this use to PCA only in 1968 was likely to reflect the second downtown Greyhound Bus Terminal formerly located at 130 East Congress Street, now the One Detroit Garage (originally planned as a second One Detroit Center tower), a site that has historically been zoned PCA as it is adjacent to the Public/Civic Center and the Coleman A. Young Municipal Center. The Greyhound Terminal opened in 1958 as part of a nationwide Greyhound building program, closed in 1989, and was demolished in 1990 for the development of One Detroit Center. From 1968 until the 2005 zoning ordinance, PCA was the only district that permitted Passenger transportation terminals.

In 2005, what is referred to as the Clarion zoning ordinance was adopted (Ord. No. 11-05), being chapter 61 of the City Code at the time. The 2005 ZO was the first ordinance with the structure of use categories being used to group sets of related specific land uses. The 2005 ZO included the creation of the “Aviation and surface transportation facilities” use category that includes the following four specific land uses:

- Aircraft landing areas for winged aircraft
- Heliports
- Passenger transportation terminal
- Tunnel or bridge plaza and terminal, vehicular

In 2005, Passenger transportation terminals were permissible in the following districts:

Sec. 61-12-71 (2005)	Business		Industrial				Special		
Specific Land Use	B5	B6	M1	M2	M3	M4	PCA	TM	SD2
Passenger transportation terminal	R	C	R	R	R	R	C	R	C

- R = By-Right Use
- C = Conditional Use

As indicated in the above permissions, passenger transportation terminals, whether they serve surface bus or rail transit, are intended to be located in industrial districts, districts that cover downtown (B5, B6, PCA), and mixed-use neighborhood commercial corridors (TM, SD2). In 2005 when Passenger transportation terminal was first added as a permitted use in M4, the train station had ceased operations since 1989. It appears that when it comes to city zoning history for this use, consideration has been most closely tied to the second downtown Greyhound Bus Terminal and zoning provisions have only recently specially addressed the train station site.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Surrounding Zoning and Land Use

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

- North:** R2; Roosevelt Park
West: M4; Vacant land, surface parking
East: M3; Newlab at Michigan Central (office building)
South: SD2; Rail line, Star Paper Converters, Apac Paper

Master Plan Consistency

The subject rezoning site is located within the Corktown area of Neighborhood Cluster 4 of the Detroit Master Plan of Policies (MP). The Future Land Use map for this area shows the Mixed Residential Commercial (MRC) designation. The Planning and Development Department (P&DD) has been requested to provide a MP interpretation letter for the proposal.

Zoning District Descriptions

Below are the Zoning Ordinance descriptions for the applicable zoning districts with staff analysis.

M4 – Intensive Industrial District (Current)

The M4 Intensive Industrial District will permit uses which are usually objectionable and, therefore, the district is rarely, if ever, located adjacent to residential districts. A broad range of uses is permitted in this district. New residences are prohibited with the exception of loft conversions of existing buildings and of residential uses combined in structures with permitted commercial uses. These requirements are to protect residences from an undesirable environment and to ensure reservation of adequate areas for industrial development (Sec. 50-10-101).

B5 – Major Business District (Proposed)

The B5 Major Business 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 (Sec. 50-9-131).

Based on this description of district intent, M4 zoning may not be appropriate for the train station site due to the broad range of industrial uses permissible under M4. As described in Specific Land Use History, the land use that reflects the historic train station use is Passenger transportation terminal. Current zoning permits Passenger transportation terminals in the following districts:

Sec. 50-12-101	Business		Industrial				Special		
Specific Land Use	B5	B6	M1	M2	M3	M4	PCA	TM	SD2
Passenger transportation terminal	R	C	R	R	R	R	C	R	C

R = By-Right Use

C = Conditional Use

Due to concerns with potential objectionable uses that could be permitted either by-right or conditionally in the M4 district, there has been an ongoing effort by CPC, the Administration, and P&DD, to downzone M4 property being redeveloped to reduce the amount of M4 zoning in the city and the potential for future objectionable uses (e.g. rezoning of former AMC HQ at 14250 Plymouth Road and Cadillac Stamping at 10600 Gratiot Avenue). There are numerous types of industrial uses permissible in M4 that are typically considered objectionable due to M4 being the second most intense industrial zoning district. Example uses include Explosives storage; Hazardous waste facilities; Incinerator plants; Radioactive waste handling; Scrap tire storage, processing, or recycling; Very high-impact manufacturing or processing (e.g. asphalt plants, automobile body plants, steel mills); and Waste/scrap materials storage, handling, or transfer. These examples of objectionable industrial uses justify the M4 district description and may signal that M4 zoning is not appropriate for the preservation and reuse of the historic train station building.

Furthermore, M4 zoning may not be appropriate for the train station site based on the current boundaries of M4 zoning and industrial development in the area. The vast majority of M4 zoning in the Corktown and Hubbard Richard neighborhoods exists south of Bagley Street, between Bagley Street and the Detroit River. North of Bagley Street, only two sites in Corktown, the train station and a Detroit Public Works facility at 2633 Michigan Avenue, are currently zoned M4. The presence of M4 zoning in these two neighborhoods dates to the city's first official zoning ordinance

adopted in 1940 (Ord. No. 171-D). The primary purpose of the 1940 ordinance was to implement the first Zoning Ordinance District Maps Index, the city's first official zoning map.

Index District Map 42 applies to the area west of Rosa Parks Boulevard (named 12th Street at the time) and District Map 1 applies to the area east of Rosa Parks Boulevard, district maps from 1940 are attached for reference. Prior to the 1968 zoning ordinance (Ord. No. 390-G), the "M4" district was referred to and indicated on maps as the "MH" district. The 1940 District Map 42 indicates MH zoning that generally follows both sides of what was then the Michigan Central Railroad tracks that crossed the entirety of the Map 42 area on an arc towards the Detroit River. South of Bagley Street, between 16th Street to the west and 12th Street to the east, MH zoning expands towards Fort Street. South of Fort Street, the entirety of property between what was then West Grand Boulevard and 12th Street was zoned MH. M4 zoning in the area south of Bagley Street to the Detroit River is a continuation of the MH industrial zoning first established by the 1940 zoning ordinance, and this area south of Bagley Street continues to be used for industrial purposes.

COMMUNITY INPUT

A community meeting was held on January 24th. CPC staff participated in a presentation with the Michigan Central Station representatives to inform attendees from the surrounding area of what zoning is, the reason for a rezoning request, and what is being proposed.

The meeting went relatively well, with participants asking questions and generally receiving responses for everything that was raised.

Since then, four letters of support have been received and one letter in opposition has been submitted. Please see attachments.

Attachments: Letters

cc: Antoine Bryant, Director, PDD
Kevin Schronce, PDD
Greg Moots, PDD
David Bell, Director, BSEED
Conrad Mallett, Corporation Counsel
Bruce Goldman, Law
Daniel Arking, Law



Rezoning shown within hashed line. The shaded-striped area is proposed to be rezoned from M4 to B5.