



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Mary Sheffield, Council President
FROM: Antoine Bryant, Director, Planning and Development Department (PDD)
DATE: May 10, 2024
RE: Community Outreach Report for the I-375 Zoning and Land-Use Study

Below is a detailed description of the community outreach efforts led by the Planning and Development Department with assistance from the Department of Neighborhoods (DON).

1. How many meetings have or will occur?

Engagement for the Community Outreach Ordinance (COO) was comprised of two public meetings, as required for Class B Neighborhood Proposals. The following two public meetings were held virtually and noticed per the COO notification requirements:

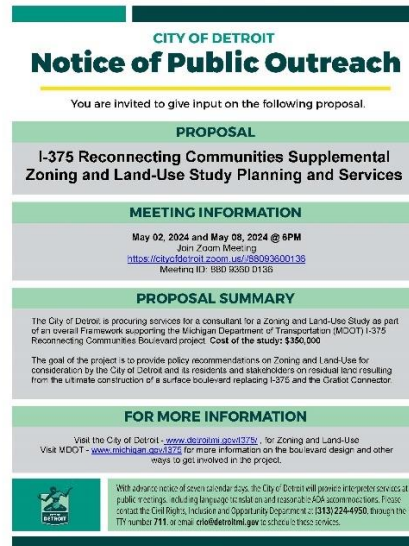
COO ENGAGEMENT PUBLIC MEETINGS

1. **Meeting 1** was held via Zoom during a special District 5 DONcast meeting on Thursday, May 2, 2024, from 6:00p to 7:30p. Thirty-seven people attended this meeting including City staff, ecumenical leaders, block club leaders and residents from all seven Council districts.
2. **Meeting 2:** was held via Zoom during a special District 5 DONcast meeting on Wednesday, May 8, 2024, from 6:00p to 7:00p. Twenty-seven people attended this meeting including City staff, ecumenical leaders, block club leaders and residents from all seven Council districts.

At the meetings, PDD gave an overview of Zoning and Land Use Study and its importance to residents, goals for the I-375 Zoning and Land-Use Study, contract scope with deliverables, and the proposed plan for review. At the conclusion of the presentation, attendees provided feedback on the proposed contract and were encouraged visit www.detroitmi.gov/I375 to learn more about the project. Additionally, residents were encouraged to submit additional feedback at I-375@detroitmi.gov. A comprehensive analysis of the feedback is listed below.

2. How were people notified or will they be notified?

Both COO meetings, **Meeting 1: May 2, 2024** and **Meeting 2: May 8, 2024** were noticed in compliance with the Community Outreach Ordinance. The COO notice for *both* meetings was distributed and posted as follows:



- Shared with Detroit City Council Members and staff via email on April 23, 2024.
- Distributed via GovDelivery to members of the public and members of the Community Advisory Council for Districts 5 on April 23, 2024.
- Advertised via TV Channel 10 (Comcast) from September on April 23, 2024.
- Advertised via the City of Detroit’s and PDD’s social media channels on Facebook and Instagram on April 23, 2024.
- Advertised at the Local Advisory Council (LAC) meeting for I-375.

3. What questions/concerns were raised by the community and how does the Department plan to address those concerns?

3. **Meeting 1:** The questions and concerns from the community were as follows:

1. *Question:* What is the overall planning process associated with the I-375 Project and how the City of Detroit and the Michigan Department of transportation are coordinated and organized, as well as opportunities for the broader city to be involved?

Answer: For coordination, the city is in coordination with MDOT (who is leading the design with the boulevard). MDOT has information regarding any planning schedule to be in sync for engagement, particularly with the zoning and land-use study, as well as our partners in the Legislative Policy Division. The city welcomes

any ideas as the process is meant to be iterative with the design of the boulevard.

2. *Comment:* Concern on traffic to St. Joseph's Church on Gratiot with a reconnection of the stub of Orleans south of Gratiot.

Answer: Discussions have occurred regarding the re-opening of Orleans with MDOT and the church's concern specifically. This was considered as an option and not integral to the project. (Note: MDOT will reach out to set up a meeting).

3. *Question:* Is the firm selected for the RFP local to Detroit?

Answer: The team is mixed either in having a branch office in Detroit or headquartered in the city. The entire team has experience with several projects in the city.

4. *Question:* Will the report just be delivered; or will there be actual engagement?

Answer: There will be about 4 community-wide meetings scheduled and individual stakeholder meetings. Time scheduled for a draft report as well to give feedback to make sure we are on the right track.

5. *Question:* You're not able to say who was awarded the RFP at this point? What timeframe when this will be brought before council so we can track all of this?

Answer: By rules of our office of contracting and procurement, I am not allowed to divulge; but this will be made public when brought to the City Council for contract consideration. Timeframe: We expect to have the contract and COO report before council by Mid-May to appear before a formal session to refer to the Planning and economic development standing committee for their consideration.

6. *Comment:* I feel like we're missing a real opportunity to create a real framework. Consider expanding efforts to not just include zoning and land-use. This should be a city-led process.

Answer: MDOT is very much interested in in a broader framework as well. With Zoning and land-use being a component of that, consider this less so much as following sequentially to the road design and construction; but more iterative. We encourage your continued participation.

7. *Question:* This is a real move forward to see this project as a real opportunity that goes beyond the road idea. What operational framework will go towards engaging, supporting the vision, and the values of the community?

Answer: That is something that we are working towards in achieving that we see this as an integral step. In an otherwise very complex project with many different layers. But we also have to make sure that this is intentional as well. To get to your point on making sure that this reflects the values of the community surrounding. I think that's one of the things that ust with the discussions that have happened back and forth in in the last 2 and a half years or so. The need to be able to say that this was intentional.

8. *Question:* Has a timeline been implemented outlining when you plan to engage with various communities? Is it incumbent upon the community to initiate a conversation with a planner?

Answer: We will work with the consultant to prepare a schedule for the entire process which will include but is not limited to engagement. Once established, we will work with residents and community groups on an engagement plan; therefore, you will not have to initiate a conversation with PDD.

9. *Question:* As part of the RFP process, is planning and development able or would that be city council be able to leverage an opportunity for some of these impact residents if there's a chance for them to get hired on by this contractor to do some of the engagement, gather data or facilitate conversations. You know the logistics part of it. Putting together this report. Is there a chance for us to have Detroiters who are in this area be a part of this information gathering contract?

Answer: The city and its consultant services will have folks on the ground with Detroiters reaching out to various community stakeholders in and around the project area. For the contract itself, PDD selected its consultants based on the budget given. If for our meetings we need services, such as retail/ food, we use Detroit businesses.

10. *Comment:* Looking forward to exemplifying the history of the area. Hope there is a way to display and remember the legacy of the area before I-375. Hope to get as many people as possible to engage as a lot of people were displaced from that area, business-wise, family-wise, and residential-wise.

Answer: PDD aspires to have thoughtful, inclusional, and intentional engagement as it relates to the boulevard project.

11. *Question:* At what point will interested community/citizens be able to give input on how it is zoned?

Response: At any time before and during the study. I can be contacted [L-375@detroitmi.gov](mailto:L375@detroitmi.gov)

12. *Comment:* Design strategist offered the opportunity to show a plan envisioned after being in the area for about 5 years. Advocating for a more comprehensive framework approach to the project as well as a broader study of mobility options less reliant on automobile.

Answer: PDD offered to meet and review the ideas of the design strategist. Noted recent updates in the cross-section of the boulevard (much reduced width).

13. *Concern:* Added time for seniors to reach emergency services along the Jefferson Avenue Corridor.

Answer: The project is in coordination with emergency services in routing emergency access routes and response times.

14. *Question:* When does the land get broken up and do I have a say and at what points in the process people will have a say?

Answer: If anyone has ideas, they may share them at anytime ([L-375@detroitmi.gov](mailto:L375@detroitmi.gov)). Part of the process is to understand not only parcels, but the context of scale, infrastructure, mobility systems, opportunities etc. in this area, in addition to open space.

15. *Question:* I was led to believe the project was to make the neighborhood more pedestrian friendly. What was the reason behind the modification of the I-375 Corridor and it seems the opposite?

Answer: The project, which has been around for some time, is a means of connecting neighborhoods surrounding the corridor and linking the riverfront. More so the bridges themselves, are in need of repair and remediation as well as the highway itself. There have been updates to the design of the boulevard that has reduced the width. Additionally, the opportunity to understand what zoning and land-use applications should come from this and other potential opportunities coming from this project.

16. *Comment:* Comment attributed to director Antoine Bryant, as quoted in the Bridge Detroit regarding citizens concerns “references to a loud few”. There is a critical

mass of residents and nearby businesses who share many concerns and criticisms of MDOT's process and thinking. It was very impolitic and reflects poorly on PDD.

Answer: The reporting of Bridge Detroit on this matter is inaccurate and Director Bryant has stated as such to said publication. Director Bryant and PDD have spoken with various members of the community over the past several months, both in public settings and in private meetings scheduled by members of the community and will continue to do so over the course of the Zoning & Land Use Study. PDD is committed to open and comprehensive engagement of the residents of this City, and values all of their perspectives, including those of the impact area. We have heard that Bridge will adjust their reporting appropriately.

17. Question: Could you share the links to the zoning maps to the surrounding areas?

Answer: <https://detroitmi.gov/how-do-i/find-information/detroit-zoning-map-index>

18. Comment: Hope there is a thought given to repairing Black families and descendants that lost their opportunities to grow due to the destruction of Black Bottom and the construction of I-375.

Answer: We look forward to the opportunity to engage as many residents as possible on this, in whatever capacity there is to do so. The Zoning and Land-Use study is more narrowly focused; but, there are opportunities to express what that should be going forward.

19. Question: What is the vision behind the I-375 modification? Why not leave it as is, expand it, or create an expanded overpass over the pit?

Answer: There were many options considered, from keeping the boulevard, decking the boulevard, moving the expressway to west side/ east side of the right-of-way. This stems from the 2014 Public and Environment Linkages (PEL) study, which determined the best option and benefit is to bring a boulevard to the surface. This was studied at a high level also during the East Riverfront Framework. To note, the design has undergone significant revision. The Zoning and Land Use component is a step forward to a larger understanding of the area.

20. Comment - Please consider the history of this land prior to contact with Europe, including its transformation from a place where people coexisted with marshland or alluvial plane to a place where the marsh had been drained and native inhabitants eradicated. This pattern repeats in community management and land-use policy.

Answer: PDD - Developing a historic narrative part of the scope of this study

21. Question: Was there an opportunity to provide feedback on the RFP before it was made available?

Answer: In the direct writing, there was not (outside of a peer review). We did take into consideration the comments we have had in engagement up to that point of writing the RFP to understand the level of complexity going into the RFP. You will have an opportunity to comment when this goes to the Detroit City Council.

22. Question: How will this framework (study) relate to the new Detroit Master Plan?

Answer: With any zoning and land-use study, the ultimate goal is to be considered amended into the Detroit Master Plan. The master plan update is a 22-month process, You may also follow the Detroit Master Plan process at www.plandetroit.com.

23. Comment - A six to nine lane boulevard does not do much to reconnect the communities and anything that can reduce the footprint should be done. Happy to see the addition of bike lanes and less car lanes in the new plan because the road is too wide. Include alternative forms of transportation, like public transit.

Answer: PDD will make sure MDOT receives these comments.

24. Comment - I would like to see put in that there is public transport to be included. I like the new renderings in that there are new bike lanes and safe walking spaces; but in terms of erasing cars, people still need to drive.

Answer: PDD will make sure MDOT receives these comments.

25. Comment: It seems unfortunate that two of the most popular zones, Eastern Market and the Dequindre Cut, don't seem to benefit very much from the project and their sense of connection to each other.

Answer: There is a Gratiot Planning and Environmental Linkages Study that takes a deeper dive into the Gratiot Corridor in its planning. Additionally, we are in coordination with Eastern Market in planning regarding I-375, as the Gratiot connector also is undergoing a change and zoning study.

4. **Meeting 2:** The questions and concerns from the community were as follows:

1. Question: Where is this to be housed and will the public be able to see this presentation as well? Is there a website where people can go to to get this information?

Answer: The information is on the PDD website, including this presentation as well as the recording from the May 2, 2024 meeting. www.detroitmi.gov/I375/. Update, the May 8th recording has been added as well to the website.

2. Question: After the study is completed, what are the next steps to procuring the actual zoning for the property? How is that process handled and at what point do organizations such as ours get a voice in how that property is used?

Answer: Ultimately, zoning and land-use becomes policy either at the close or at the end of construction period. What is happening now is the opportunity for the public to contribute to the discussion as to what this land should be. As construction is ongoing, we have a policy in place that takes into account your thoughts and ideas going forward. There will be public meetings and individual stakeholder meetings that happens during the course of this process.

3. *Comment:* I've been a resident of Park Co-op for the last 10 years and I attended the original introduction of the I-375 project 10 years ago in Eastern Market and I've now been to it. This is my fourth community meeting regarding this project. I have come to the conclusion that I granulosly opposed to this project. I would hope the city would change course and try to condemn that to halt this project; but, because it appears that the fix is in and it's going to happen, I would propose to items that I strongly endorse. First is a lot of these meetings people have really voiced the concern. 30 acres that are being freed up should be used for green space as a first priority. Second, because basically, you brought the freeway to the surface and it's going to cause extreme danger to pedestrians and bicyclists. I would ask that the city proposed that MDOT put over passes over the boulevard so that people can get across this new freeway safely.

Answer: PDD can share to MDOT your concerns and ideas on the boulevard design

4. Question: I am asking specifically about MDOT I-375 changes and PDD releasing an RFP for planning services. I'm interested in the coordination and our synergy between the planning consultant that MDOT is hiring and the work you're describing?

Answer: MDOT released an RFP for services related to the Progressive Design Build (PDB) contractor that will be designing and ultimately constructing the boulevard. What we're doing and what MDOT is doing, the delivery method (PDB) allows for continued input into the design through late next year. By the end of next year the boulevard would be under construction; but before that we will have

not only the zoning and land-use study and the broader framework that'll be underway – the latter more focused on all aspects inherent to a traditional framework process in the city. MDOT and the city are in constant coordination with scheduling.

5. Comment - I'm a Lafayette Park resident. I've been a resident here for a long time, 30 plus years and the last meeting that I was at was at Chrysler School sometime in the fall where many of the people from our neighborhood that we're at, and none of them want this. I know this is probably a little bit out of the purview of your portfolio here, but I think that needs to be expressed and related that this this needs to be rethought. I agree with what Steve Blackheart said and if it's happening regardless there's a lot of things that need to be considered, including emergency vehicles, ambulances. Think how they get to the hospital and that land. I would agree that the priority should be for green space you know, there's now we're talking. Somebody was talking about putting pedestrian bridges over the boulevard, where had been much simpler to just leave the expressway there and put pedestrian bridges over the expressway which used to exist. We had a pedestrian bridge over the expressway. We could have made some nice, beautiful bridges. We could have fixed all that up. And we could have all this money that's being spent here for rep, for, you know restorative justice. Just give it as reparations to the people that were displaced. Instead of all this. It's not really going to make it better the way I see it, though.

Answer: PDD encourages making concerns known for consideration in the design and overall framework process. MDOT/ City is actively working with emergency services as part of the process of design.

6. Question: What zoning is really on the table. We're all familiar with different types of zoning in the city (industrial vs. residential and commercial). Is there a multi-faceted approach to zoning parks in general? (public art sculpture garden versus general public park?)

Answer: The idea is to one to analyze the neighborhoods that are around the area that's affected by the construction that helps us to determine. To your question what zoning is actually on the table? And keeping in mind that we're talking about an area that's roughly from near the riverfront through North south, through Lafayette Park, downtown, and then east west between Lafayette Park, roughly and Eastern Market that is under consideration. There will be a multitude of zoning options that are considered, but ones that do take into the context of the neighborhood that is surrounding in order to understand what is

the best path forward. (Note: this is not specific to park planning. There is nothing predetermined in terms of what the uses are and what we're studying)

7. Question: You mentioned the contract will go before the city council sometime in June. Can you speak more to that?

Answer: PDD is trying to have it before city council in May 2024. The report includes feedback received by the Department from the community. Typically for those that are unfamiliar with the process, it will appear before the formal agenda, because that's where all items are referred, or do their initial appearance. From that the report as well as the contract, will then move to the planning and Economic Development Standing Committee. After that the Council will receive and file the report if they're satisfied with it, and then they will take action on the contract itself. The action that they take on the contract is the start of it. After consideration in committee will then move back to the formal session for the entire body to take action.

8. Question: Wanted to ask you about the framework plan? Has that started? And if it has it, why has isn't that being done in conjunction with all of the other stuff that's happening? In other parts of the city. I know that the excuse me, framework plans were developed alongside any major or big development, and I'm just wondering. Is there a reason that that is not the case?

Answer: None of the studies have started. I think what we are what we were intent to do, particularly with MDOT is to understand, an appropriate design for the boulevard, in which there have been some significant changes that have occurred and the overall width. Many of you probably remember the 9 lanes from the previous design. That has been cut to 2 lanes in north and then south. There are 4 lanes driving, and then 2 turning lanes. That in terms of a cross section. So it's probably more akin to Lafayette and or Woodward in overall width. We're going through that process, but also in in reaching out to some of the stakeholders in and around the community just to make sure and understand, the design is over. There will be opportunities through the PDB method of delivery to influence the design, as well as the upcoming study. This is something that is understood by MDOT. We look forward to continued conversations with the community on this subject.

9. Comment: I'm trying to inform myself through these meetings, and I want to thank you, John and Edwina, for the work you're putting into these public sessions and inviting discussion. Last week the point I was trying to make was this, I-375. This is a wonderful opportunity for this city to do something really special, especially beyond building a road, a connecting road and I kind of referenced the waterfront,

the really a prize-winning, acclaimed riverfront water, Detroit Riverwalk, and it was designed at first, or planned to be at first a Casino district, with closed windows against the river, and a constituency of citizens and businesses and foundations came together and really developed a much larger and more transformative vision for that river. And we're all benefiting from that today. And I see a similar opportunity in this I-375, exchange. And I'm thinking, maybe one of the issues is who are the stakeholders in the city, and I think for this one of them could be. One of them could be the Detroit River Project, which is an ongoing effort to get Detroit River UNESCO World Heritage site because of its connection to Canada and the role the Underground Railroad played in the move toward freedom of African Americans and the role that was shared by by many people across the country, and this was the term of that and the largest point of transfer over into Canada for people who found their freedom there. The Detroit River is already an American River heritage site. It was Bill Clinton when Dennis Archer was mayor of the city, who made that designation, and I think this is an opportunity. Opportunities like this come up one or 2 or 3 times in a century, and I think it would be such a shame to let this pass by when I think there's enough kind of discussion and confusion and contention in the discussion, and I'm just wondering if really can't we find a way to just back up and then do the best we can as a city to make this something really special and transformative for our city. John, what triggered my thinking about this? You said in terms of land use. Nothing is predetermined in this project, but what seems to be predetermined is the Md. Road proposal. It's out for RFP. Right now, and a contract hasn't been delivered. We're still talking. I mean, we're having a wonderful discussion last week, and this week, I think, are really good discussions. And I want to thank you know the people, Youtube particularly. But anyone who's been involved in organizing this and bringing this opportunity for discussion in the city, and to say, Gee to me, this is a rich discussion. There's a lot of energy behind this discussion, and I think you know we've sometimes we've been kind of working at. Well, should there be this number of lanes, or that number of lanes, or should it be above or should below. And I'm not sure those are really the questions we should be focusing on. I'm really more concerned that we not let slip out of our hands an opportunity that is in our generation's hands. We are multiple generations who are together in this call and in this city to do something that reflects the something that reflects the history of the city, something that reflects the creativity, the ambitions of the city, and you know, and I and I think really that isn't addressed in the existing M. Dot proposal, and I don't fault M. Dot. They were asked to design a road, and that's what they're good at. But a road should be in the service of something larger. It's not the road that determines the neighborhood. It's the neighborhood that determines the need for a road. And so there needs to be an interplay because the neighborhood doesn't doesn't include necessarily engineers who know how to build a safe highway, but it does include the heart and spirit of the community. And I'm just saying, Oh, golly! It seems to me the community is asking for that heart and spirit to be expressed. We're kind of showing up, and we're listening. And I want to

say, listening with respect, because I think what you all are doing is in the same spirit that my remarks are coming from, and that is loving this literally loving this city, knowing it has a complicated but rich history, and wanting to celebrate the richness of the history and to celebrate the community. And I'm really talking about community in a sense that reflects a kind of a wide sense of collaboration and cooperation and respect and ambition for this to be the kind of story we tell or promote in any kind of large project like this. So I thank you for indulging me to talk twice last week, and this week in this whole, these remarks. I hope you find a spirit that matches with your thinking, and something that maybe we could. I mean, it's kind of calling for a pause, and working more together to find how rich and how deep is the community we live in.

Answer: We're hoping to facilitate that not only through the Zoning and Land Use Study but with the broader framework just to understand more of the overall fabric going in. As you pointed out. This can be a really transformative project, I want to also acknowledge the concerns over the design of the boulevard they were very valid in terms of safety. I appreciate your comments and look forward to engaging not only with yourself, but your neighbors.

10. Question: When John mentions neighborhoods, is that to include residential and commercial property owners or the residents of the area? Which has a higher priority?

Answer: It's to include anyone that is a resident, a business, a genuine concern, idea, or question that they may have regarding the overall study and any other aspect of the I-375 project going forward. There are different concerns that need to be weighed; not so much of one over the other. It's just how does this function as a system is what we're looking towards and to make sure that it could work for everyone to the extent it can.

11. Question: Please tell us if you consider I-375 to be a road project or an urban planning project?

Answer: We consider this to be a transformative project that has the potential for tremendous amount of opportunity with a tremendous amount of change associated with it. As one would acknowledge, there was an impact with the highway going in, and an impact coming out. This is why we have the studies in association with the design of the boulevard going forward.

12. Comment – there is a need to take a broader view of the opportunity.

Answer: PDD concurs

13. Question: Can you share some of the engagement that has occurred with the LAC (Local Advisory Committee), including your most recent meeting with the LAC so people can get the full breadth of what exactly transpired?

Answer: The formation of the LAC (by MDOT) is a group of citizens, businesses, place makers in and round the community to get feedback on the I-375 project. What we understood was an issue with the design of the boulevard, particularly regarding pedestrian safety, width of the road, and lack of ease and access to certain areas. What has happened since is MDOT revisited the traffic count (originally from 2017) and use current counts post-pandemic. Post pandemic count reflects a 20% drop in traffic in the I-375 corridor. Additionally, SEMCOG (Southeast Michigan Council of Governments) in their projected growth rate through 2045 supports this (through slower growth models). Significant adjustments were made in the design of the boulevard, grid connections, and the interchange. The boulevard itself is to extend into Brush Park to provide more connections to points north, including DMC. MDOT presented the updated information on the LAC in the most recent meeting. There were breakout groups from that meeting that allowed for more in-depth discussions on broader urban issues, safety, emergency services, senior population along the Jefferson Corridor, and reparative justice. In developing the updated design there have been continuing meetings with block clubs and other community groups to get more detail to the issues at hand. The information becomes a part of the overall analysis for the project. This does not mean this stops here – it just means this a place to restart the discussion and build trust.

14. Question: The plan continues to not solve the pain caused Mayor Cobo when he bulldozed Hastings Street and powered by the FHWA. This impacted generations of citizens in our city. I am looking for substantive tribute and economic development earmarked towards the property lost as a result. Where is there a plan? Where in the plan does the city advocate for those citizens?

Answer: The focus of the study does take into consideration a historic narrative. However, for this study we are limited by scope and budget. There is an opportunity to weigh in on the larger framework study to have those discussions. There is no plan on the table; but we are just starting.

15. Question: Can the City Council stop this project?

Answer: Anyone is within their right to petition the city council; but the boulevard project is the purview of the State of Michigan

16. Comment: There needs to be more community engagement.

Answer: PDD is looking for more community participation going forward.

- 4. Was there any written feedback received, including letters, comments, or reports from residents, businesses, neighborhood groups, or an established Community Advisory Council?**

An e-mail was received after the first meeting requesting location of the meeting recording and the PowerPoint presentation, which was posted on Monday May 6, 2024. Since then, both presentations from May 2nd and May 8th have been posted to the website. No other questions as of the writing of this report were received.

We would be happy to answer any additional questions. Answers to above questions and comments were answered during the presentations or as a follow-up in this report.

CC: Detroit City Council
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