

Frequently Asked Questions 415 W. Washington Request for Proposals

Q: Why is the City selling the 415 W. Washington site?

A: The building and garages are no longer needed for city field operations/maintenance activities, since these functions were moved to the Wheeler Center in mid-2007. The Financial and Administrative Services Area has determined that the property is “surplus.” The City will consider proposals for sale or long-term lease of the property, if the proposal meets the site development objectives.

Q: Can the existing buildings on the site be torn down?

A: The building is a contributing property to the Old West Side Historic District. All work on the property, including demolition, must be reviewed and approved by the Ann Arbor Historic District Commission. Demolition of contributing properties is strongly discouraged by city code. There are rare instances when the Historic District Commission can approve demolition. If the owner can demonstrate that the building is a hazard to the safety of the public, or if retaining the building is an economic hardship, and the Historic District Commission is convinced that demolition will correct the condition, it may issue a notice to proceed. The Historic District Commission must also approve any new construction on the property to ensure it is compatible with the surrounding historic district.

Q: What will happen to the public parking currently on this lot?

A: The \$2/day parking is a temporary arrangement and is intended to be discontinued when the City signs an agreement for the site.

Q: Is the 721 N. Main parcel part of this RFP?

A: No. The 721 N. Main site will continue to be used by the City as a staging area for the anticipated Police/Court construction on the City Hall site.

Q: The site is located in the Allen Creek floodplain. Can anything be done with it?

A: Yes, with limitations. If the existing structure is substantially improved, the Michigan Building Code will require the ground floor to be open and the uses to be put on the second level. However, the Building Code includes some exemptions for maintaining historic structures that may apply, depending on what is proposed. If a new structure is proposed, the lowest floor of a non-residential use must be elevated or floodproofed to an elevation 1 foot above the 100-year flood elevation. If residential use is proposed, the lowest floor must be elevated to an elevation 1 foot above the 100-year flood elevation.

The eastern portion of the site is located within the floodway, which has additional restrictions. State law prohibits new or expanded residential uses within the floodway. The Allen Creek Greenway Task Force and the City of Ann Arbor Flood Mitigation Plan have recommended that the floodway portion of the site remain open. Additionally the Flood Mitigation Plan advises against parking in the floodway since the flood depths within the floodway exceed 2 feet.

Other floodplain constraints include:

- Construction projects within the Allen Creek Drain easement require a permit from the Washtenaw County Drain Commissioner.
- Construction projects within the floodplain require a permit from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality (MDEQ). Flood flow may not be obstructed in a manner that causes a rise in flood elevations at the property line.
- The State, County, and City all require removal of soil to compensate for any proposed fill.