
24 June 2025

City of Detroit City Planning Commission
208 Coleman A. Young Municipal Center
Detroit, MI. 48236

RE: Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) Proposed Freud Street Pumping Station

Chairman Smith and Members of the City Planning Commission:

We once again appreciate the opportunity to address this Honorable Body to express our **OPPOSITION** to the proposed rezoning. The District 4 Community Advisory Council is on record opposing this project as well and since first learning of this project, The WATER Project launched a petition drive to OPPOSE it. Attached are **382** signatures. There is an overwhelming disenfranchised and deflated community that has perceived this as a “done deal” since we first learned of it after GLWA had been advancing it quietly for years. The absence of their numbers in-person, before you should not be misinterpreted. The timing of meetings, confusion and the delays in this process has made it difficult to sustain this effort which works in favor of the applicant.

While we are perplexed and continue to be disappointed in the Great Lakes Water Authority (GLWA) posture and approach, we cannot change history and it appears we cannot influence them to change their behavior. We understand the Commission’s history and desire to support investment in the City while often seeking to find balance and a “WIN-WIN” for complex or controversial projects. In using Planned Development (PD) for other transformational projects, the “WIN” for community comes as the project propels or changes the economic health and trajectory of neighborhood in a positive way. This project does none of that and therefore, there is NO WIN for our community.

Using the PD classification gives the Commission Staff authority to negotiate the minute details of the project versus leaving those items for the uncertainty of how the Buildings Safety, Engineering and Environment Department (BSEED) might deal with them under R5. And, while we have more faith in a Legislative Branch agency, the process has been no more transparent than GLWA’s previous activities and there is no mechanism for formally engaging community representatives in the decision-making that will affect them. This is a flaw in the system Commission should consider addressing.

In opposition to this project we have provided numerous supporting documents, including those distributed at the January 16 Hearing. Supplemental materials were submitted with testimony on June 5 where we provided evidence a Building Permit had been issued, but we have yet, to receive a copy.

Land Use – To support our opposition, this correspondence includes a variety of data and graphic information you might find helpful in considering your decision. At the end of the day, this is a **ZONING/LAND USE** matter that is focused on an **INDUSTRIAL** encroachment (regardless of R-5 or PD) into a residential neighborhood (R2). By their own admission at the January 16 Hearing, GLWA officials stated this is an **INDUSTRIAL USE**. Therefore, the only land use that should be before you, is an “M” classification and the insertion of that use would be rejected.

Any attempts to mask this project with some other classification ignores any rationale for approval. Simply attaching design conditions whether administered through BSEED or by the Commission turns this into a discussion about façade choices and landscaping enhancements and dismisses the underlying land use that surrounds the project.

The November 20, 2024 Staff Report included eight (8) **Rezoning Approval Criteria** that were suggested as the basis for making your decision and as demonstrated in the chart below, the review of each and every criteria should cause you to **REJECT** this rezoning request.

Rezoning Approval Criteria Chart

1	Whether the proposed amendment corrects an error or meets the challenge of some changing condition, trend, or fact.	This project DOES NOT CORRECT an error in land use. While the conditions of the neighborhood and surrounding environment have changed over its hundred-year history, it has mostly deteriorated due to outside forces and bad public policy. Rezoning would set a DANGEROUS PRECEDENT for the City, continue to harm and negatively impact the community.
2	Whether the proposed amendment is consistent with the Master Plan and the stated purposes of the zoning code.	The proposal is an INDUSTRIAL USE encroaching on a low-density residential neighborhood and therefore, is NOT CONSISTENT with the Master Plan and other planning documents that should be used to guide this decision, including: - 1993 Jefferson-Chalmers Modified Development Plan, which demonstrates all the land west of Dickerson was to be used for HOUSING; and - 2019 Jefferson-Chalmers Neighborhood Framework Plan which recommends STABILIZING NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING.
3	Whether the proposed amendment will protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the public.	While the project will provide much needed investment in the REGION's water system, the neighborhood is one-thirtieth (1/30) of the project's service area and the project does little to support combined system capacity within the Jefferson-Chalmers community. As a result, the project and proposed rezoning's introduction of an industrial use will UNDERMINE the health, safety, and general welfare of the public.
4	Whether the city and other service providers will be able to provide adequate public facilities and services to the subject property, while maintaining adequate levels of service to existing development.	The construction of the project has already caused significant disruption in traffic, access for emergency vehicles and public transportation. Adequate service will be restored when the new street is opened.
5	Whether the proposed rezoning will have significant adverse impacts on the natural environment, including air, water, soil, wildlife, and vegetation and with respect to anticipated changes in noise and regarding stormwater management.	The project has already had SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE ENVIRONMENT IMPACTS as the applicant has made little to no effort to mitigate noise and air pollution as generators operate 24/7 while it appears there are no dust and sediment controls. Forever DETRIMENTAL IMPACTS include a building - whose style, materials and scale are completely out of context, with large, blank and impenetrable facades; - with a site and footprint that permanently disrupts the street pattern and grid; and - due to its size will cast a looming shade and shade on surrounding residential properties.
6	Whether the proposed amendment will have significant adverse impacts on other property that is in the vicinity of the subject tract.	Detroit has witnessed the long-term adverse effects of the encroachment of industrial and incompatible commercial uses into residential neighborhoods. Given the City's long and storied history, there is little doubt the proposed rezoning will have SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS on property values in the vicinity. Further, what chilling message will this approval send about confidence investors and home owners should have that after nearly \$50M in housing investments in Clairpointe Woods, Habitat Housing and Creekside homes, City leaders are prepared to undermine their decisions in less time that it takes to pay-off a mortgage
7	The suitability of the subject property for the existing zoning classification and proposed zoning classification.	While the project's municipal ownership may qualify it for a less obtrusive zoning classification, the proposed land use is INDUSTRIAL . The project is NOT SUITABLE for the existing zoning classification and DOES NOT COMPLY with the proposed LAND USE .
8	Whether the proposed rezoning will create an illegal "spot zone."	The proposed rezoning is: • arbitrary, capricious and unreasonable; • inconsistent with the surrounding area; • disrupts the overall zoning plan and the character of a neighborhood; • grants special privileges to the applicant; • negatively affects neighboring properties; • creates inconsistencies in land use; and • is strongly discouraged and scrutinized by courts. Therefore, the proposed rezoning WILL CREATE AN ILLEGAL "SPOT ZONE" and it's likely the Court will be used to arbitrate this matter.

Finally, while the PD grants Commission the power to negotiate finite details of the project, the applicant's track record of ignoring public processes and laws gives us little faith they will comply with requirements that accompany the rezoning. Enforcement of the terms attached to Commission's approval will be BSEED's responsibility, an agency which has already "accidentally" issued a Building Permit for this project. What recourse will we have when they fail to comply and we are stuck with a project that should not exist, let alone have gained approval without following proper procedures.

Community Engagement

While we all bemoan the lack of community engagement on this project. GLWA Board's took action in 2016 that authorized the purchase of property and approval of the design contract for the project. Prior to the community learning of the project, GLWA had more than eighty opportunities to engage, including direct communication and inquiry about their work in the community with GLWA's CEO and other officials.

Yet, the community only became aware of the project by chance due to an errant comment by Commission staff during a random visit to CPC's office in March of 2024.



April 9 Meeting Flier



Proposed East Jefferson and Conner Project

There efforts to engage to community only occurred at our insistence and we do not expect GLWA to change its posture or approach as demonstrated as recently as this spring, when flyers for an April 9 meeting were distributed on April 6.

On April 9, GLWA disclosed their plans for the East Lake Baptist Church which they have owned since the end of 2020. Flyers were only distributed in a few blocks east of the site while the project has a much greater impact. And, while we appreciate their need to upgrade the regional system, here's another example of bad planning where a 100% corner is proposed to be developed for an industrial use – expanding the industrial footprint in our community.

It should be demonstrated, GLWA dismissed every level of public engagement and public approvals, including:

- ignored the recommendations from the City's Preliminary Plan Review (PPR) in July 2021;
- failed to comply with the City Ordinance regarding notice requirements when vacating the street and alleys last spring;
- disregarded State's Dept. of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy (EGLE) (financing the project) suggestion they engage with the community; and more importantly, they
- advanced the project without zoning approval, thinking they were exempt from zoning approvals; and
- secured a Building Permit without land use approval.

Graphic Presentations + Messaging – At the same time, GLWA continues to use misleading statements as we know they have purchased additional adjacent property from reticent property owners when they promised their footprint and acquisition would not expand. Additionally, their graphics are disingenuous at best. It is curious their presentations now include future housing – an idea we introduced. While there are some duplexes in the area, the overwhelming majority of homes are single-story or bungalows of much lower heights. The outline of houses shown below would have to be in the middle of the street and that west elevation has no homes in front of it. Misleading renderings conveniently place buildings and landscape that cover the large blank walls of the project.



West Elevation with Misleading Housing Heights



West Elevation – Are there homes there or not?



East Elevation Facing the Neighborhood

Tennessees Homes West and South



Conner Ave. Elevation – Tree/House Conveniently Cover Blank Wall



East Perspective Facing the Neighborhood

A huge blank wall of the east elevation that will face the community further demonstrate how inappropriate this use is for a small-scale residential neighborhood. They have obfuscated and been responsible for their own delays in this process and will complain about having spent untold millions on the project as if it is anyone's fault for them moving forward without the necessary approvals.



Diesel-Powered Electric Generators from GLWA Presentation

The veiled threat of noisy, noxious and obtrusive diesel-powered temporary generator as necessary for alternative improvements to the existing Freud Pump Station is equally misleading. GLWA is DTE Energy's largest customer. To suggest an alternative energy source for an extended project at the existing pump station could not be designed in cooperation with DTE insults our intelligence and further undermines our trust in GLWA.

Coming to the community and this Body with sexier slides and more sizzle does not change the flavor of the steak.

Please be diligent and don't be fooled. Do not reward them for their bad behavior.

Relationship to Floodplain + Fox Creek – it is important to note that this project has NOTHING to do with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEAM) 100 Year Floodplain or Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs). GLWA's inclusion of information in presentations conflates and confuses the issues. It suggests they may have concern for this challenge, but it's really a distraction from the matter at hand. It's true that GLWA had to collect and treat water that ran into the street and catch basins after topping the shoreline during the Great Lakes encroachment in 2019 and 2020. But that's their job.



Great Lakes Flooding



Fox Creek South of E. Jefferson



Cranes at Fox Creek Gates

At the same time, it's ironic GLWA has no record of the volume of sewage that spit from the Fox Creek CSO. GLWA took no responsibility for their system failures in June 2021 that left condoms hanging from trees while sewage overtopped the banks of Fox Creek and ran into residents' yards and homes. EGLE's permit for the CSO expired in October 2022.

That lack of responsibility for that event and by advancing proposed project, how dare they suggest they are protecting the interests of the Jefferson-Chalmers community.

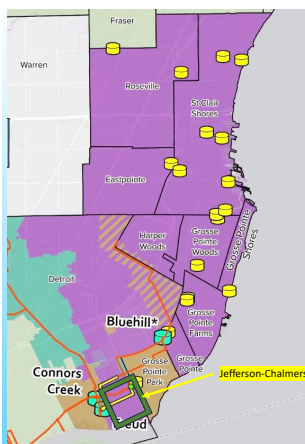
Furthermore, for over a year GLWA has been working on the Fox Creek CSO and after numerous requests, we still have no insight on this project and they have acquired property on East Jefferson using eminent domain.

Service Area and Alternatives – By their own admission, the problem with the combined regional system is not wastewater, but stormwater. The area served by the existing Freud Pump Station is **30 TIMES** the size of the Jefferson-Chalmers community. So, the suggestion this investment will somehow help our community is also misleading.

The community:

- supports GLWA's efforts to upgrade the region's infrastructure;
- appreciates that 70% of the region's combined system flows through the Jefferson-Chalmers community;
- understands they are attempting to intercept two sewers where they conveniently come together near Freud and Conner.

However, the project includes a new 2,500-foot force main to reroute the sewage intercepted on Freud to the Detroit River Interceptor (DRI) in East Jefferson and GLWA could have used force mains to consider a variety of other locations and the sewers have miles of opportunities outside Jefferson-Chalmers.

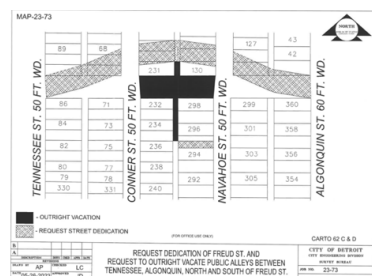


Pump Station Service Area

Figure 1 – Location Map of GLWA Freud Pump Station Improvements Project
CWSRF Project Number 5708-01, City of Detroit



Force Main to E. Jefferson



City Council Action – Last year's street and alley vacation was advanced by several Executive Branch agencies in direct violation of City Ordinances. The Department of Public Works, Law Department and Planning & Development failed to comply with a variety of regulations including Section 43-7-1 requiring petitions from adjacent property in support of the vacating of alleys and streets. In addition, City Council did not hold a Public Hearing leaving the community no recourse as the penalty for these actions is a \$250 fine and misdemeanor and compelling the Wayne County Prosecutor to pursue this action is highly unlikely.

Please reference the May 3, 2024 Great Lakes Environmental Law Center Letter previously submitted (also available on our website). GLWA's suggested they had no public outreach obligations, because they had purchased all of the "adjacent" property.

Unfortunately, Council was unwittingly complicit in supporting this illegal action and we understand that the momentum created by their approval, makes it difficult to prevent the project from moving forward. However, the Commission should not allow the dominos put in motion by the previous actions to impact its decision and cause further harm to our community.

Moreover, it is disappointing that Council lacks the necessary staff capacity to conduct thorough due diligence required by more complex projects. Matters as important and impactful as these should not be dispensed through a simple

Committee referral and Consent Agenda approval. As a visit to the site and recent drone photos submitted on June 5 demonstrate, this is a HUGE project that the 8-1/2 x 11 drawings submitted for approval could not capture. Most everyone is shocked by the project's sheer size in this location.

Over thirty years ago, Dr. Rory Bolger taught me that “the Zoning Ordinance is the legislative expression of a Community’s Master Plan.” The Planning & Development Department’s website suggests “For residents, the Master Plan gives voice to your hopes and concerns for Detroit’s future and prioritizes actions.” Approval of this application violates the spirit of those ideals.

The City Planning Commission is where critical analysis, thoughtful deliberation and sound decision-making is often missing in an Executive Branch dominated place that favors the transaction over consideration of impact. As a result, the Commission plays an important role ensuring changes in land use consider the Master Plan and long-term consequences. This means you stand as the last line of defense to protect the residents of our community from this industrial encroachment and its dangerous precedent.

In closing, the proposed rezoning is NOT part of the community’s Master Plan. The approval of this project will set a dangerous precedent allowing GLWA and future applicants to act with impunity. The analysis of all eight (8) **Rezoning Approval Criteria** results in a resounding **NO**. This project should be **REJECTED**

I will be attending virtually and can respond to any questions the Commission may have and hope the Commission might allow for additional dialogue on the points raised in this submittal.

Sincerely yours,


Jay C. Juergensen
Lead Organizer and Technical Expert

Attachments: Electronic and Paper Petition Signatures as of June 22, 2025
 Great Lakes Environmental Law Center Letter – May 3, 2024



References: June 5, 2023 Testimony and Supplemental Materials (Hand Delivered)

			
WXYZ – Channel 7, May 21, 2025	Planet Detroit, March 20, 2025	Planet Detroit, March 19, 2025	Planet Detroit, April 5, 2024

Detroit Free Press, October 16, 2024 (Subscription Required) –
<https://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/detroit/2024/10/16/detroit-neighborhood-jefferson-chalmers-residents-feel-unheard/75483639007/>

Copies to: District 4 Councilwoman Latisha Johnson
 District 4 Community Advisory Council