



SOUTHWEST DETROIT
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

June 25, 2025

Detroit City Council

Legislative Policy Division|City Planning Commission

Coleman A. Young Municipal Center

2 Woodward Ave. Suite 208|Detroit, MI 48226

Dear City of Detroit Planning Commission,

On behalf of the Southwest Detroit Business Association (SDBA) we are writing this letter of support for the adaptive reuse ordinance. This ordinance will help Southwest Detroit and all the other neighborhoods in Detroit:

- Preserves historic anchor buildings to retain culture, character and fabric of neighborhoods
- Supports neighborhood investments with increased redevelopment opportunities
- Supports new housing efforts
- Promotes redevelopment activities that serve the day-to-day needs of local residents
- Reduces annual demolition costs by making it easier to reuse institutional anchors within residential communities
- Expedites investment as an individual rezoning for each institutional building burdens each proposal with time and money spent
- Allows a variety of redevelopment options to accommodate the unique challenges of adaptive reuse

SDBA has a history of redeveloping historic buildings for new uses, such as the Rebert Building and former Odd Fellows buildings in Southwest Detroit. This ordinance will help developers redevelop these great buildings and preserve them for another century with new uses that serve the communities they are in. We appreciate the City of Detroit considering this adaptive reuse ordinance and we urge it's adoption.

Sincerely,

Greg Mangan

Greg Mangan
Real Estate Advocate
Southwest Detroit Business Association
gregm@southwestdetroit.com
313-283-6533

7752 WEST VERNOR HIGHWAY DETROIT, MI 48209-1516
T 313 842 0986 F 313 842 6350 WWW.SOUTHWESTDETROIT.COM

BUSINESS BUILDING COMMUNITY. COMMUNITY BUILDING BUSINESS.

For 65 years SDBA has led community, economic and small business development in Southwest Detroit. We are a coalition of businesses, nonprofits, and community stakeholders committed to facilitating the economic development landscape of Southwest Detroit. We foster innovation, drive, and commitment; and work in partnership with the City of Detroit, investors, entrepreneurs, customers, and residents to realize our community's vision for a prosperous, healthy, safe, and vibrant Southwest Detroit.

Hacienda Foods is a BIPOC owned and operated legacy business that is rooted in SW Detroit. They recruit, train, and retain a workforce from Detroit and have consistently provided excellent wages, benefits, and growth opportunities for residents. Over the years, Hacienda Foods has had numerous opportunities to relocate outside of the City, but has remained steadfast and committed to Detroit, its residents, and community during the most challenging of times.

SDBA has worked alongside Lydia Gutierrez and Hacienda foods and have witness firsthand her passion, proven track record and drive to continue to provide opportunities for residents, neighborhoods, businesses, and her commitment to a healthy, safe, and vibrant SW Detroit.

We appreciate the opportunity to support this development project. If you have questions, please free to reach out.

Sincerely,

Brandi Watts
Vice-President, Programs & Compliance
Southwest Detroit Business Association
brandiw@southwestdetroit.com
313-842-0986

Cc: Mark LoPatin & Co.
Lydia Gutierrez, Hacienda Foods
Kevin Johnson, DEGC, President & CEO

Detroit City Planning Commission
Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
2 Woodward Avenue
Detroit, MI 48226

June 24, 2025

RE: Letter of Support for the Institutional Building Adaptive Reuse Zoning Text Amendment

Dear Members of the City Planning Commission,

As a non-profit housing developer dedicated to creating and preserving affordable housing in Detroit, I write to express our strong support for the proposed **Institutional Building Adaptive Reuse** zoning amendment to Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code.

Our organization has successfully completed adaptive reuse projects such as **St. Matthews School** and **Transfiguration Place**, both of which transformed vacant institutional buildings into vibrant, affordable housing communities. However, each of these projects required lengthy and complex zoning changes, which significantly increased development timelines, costs, and risk. These barriers often discourage the very kind of community-centered development Detroit needs most.

The proposed amendment is a forward-thinking solution that will:

- **Enable speedier adaptive reuse of vacant institutional buildings**—such as schools, churches, and libraries—by allowing a broader range of conditional uses in residential and mixed-use districts.
- **Encourage preservation over demolition** by offering development standard reductions when a significant portion of the building is retained.
- **Facilitate incremental revitalization** through tactical preservation practices, allowing developers to bring buildings back to life one space at a time.
- **Reduce parking and loading requirements**, which are often infeasible for older structures and can be a major barrier to reuse.

These changes will make it significantly easier and more cost-effective to repurpose Detroit's underutilized institutional assets into affordable housing and community-serving spaces. They will also help level the playing field for non-profit developers like us, who are committed to equitable development but often lack the resources to navigate protracted rezoning processes.

We commend the City for recognizing the value of these historic and existing surplus structures and for proposing a zoning framework that supports their thoughtful and

Lansing | Corporate Headquarters
1118 South Washington Avenue
Lansing, Michigan 48910
517 482 8555

Grand Rapids
100 César E. Chávez Avenue, Suite 202
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49503
616 272 7880

Madison
10 East Doty Street, Suite 617
Madison, Wisconsin 53703
608 234 5291

Wilmington
100 West 10th Street, Suite 502
Wilmington, Delaware 19801
302 655 1420

Detroit
2111 Woodward Avenue, Suite 600
Detroit, Michigan 48201
313 841 3751

Chicago
225 West Washington Street, Suite 1350
Chicago, Illinois 60606
312 957 7283

Indianapolis
201 North Illinois Street, Suite 1530
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
317 423 8880



efficient reuse. We urge the Planning Commission and City Council to adopt this amendment and continue to champion policies that promote inclusive, sustainable development across Detroit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Edward Potas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Edward Potas

Development Manager
Cinnare Solutions Corporation
epotas@cinnare.com
313.544.4009

Dear Council,

As someone who's heavily invested in multiple historic buildings in Detroit, I fully support the adaptive reuse ordinance. I believe this will pave the way for more critical preservation and restoration efforts across our city.

Sincerely,
Paddy Lynch

Proprietor,
Schvitz Heath Club
Convent Detroit
Dutch Girls Donuts
Dakota Inn Rathskeller

June 24, 2025

Detroit City Planning Commission
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, MI 48226

RE: Proposed Amendment of Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code – Institutional Building Adaptive Reuse and Tactical Preservation

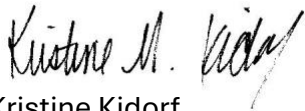
Dear Chair Smith and Commissioners,

I am writing in support of the proposed amendment of Chapter 50 to expand the permitted uses when adaptively re-using Detroit's many underutilized buildings.

As a resident of Midtown, and a historic preservation consultant, I see many buildings that could benefit from both the expansion of permitted uses and to allow for tactical preservation. Allowing conditional approval of more uses will speed up the rehabilitation process, as will allowing building owners to phase their renovations. The parking and loading reductions will benefit the rehabilitation of historic buildings in dense neighborhoods by preserving structures that might otherwise be demolished for parking. Additionally, the requirement to create parking can be cost prohibitive for a project.

I encourage the City Planning Commission to recommend to the Detroit City Council to adopt these ordinance changes as proposed.

Thank you,



Kristine Kidorf
451 E. Ferry Street
Detroit, MI 48202
313-300-9376

ALIBI STUDIO

Detroit, Michigan USA

Catie Newell

06/26/2025

To the City Planning Commission,

Our buildings take care of us - we need to take care of them. They live and age with us. They hold our most cherished events, they tell our stories, and they support life as it changes and evolves.

Adaptive reuse within the City of Detroit pairs together the creativity and ingenuity of this city with its pride and respect for the built spaces that have anchored our lives. It is truly heartbreak to watch buildings that have defined our skyline, pulled us together as a community, and anchored neighborhoods, be torn to the ground only to leave an unfillable void or to be replaced with buildings that can mark only speed and profit.

We should be supporting efforts to save our buildings. As we grow and evolve, and define new ways of being in the City, our buildings can remain the core of neighborhoods in physical structure, while also hosting our new dreams.

While many buildings continue to sit vacant, there are also sparks of space and ideas, many of which go unexpressed because of what feels like a pile of roadblocks to save them. As an architect, it has always amazed me how building new is easier than saving that which has already existed with us. Money, time, and restrictions of zoning and code requirements that when deployed in mass swallow up the chance to consider something beyond the building's original intention. We should fully encourage thinking that saves, redefines, and contributes to preserving cherished buildings and stories.

The reason I live and work in this City is because Detroit feels like the perfect host for the unexpected. The host for possibility and re-creation. The host for making new while cherishing the old.

I applaud amendments and efforts to make it easier to reuse various public, civic, and institutional buildings. I fully support these efforts to carefully and more openly consider the zoning of a building that has the potential to continue to soar.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Catie Newell', written in a cursive style.

Catie Newell
Principal, Alibi Studio
newell@alibistudio.com
(313) 482-8178
alibistudio.com

Kimani Jeffries

City of Detroit
Planning and Development Department
Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Kimani,

On behalf of Tekton Development, I am writing to express our strong support for the City of Detroit's proposed Adaptive Reuse Ordinance. This initiative is an important and timely step in addressing the urgent housing and neighborhood revitalization challenges facing our city.

Detroit is in the midst of a housing crisis. As a minority-led, Detroit-based development firm focused on building affordable and workforce housing, we see firsthand the persistent need for tools that accelerate housing delivery and reduce barriers to investment. This ordinance offers exactly that—by streamlining the path for reactivating Detroit's vacant public, civic, and institutional buildings, it enables developers like us to bring housing and neighborhood-serving amenities online more efficiently.

The ordinance's emphasis on flexible zoning, reduced parking requirements, and phased occupancy through tactical preservation reflects a thoughtful response to the practical challenges of adaptive reuse. These are powerful improvements that will help unlock hundreds of long-dormant structures across the city.

That said, we believe this ordinance should be seen as a first step—not the finish line. To fully harness the potential of Detroit's underutilized land assets, we urge the City to expand this framework to also include former school sites that are now vacant land. These parcels are often deeply embedded in neighborhood fabric and offer some of the most shovel-ready opportunities for new housing, commercial space, and community infrastructure. A streamlined process for redevelopment of these properties—mirroring the zoning relief and flexibility proposed here—could catalyze equitable growth across Detroit's neighborhoods.

We commend your leadership and the work of the Planning and Development Department in bringing this policy forward. Tekton Development stands ready to support its implementation and to work collaboratively with the City to take the next steps that our housing crisis demands.

Sincerely,

Jason Jones

Principal
Tekton Development



**PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 808
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Phone 313•224•1339
www.detroitmi.gov

June 18, 2025

Donovan Smith, Chairperson
City Planning Commission
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, MI 48226

Dear Chairperson Smith,

I'm writing on behalf of the Office of Historic Preservation, a distinct team within the Planning Department that is tasked with administration of the city's historic districts for the Historic District Commission, and more broadly, strategic historic preservation planning citywide.

In 2021, our office completed an unprecedented study of nearly eighty vacant school buildings across the city, including dozens owned by city government. Identification of feasible redevelopment paths for these blighted institutional properties has been a major goal of my team, and the city has worked diligently to increase the attractiveness of such projects. A successful redevelopment of a school, fire station, library, or other community landmark saves both the substantial cost of demolition, and the negative impact on communities when a beloved historic building is exchanged for a vacant lot. Though many such properties have been demolished in the last few years, many historic institutional properties remain without secure futures.

The proposed modifications to Chapter 50 for Institutional Building Adaptive Reuse and Tactical Preservation promise to greatly augment the city's redevelopment efforts. While an increasing number of vacant historic properties are in the process of rehabilitation (including the historic Higginbotham School in District 2, which is also a local historic district), the expansion of conditional uses allowed under this revision are a strong incentive for historic preservation, and I am hopeful that the City Planning Commission will choose to give it your enthusiastic support.

We therefore urge your Commission to carefully consider and recommend approval for this important code revision.

Regards, and at your service,

Garrick B. Landsberg, AIA
Architect and Director of Historic Preservation, OHP
City of Detroit, Planning and Development Department

cc: Alexa Bush, Director, Planning and Development Department

24 June 2024

City of Detroit
City Planning Commission
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal
Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Institutional Building Adaptive Reuse and Tactical Preservation

Dear Mr Jeffries and Mr Moots,

I write as a concerned citizen and historic preservation professional formerly employee at the City of Detroit Planning and Development Department (2016-2019). I write to express my support for the text amendments proposed to Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City Code, Zoning with respect to Institutional Building Adaptive Reuse and Tactical Preservation.

The Tactical Preservation approach to partial adaptive reuse of vacant buildings provides a unique opportunity to revitalize neighbourhoods in a thoughtful, measured approach, yet which can be applied to transform vacant buildings quickly. The tactical preservation method of incrementally transforming vacant buildings helps create an immediate transformation, while infusing the building with new life over time, and attracting new investment for further development to a sustainable degree. The approach helps preserve the civic buildings that anchor communities, repairs neighbourhoods through re-activating dormant buildings, and reverses negative economic impacts by returning value and active use to properties. Incremental adaptive reuse signals to the community, visitors and developers alike the possibility that change can occur, will continue to occur and can occur further down the line.

I am very excited to see this approach to transforming Detroit's vacant buildings and preserving the history and character of the urban environment through a change in zoning regulations. Its another step towards revitalizing the city while also contributing to sustainable building practices that minimize environmental impacts and reduce carbon emissions. Such innovative new zoning sets Detroit apart as a city prepared to make important changes needed for visible and lasting progress.

Sincerely
Jacqueline Taylor

Hello,

I am writing to express my support for the amendment to Chapter 50 of the 2019 Detroit City code, *Zoning* with respect to Institutional Building Adaptive Reuse and Tactical Preservation.

I work daily to put city-owned property back into productive use through development and sale of city-owned property and this amendment would greatly increase the potential for redevelopment of many properties in the city's portfolio. These buildings are often located within neighborhoods and expanding the allowable uses allows for these buildings increase their potential to serve neighborhoods with uses that enhance residents' quality of life. These historic institutional buildings are often examples of excellent architectural design and quality that cannot be reproduced and increasing the development potential for these buildings will make their preservation more feasible.

Thank you,

JP Mansolf, AICP | Development Director – Central Region

City of Detroit – Housing and Revitalization Department

Coleman A. Young Municipal Center

2 Woodward Avenue, Suite 908

313-224-9077

JP.Mansolf@detroitmi.gov

Dear City Planning Commission -

After attending several of the City Planning Commission staff engagement sessions, I am writing this afternoon in strong support of the proposed ordinance you are considering this evening.

The Institutional Adaptive Reuse ordinance would facilitate the redevelopment and adaptive reuse of important and often historical and culturally significant institutional structures located throughout the City of Detroit. Too often these buildings have become functionally obsolete for a variety of reasons, the least of which, unfortunately, are restrictive residential zoning regulations which can prohibit creative, community supporting uses that could give these structures a new lease on life.

The Institutional Adaptive Reuse ordinance seeks to remove many of these barriers allowing new housing and certain commercial activities that align with neighborhood reinvestment strategies and can act to support the everyday needs of residents in the City of Detroit. We have lost too many irreplaceable schools, libraries, and other structures that provided a common touchpoint for the neighborhood during their heyday, and, under this proposal, might have had another chance to positively contribute.

Please support this proposal so we can see more of these buildings find a different, more positive outcome.

Thank You,
Francis Grunow
34 West Bethune
Detroit, MI 48202