

Alton James
Chairperson
Lauren Hood, MCD
Vice Chair/Secretary

Marcell R. Todd, Jr.
Director

City of Detroit
CITY PLANNING COMMISSION
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: (313) 224-6225 Fax: (313) 224-4336
e-mail: cpc@detroitmi.gov

Brenda Goss Andrews
Damion W. Ellis
David Esparza, AIA, LEED
Frederick E. Russell, Jr.
Donovan Smith
Angy Webb
Henry Williams

January 27, 2021

HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

RE: Proposed Capital Agenda FY 2021-22 Through FY 2025-26 (CONVEYING QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDING APPROVAL WITH MODIFICATIONS)

Article 6 Chapter 1 of the Detroit City Charter calls for the Budget Director in cooperation with the Planning and Development Director to assist the Mayor in the preparation of a capital agenda and capital budget. On November 2, 2020 consistent with Article 8, Chapter 2 of the City Charter, the Proposed Capital Agenda for FY 2021-22 through FY 2025-26 was submitted by the Budget Department to the City Clerk and conveyed to Your Honorable Body. The Capital Agenda is one of the Development Matters as defined in Section 6-204 of the Charter that is charged to the City Planning Commission (CPC) for review. Therefore, the Commission has been in review of the document since that time. Following an introductory presentation by Donnie Johnson of the Budget Department, CPC staff and LPD on December 5, 2020 and subsequent robust discussion at its, January 21st meeting the Commission completed its review and now submits this report for your consideration.

REVIEW

The Commission acknowledges of the Budget Department's accomplishment, preparing this document under our current circumstance and in a compressed timeframe. The Pandemic has had a significant impact on City government, causing a budget deficit, staff reductions, resource limitations and the shifting and expansion of work responsibilities. It typically takes five to six months to assemble the Capital Agenda. However, the Budget Director, Tanya Stoudemire, her staff lead by Donnie Johnson and all the contributing agencies were able to complete this undertaking in a month's time. Our assessment of the document is sensitive to these factors. While it is not the comprehensive document that it otherwise would be, it responsive to the charge and reflective of the City's needs and undertakings, with the exception of those item noted in this and other reviews.

We commend the administration for maintaining and refining the organizational structure that supports the management and coordination of capital improvement projects. This structure allows for the centralized real-time evaluation, reporting and oversight of projects as an ongoing part of City government. This no doubt contributed to the agency's ability to assemble the document to the extent provided despite current challenges.

This proposed Capital Agenda retains its organization by categories: Housing and Economic Development, Open Spaces and Recreation, Health and Public Safety, Transportation, Technology

and Government Infrastructure and finally Affiliated Entities. The latter category covers the Detroit Economic Growth Corporation, Detroit Riverfront Conservancy and Detroit Wayne County Port Authority. These are separate legal entities that own, operate and maintain property, such as the Port of Detroit or the Riverfront Promenade via some sort agreement. There may be good reason to include other similarly situated agencies under this heading. A clear understanding of the criteria and consistent application thereof should address this minor issue.

This Capital Agenda is inclusive of new and ongoing or carryover initiatives, while also covering new undertakings the City has devised including those that result from the City's response to COVID-19. Capital dollars have been spent to acquire computer equip to afford City staff the ability to work remotely, construct a new COVID testing space at the Joseph Walker Williams Rec Center and funds are proposed to be spent to retrofit buses with shielding to safeguard drivers. It is supportive of neighborhood based projects which the Commission has reviewed such as Eastern Market, the State Fairgrounds Amazon project, the FCA expansion and the Gordie Howe International Bridge. These and other projects benefit greatly from new or improved infrastructure and public facilities such as roads, parks and fixtures of our transit system. Modernized and improved parks and recreational facilities provide amenities for all users. The Capital Agenda will support these efforts and support the creation of new attractions like the Joe Louis Greenway. The needs of our first responders are also covered with plans to provide them with the technology, equipment and personal gear to safely, swiftly and more effectively service this community.

The five-year plan also speaks to the technology government needs in order to operate and the support of government operated utilities. DWSD will make a \$400 million investment in our system over the term of the plan, while the Public Lighting Department will continue its phase out, decommissioning power generation and transmission capacity, shifting customers to DTE, while partnering with the Public Lighting Authority to maintain our street lighting network.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The City Planning Commission has completed its review. While we find the document to be generally in good order, there are a few corrections and additions that we have identified along with a number of questions we are seeking answers to. The commission has also identified some additional areas that should be addressed in the next Capital Agenda and/or as part of related city initiatives. The CPC recommends approval of the proposed Capital Agenda FY 2021-22 through FY 2025-26 upon the following corrections, additions and questions being addressed.

Concerns

- On page 35 of the under the Planning and Development Department, we note that the strategic priorities of the Department do not include master planning, which is one of its Charter mandated responsibilities and is also spoken to in the Michigan Planning Enabling Act. Add Master Planning to Strategic Priorities.
- On page 28 of the document the Health Department claims the Animal Control agency. On page 129 the General Service Department GSD also claims Animal Control as of 2021. Which is it or is there a distinction between the two items that needs to be made clear?
- Informational and educational sessions need to be held with the community as it concerns the implementation of bike lanes across the City. Many riders avoid them and some installations cause confusion for motorists and pedestrians. Due to operational concerns and the loss of right of way many communities do not want them and would prefer to have a choice as to their installation and not have them thrust upon their neighborhoods. The

City needs enhanced outreach campaign for community update and awareness of all improvements to streets be it, bike lanes, speed humps, repaving/reconstructions, lighting, etc.

Questions

- *Demolition and the Housing and Revitalization Departments* – The Commission recognizes the long-time trend toward blight removal by demolition. We are happy to see a greater focus on rehabilitation and restoration as a solution too. How does the City determine the viability of residential structures, which are to be demolished vs rehabbed or restored? Is deconstruction an option in order to recycle and take advantage of viable materials and components of structure no longer deemed viable as a whole.
- *Health Department* – Can or will the existing or the proposed to be acquired additional Mobile Health Clinic be used to provide COVID-19 vaccinations to seniors or other members of our population whose mobility is limited? Or, are those facilities dedicated to the outreach services they were designated to provide?
- *DPW* - What is the department doing to ensure the quality and performance of work done by contractors resurfacing or reconstructing City streets? There are a number of residential streets where the work has been performed and for example the final grading of the roadway results in improper drainage causing ponding along the curbs and in driveways.
- Page 98 lists a project with the name Rosa Parks Transit Center, but the description refers to renovations at the Shoemaker Terminal. Please review and correct.

Additions to the currently proposed Capital Agenda

- As with other City-owned properties managed and operated by others Belle Isle should be included in the Capital Agenda, particularly in given city involvement with capital improvements to the Nature Center, aquarium and conservatory for example. Add to Open Space and Recreation.
- Please restore City Airport as an agency under Transportation.
- Add the Truck Route Identification project along with industrial corridor identification to the Capital Agenda
- Add to DPW and DWSD projects studying the residential flooding issues in the City caused by high water levels in waterways and failed or inadequate infrastructure with particular focus on waterfront and adjacent communities.

Additions to be developed for the next proposed Capital Agenda

- How has the Pandemic affected capital planning, preparedness efforts and emergency operations? The Commission would like to see projects developed in the next Capital Agenda reflective of what the City has learned and recognized as needed areas of improvement. The Commission would also like to review the City's current Emergency Operations Plan and related proposals for updating that Plan.
- Similarly, with the exercise of discretion, the Commission would like to see some coverage of the City's homeland security and cyber security efforts to protect the public and safeguard City government.

- Department of Innovation and Technology - What is the status of public WiFi implementation? This is a quality of life issue addressing the digital divide and would seem a fitting capital improvement project.

In closing the Commission would like to share one additional observation rising out of our review concerning communication. Our present circumstance has shown the value of regular if not daily briefings by state and local government to the public. With the City undertaking so many projects for the public good, those that arise out of normal circumstance and those that arise in response to critical or emergent conditions like those brought on by COVID-19, there is a clear need to better ensure the public's awareness of the City's efforts. A better informed public, in theory, might yield a better understanding of how the City works, contribute meaningfully to the formulation and implementation of these efforts, and most importantly benefit from them. The continued development and evolution of public awareness campaigns and a greater commitment from and partnership with local media outlets would serve the City well.

Respectfully submitted

ALTON M. JAMES, CHAIRPERSON



Marcell R. Todd, Jr., Director
David Teeter, Policy Analyst