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July 16, 2024

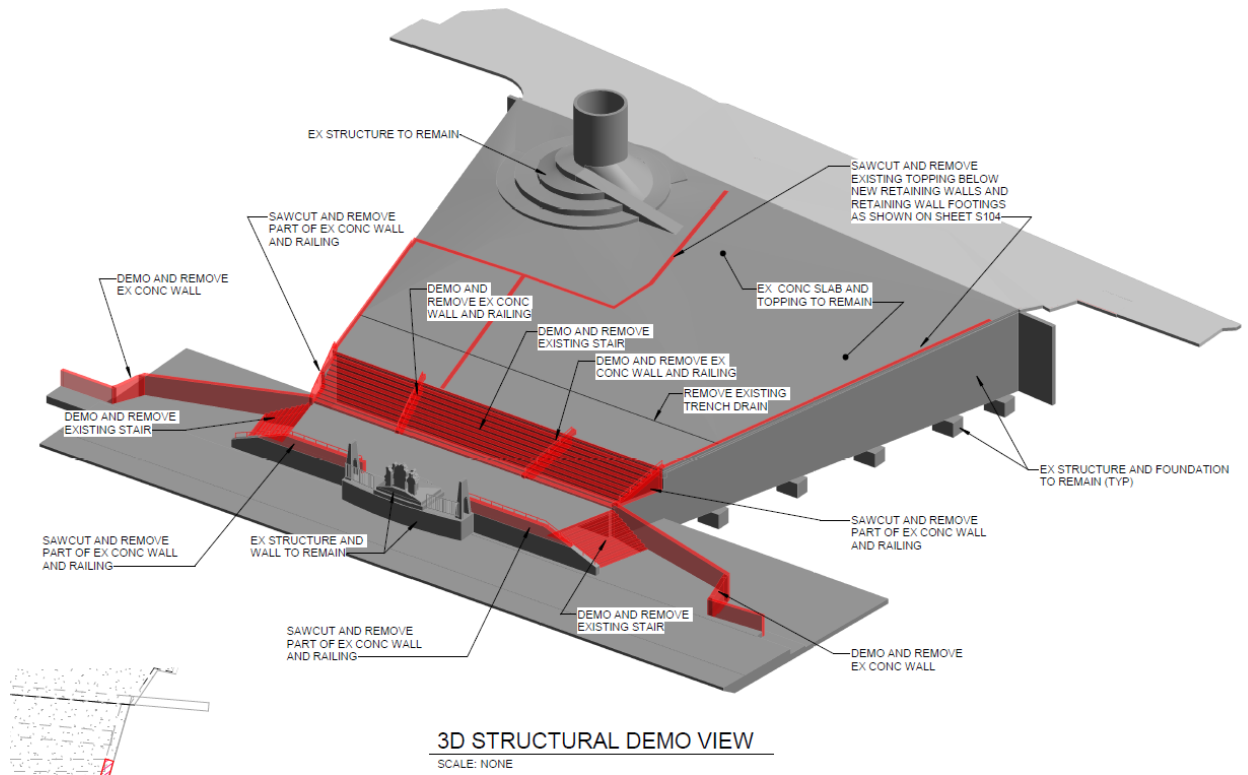
HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

RE: Request of Smith Group on behalf of the City of Detroit General Services Department for PC (Public Center) Special District Review of proposed renovation of the “grand staircase” in Hart Plaza including new paving, landscaping, and seating. **(RECOMMEND APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS)**

REQUEST

The City Planning Commission (CPC) has received a request from Smith Group on behalf of the City of Detroit General Services Department for PC (Public Center) Special District Review of proposed renovation of the “grand staircase” in Hart Plaza including new paving, landscaping, and seating. This request is being made consistent with the provisions of Section 50-3-222 of the Detroit Zoning Ordinance. Because this site is zoned PC, all exterior changes require review by Your Honorable Body.





Aerial view of area to be demolished – note that Gateway to Freedom sculpture and surrounding wall will remain

PROPOSED PROJECT

The petitioner proposes to renovate the area of Hart Plaza between the Atwater Tunnel and the Detroit Riverwalk. The existing area consists of a sloped plaza that is too steep to be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). It will be regraded into two flat plaza areas with retaining walls and railings. The stairs will be reconfigured and paved paths will be added with ADA-compliant slopes. The existing light fixtures will be refurbished and reinstalled within the renovated area, and additional lighting will be added. New seating areas and additional landscape beds will be added to improve the space and make it more inviting.



The Gateway to Freedom statue and its perimeter granite wall will be preserved and protected in its current location. The existing stainless-steel railings will be removed and new railings will be installed to match the remainder of the new railings.

HART PLAZA BIRDSEYE

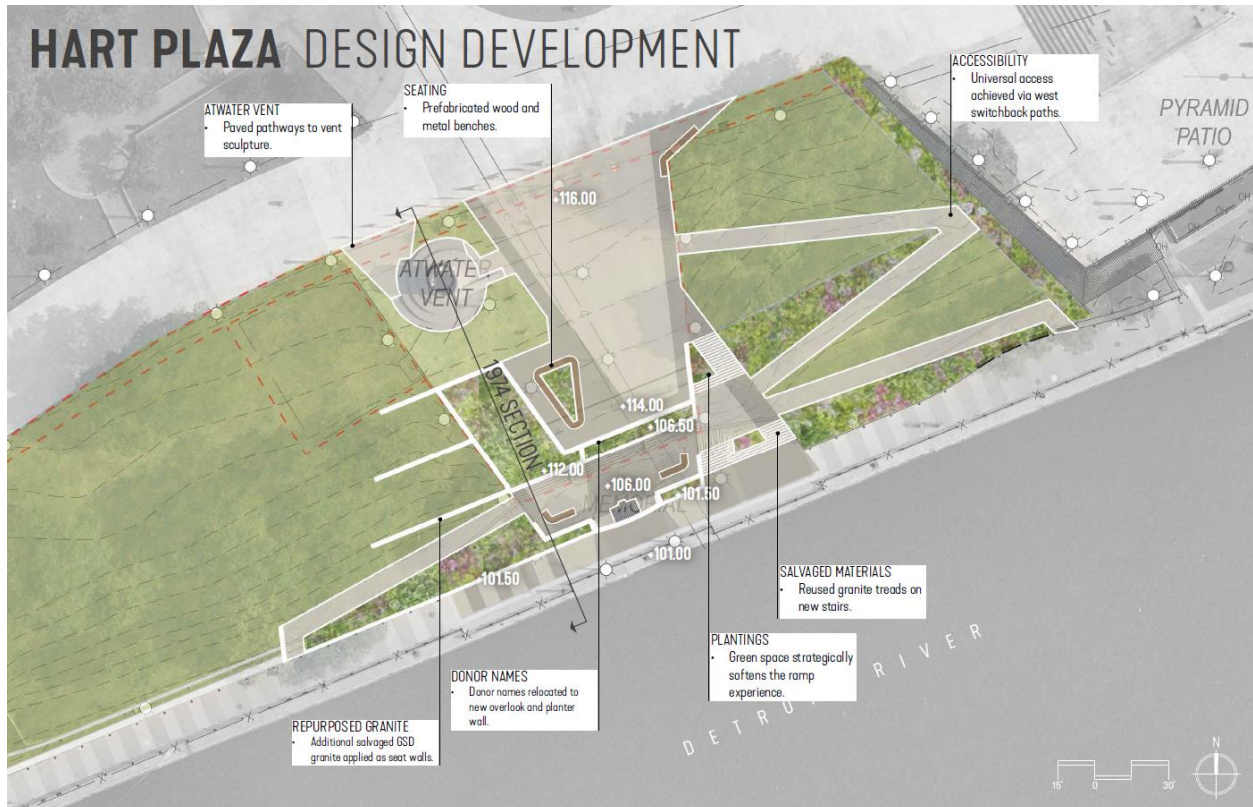


BIRDSEYE NORTH

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MAJOR CONTRACTING **SMITHGROUP**

Rendering of Proposed Changes – looking north toward Jefferson Avenue



Plan View Rendering of Proposed Changes

REVIEW & ANALYSIS – PC District Review Criteria

The purpose of PC District review is to ensure that proposed changes are consistent with the spirit, purpose, and intent of the district. To guide the review, eighteen PC District Review Criteria are listed in Section 50-11-67 of the Zoning Ordinance. The relevant criteria follows with staff analysis in italics:

(1) The proposed development should reflect applicable policies stated in the Master Plan. *Increasing open space and recreational opportunities is Goal 8 of the Central Business District subsector. Policy 8.2 states that the condition of public areas should be improved to encourage river-related recreation activities including fishing and picnicking. The proposed renovations to Hart Plaza will further these goals with new seating, additional landscaping, and accessible pathways.*

(3) The proposed development should be compatible with surrounding development in terms of land use, general appearance and function and should not adversely affect the value of adjacent properties. *The proposed changes will improve the appearance of Hart Plaza which will be beneficial to adjacent properties.*

(8) Public access should be provided where appropriate, including provision of adequate right-of-way for the continuous pedestrian/bicycle pathway being developed along the Detroit River. *The proposed renovations will increase accessibility to the Riverwalk for both pedestrians and bicyclists.*

(13) Barrier-free access and public safety features should be carefully planned. *This project will provide barrier-free access between Hart Plaza and the Riverwalk which is currently inadequate. New paved paths with ADA-compliant slopes are proposed where there is currently no accessible route.*

(15) Urban design elements of form and character should be carefully considered; such elements include, but are not limited to: richness/interest of public areas through the provision of storefronts, window displays, landscaping, and artwork; color, texture and quality of structural materials; enclosure of public spaces; variations in scale; squares, plazas and/or "vest pocket parks" where appropriate; continuity of experience, visual activity and interest; articulation and highlighting of important visual features; preservation/enhancement of important views and vistas. *Existing granite will be salvaged from the site and repurposed as seating and stair treads which will retain the existing character of the site. The distinctive light fixtures will be refurbished and reinstalled, and the Gateway to Freedom sculpture will be preserved in its current location.*

Design

The Planning & Development Department has reviewed the proposed changes and recommends approval. The full recommendation is attached.

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

The proposed renovation was presented to the City Planning Commission on July 11, 2024, and was favorably received with two comments—ensure that the accessible paths have an appropriate surface and that there is adequate visibility where the stairs meet the Riverwalk. These are long awaited improvements addressing old design flaws. Consistent with the above, approval of the proposed changes is recommended with the following condition:

- That final plans be reviewed by CPC staff for consistency with approval prior to application being made for applicable permits.

Respectfully submitted,

DONOVAN SMITH, CHAIRPERSON



Marcell R. Todd, Jr., Director
Jamie J. Murphy, City Planner

Attachments: Construction Drawings dated 6/14/2024
Renderings of proposed design
PDD Recommendation
Resolution

cc: Antoine Bryant, Director, PDD
Russell Baltimore, PDD
Greg Moots, PDD
Bruce Goldman, Law Dept.
David Bell, Director, BSEED
Tim Karl, Chief of Landscape Architecture
LaJuan Counts, Director, Construction and Demolition
Samuel Krassenstein, Chief of Infrastructure

July ____, 2024

**A RESOLUTION REGARDING ALTERATIONS IN A PC ZONING DISTRICT
IN HART PLAZA.**

BY COUNCIL MEMBER _____:

WHEREAS, Smith Group on behalf of the City of Detroit General Services Department proposes renovation of the “grand staircase” in Hart Plaza including new paving, landscaping, and seating; and

WHEREAS, Hart Plaza is located within an established PC (Public Center) zoning district; and

WHEREAS, work to be performed within a PC zoning district requires Special District Review and the purpose of the PC zoning district classification is provided for in Section 50-11-51 of the Zoning Ordinance as follows:

This district includes areas used or to be used for governmental, recreational, and cultural purposes of particular or special civic importance. All construction or other improvement within this district requires that the Planning and Development Department and the City Planning Commission review and make recommendation to City Council, so as to ensure a completely harmonious, pleasing, and functional public center; and

WHEREAS, the Planning and Development Department has provided favorable review; and

WHEREAS, the City Planning Commission has reviewed and recommended approval of the proposed alterations; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Detroit City Council hereby approves the proposed changes as depicted in the construction drawings and renderings prepared by Smith Group and dated 6/14/2024, with the following condition:

1. That final plans be reviewed by CPC staff for consistency with approval prior to application being made for applicable permits.