



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake  
Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

### STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur  
Director

May 27, 2010

#### REQUEST:

- Oldtown Redevelopment Plan (Master Plan)
- Street Closing/ Portions of Forrest & McElderry Streets

#### RECOMMENDATION:

- Oldtown Redevelopment Plan (Master Plan)- Approval and Adoption
- Street Closing/ Portions of Forrest & McElderry Streets - Approval

**STAFF:** Tamara Woods

#### PETITIONERS:

- Oldtown Redevelopment Plan (Master Plan): Department of Planning
- Street Closing/ Portions of Forrest & McElderry Streets: Baltimore Development Corporation

**OWNER:** Mayor and City Council and various private property owners

#### SITE/ GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: The boundaries of the Oldtown Redevelopment Plan study area are the JFX to the west, Broadway to the east, and Monument and Fayette Street to the north and south respectively. The Oldtown area is centrally located between downtown Baltimore and the Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions.

General Area: The Oldtown Area is located directly to the east of Downtown. The Oldtown Mall Redevelopment site is bordered roughly by Aisquith, Orleans, and Ensor streets. The plan area includes the Oldtown Mall, site of the former Somerset Homes, Dunbar Homes, the main Post Office, BG&E and part of the State's correctional complex. Oldtown is also home to several important institutions and organizations including Sojourner-Douglass College, Dunbar High School, Johns Hopkins Medical Institutions, East Baltimore Community Corporation and a new public library.

#### HISTORY

- Ordinance No. 70-760 – Established Oldtown Urban Renewal Plan enacted 7 April, 1970.
- Ordinance No. 00-085 - City Streets - Opening - Certain Streets and Alleys Lying within the Oldtown Urban Renewal Project enacted 13 November, 2000.
- Ordinance No. 00-086 - City Streets -- Closing - Certain Streets and Alleys Lying within the Oldtown Urban Renewal Project enacted 13 November, 2000.

- Ordinance No. 04-888 - FOR the purpose of designating the area located within certain boundaries as the Oldtown Mall Local Historic District enacted 6 December, 2004.
- Ordinance No. 07-498 Oldtown Urban Renewal Amendment No. 9, dated July 10, 2006, approved by the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, dated September 20, 2007.
- Ordinance No. 07-508 Rezoning - 400 and 510 Forrest Street, 400 Mott Street, 416, 418, 420, 422, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429-31, 430, 432, 433, 434, 436-38, 437, 439, 440-42, 441, 444, 447, 449-57, 450, 459, 461, 463, 465, 467, 469, 470, 471, 501-03, 505-07, 509, 511-13 1/2, 515-17, 519 Oldtown Mall, and a portion of 1000 Orleans Street enacted 26 September, 2007.

## CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The request conforms to the goals and objectives of the Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan, specifically:

- LIVE Goal 1: Build Human and Social Capital by Strengthening Neighborhoods (Objective 1: Expand Housing Choices for all Residents, Objective 2: Strategically Redevelop Vacant Properties Throughout the Objective 3: Maintain and Create Safe, Clean, & Healthy Neighborhoods, Objective 4: Target Neighborhood Planning to Leverage Investment)
- LIVE Goal 2: Elevate the Design and Quality of the City's Built Environment (Objective 1: Improve Design Quality of Baltimore's Built Environment, Objective 3: Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Mixed-use Development to Reinforce Neighborhood Centers and Main Streets)
- EARN Goal 2: Improve Labor Force Participation Rate Among City Residents (Objective 1: Align Employers with Job Seekers and Training Resources)

The request conforms to the goals and objectives of the Baltimore Sustainability Plan through the following main Sustainability Plan goals of: Cleanliness, Resource Conservation, Greening, Transportation, and Green Economy.

## ANALYSIS

### Oldtown Redevelopment Plan (Master Plan)

Oldtown was one of three original settlements in the downtown area. During the course of the 19th century, Oldtown was absorbed and surrounded by a rapidly growing metropolitan center. Gay Street, one of the major arteries from the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, grew into prominence as an important shopping street and market area for the African- American community. In the 20th century, changes to the arterial street network and the addition of an elevated highway over the Fallsway River and development pattern changes, including the several public housing complexes and the desire for shopping in the suburbs, Gay Street declined as a shopping destination. The street was closed to traffic and pedestrianized, and eventually the historic market was torn down. In 2009, Baltimore Housing razed the Somerset Homes site.

The Oldtown Redevelopment Plan was needed because both Baltimore Development Corporation and Baltimore Housing were both planning for major redevelopment efforts adjacent to each other. In 2005, Baltimore Development Corporation selected Continental Realty Corporation and McCrary Development to prepare a redevelopment proposal for the Oldtown Mall. Also, Baltimore Housing was beginning to prepare for the redevelopment of Somerset Homes, which is directly to the east of the Oldtown Mall redevelopment site.

Given the overall condition of the area and the impact to the area of the two proposed projects, it was decided that a master plan was needed to guide the redevelopment and solidify the development goals, not just of the two projects, but of the entire plan area, which many agree because of its location is important to Downtown Baltimore.

In 2007, the Department of Planning issued an RFP to select a consultant to help lead the planning process. The Department of planning worked with a consultant, Urban Design Associates on the planning process. The sub-consultants were Cobalt Group - market analysis, RK&K - traffic, Marks-Thomas Architects -design, Floura Teeter Landscape Architects-landscape design, and E & J Development – outreach. The process included over 20 meetings, including a series of public charrettes and meetings, focus groups, workgroup meetings and steering committee meetings.

The Steering Committee participants represented the following organizations: Baltimore Housing, BDC, DOT, Health Department, BCPS, Mayor’s Office of Neighborhoods, Mayor's Office of Homeless Services, City Council President’s Office, Continental Realty, A& R Development, HABC Residents Advisory Board, Fountain Baptist Church, Sojourner-Douglass College, East Baltimore Community Corporation, Edison Parking, Dept. of Juvenile Justice, BGE/Constellation Energy, Oldtown Merchants Association, Change4Real

The Redevelopment Plan not only gives recommendations and creates a framework for physical redevelopment, but also makes recommendations on sustainability and to support the human development needs of the area. The physical redevelopment recommendations were based on 5 overall design principles:

- Better connect Oldtown to Downtown
- Greening of arterial streets
- Improve existing residential developments and build new mixed-income housing
- Create a new neighborhood center for retail and community services
- Create new parks and open space links to adjacent neighborhoods

The key physical redevelopment recommendations included in the plan are for the redevelopment of Oldtown Mall, Somerset Homes redevelopment, and two Fayette Street development options (one for Baltimore Housing and the other for Sojourner-Douglass College). The other major recommendations in the plan, though very long term, are for the partial tear-down of the JFX and for the redevelopment of the Edison properties near the Fallsway.

#### Oldtown Mall and Gay Street Area

The Oldtown Mall and Gay Street Area will be redeveloped as a mixed-use commercial center with approximately 91,000 square feet of retail including a 50,000 square foot grocery store, 488 mixed-income residential units, a new community market building and structured parking. The retail center will be organized along a landscaped main street, in line with the historic market location, connecting Orleans with Hillen.

### Somerset Homes

The existing Somerset Homes site will be redeveloped as mixed-income housing with approximately 268 units. New streets and blocks will be developed in Somerset homes to provide a development framework for the new housing.

### Fayette Street Initiatives

Baltimore Housing is planning to redevelop multi-family housing along Fayette Street as possible replacement housing for Somerset Homes. Sojourner-Douglass College would like to build a School of Hotel Management and Wellness Center.

### Edison Properties and BG&E

The plan recommends redevelopment of the existing parking lots and maintenance yards into mixed-use blocks of substantial density. The mix of uses will include approximately 1,300 mixed-income residential units, 440,000 square feet of offices, a neighborhood park and adjustments to the street and block structure of the area.

### Jones Falls Expressway (JFX)

The plan recommends the replacement of the elevated JFX with a landscaped parkway that properly connects to the city street network. The plan also recommends several interim solutions including painting and providing better lighting.

### Sustainability

This Plan addresses (either directly or indirectly) many of the goals of the Baltimore Sustainability Plan, such as having energy efficient housing and mixed-use buildings, limiting hardscape and increasing the quantity of permeable surfaces in order to promote water efficiency, maximizing opportunities for “green” jobs and green design in the physical component of the plan. Opportunities for sustainable design and construction include:

- Reuse of existing buildings
- Use of recycled and local materials in new construction
- Use of low-emitting materials in residential and commercial interiors

### Human Development

The plan offers several human and economic development recommendations that will assist in strengthening all aspects of life of the current and future residents of the Oldtown area.

The goal is also to create a community in which the existing residents can thrive within the “mixed income” environment that the Redevelopment Plan envisions.

The plan makes several recommendations that provide the framework for human development within the Oldtown area. In the plan document, listed under each of the overarching recommendations are several examples of how the main Human Development recommendations may be achieved. The main recommendations are as follows:

- Improve access to quality affordable housing (both rental and for sale) and increase the rate of homeownership for existing residents.
- Improve educational attainment by providing suitable educational resources for people of all ages.
- Facilitate access to employment and career development opportunities.
- Support opportunities for business development in Oldtown.

- Build wealth.
- Improve health and balance throughout all phases of the life-cycle and the whole person.
- Improve public safety through comprehensive and coordinated efforts.
- Plan for human-scale development.
- Provide for a well-balanced, well-designed transportation system including: car, transit, bicycle, and walking, car-sharing.
- Protect the character of existing communities and limit displacement of current residents as changes occur.
- Improve accessibility so that all people, regardless of age and ability, can easily navigate the community.
- Keep local residents actively participating in the community and future decision making for the Oldtown area.

Street Closing/ Portions of Forrest & McElderry Streets

Baltimore Development Corporation is requesting that portions of Forrest and McElderry Streets be closed. The street closings are within the Oldtown Mall redevelopment site and border the northeast corner of the Forrest St. Apartments. That portion of Forrest Street to be closed is a 70 foot wide right-of-way that extends northward from Orleans Street approximately 340 feet. The portion of McElderry Street to be closed is a 60 foot right-of-way that extends approximately 160 feet from the southeast corner of Forrest and McElderry going northeast. The subject portions of the streets to be closed will be incorporated into the Oldtown Mall redevelopment project. It is staff’s opinion that these two alleys are not needed to provide access to adjacent properties and that they can be closed, declared surplus right-of-way, and be disposed.

**NOTIFICATIONS**

Staff has notified by mail Continental Realty Corporation, A & R Development, Oldtown Merchants Association, Fountain Baptist Church, HABC Resident Advisory Board, HABC Resident Advisory Board, Sojourner-Douglass College, East Baltimore Community Corporation Waters A.M.E. Church, First Charity Baptist Church, Centennial Caroline St., AB Associates, Baltimore Development Corporation, City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young, and the 12<sup>th</sup> District City Councilman Carl Stokes.

We have also notified the Steering Committee by email which contains many of the participants above as well as other City Agencies.

Copies of the Oldtown Redevelopment Plan will be available on the Department of Planning website with limited paper copies available in the Department.

**Thomas J. Stosur**  
**Director**