Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT

Thomas J. Stosur
Director

November 19, 2015

REQUEST: City Council Bill #15-0575/ Rezoning – 1520-1530 Beason Street, 1600 Beason Street, and 1220 Towson Street:
For the purpose of changing the zoning for the properties known as 1520-1530 Beason Street, 1600 Beason Street, and 1220 Towson Street, as outlined in red on the accompanying plat, from the M-2-2 Zoning District to the B-1-3 Zoning District.

RECOMMENDATION: Amendment and Approval, with the amendment of rezoning these properties to the R-8 district, as opposed to the B-1-3 district.

STAFF: Eric Tiso

PETITIONERS: Beason Street 1520, LLC and Towson Street 1220, LLC, c/o Joseph R. Woolman, III

OWNER: Beason Street 1520 LLC and Towson Street 1220 LLC

SITE/GENERAL AREA
Site Conditions: These properties are located on the northeastern corner of the intersection of Beason and Cooksie Streets. The lots are currently improved with industrial structures and surface parking and loading areas. These lots will be cleared for redevelopment of townhomes.

General Area: These properties are located on the northern edge of the Locust Point neighborhood, adjacent to the northern waterfront portion of the Locust Point Industrial Area. These properties comprise nearly half of the remaining portion of this M-2-2 zone. The properties are nearly surrounded by R-8 residential properties. The Silo Point development is one short block to the east, and Latrobe Park is located two long blocks to the south.

HISTORY
There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

ANALYSIS
Below is the staff's review of the required considerations of §16-305 of the Zoning Code, staff finds that a change to the R-8 district as staff recommends is in the public's interest, in that it will remove outmoded industrial uses, it will better compliment the residential character of the neighborhood that nearly surrounds these properties, and it will help meet the trend towards expansion of residential use in the neighborhood.

Maryland Land Use Code – Requirements for Rezoning:
The Maryland Land Use Code requires the Planning Commission to study the proposed changes in relation to: 1. The plan; 2. The needs of Baltimore City; and 3. The needs of the particular neighborhood in the vicinity of the proposed changes (*cf.* Md. LAND USE Code Ann. 2012, §10-305). In reviewing this request, the staff finds that:

1. **The Plan:** All of the properties in this M-2-2 district are currently proposed to be rezoned to the R-8 district under TrasForm Baltimore, the comprehensive rezoning project that is now under review by the City Council. Amendment of this bill to call for rezoning these properties would conform to that City-wide rezoning study. Rezoning to the B-1-3 district would create a stand-alone commercial area that would be incompatible with the surrounding neighborhood.
2. **The needs of Baltimore City:** The need for small-lot industrial uses has been reduced in recent decades, especially when immediately adjacent to residential districts. For that reason, the potential reuse of these lots with the current industrial zoning is not likely. The proposed commercial zoning is also not in demand for this location, other than to enable taller and denser residential development. Therefore, the amendment to R-8 would be most appropriate to the needs of the City.
3. **The needs of the particular neighborhood:** Rezoning these properties to a residential district as recommended by staff will support the neighborhood's stability, and will improve the livability of the immediate neighborhood. Conversely, the existing industrial zoning or the proposed commercial district in such close proximity to a residential area is not necessary strategically for the City, or desirable for this neighborhood.

Similarly, the Land Use article requires the City Council to make findings of fact (*cf.* Md. LAND USE Code Ann. 2012, §10-304). The findings of fact include:

1. **Population changes;** Between the 2000 and 2010 decennial Censuses, the Locust Point neighborhood increased by a little more than 200 households, indicating a trend towards an increasing residential population.
2. **The availability of public facilities;** This area is well served by public utilities and services, and will remain so for the foreseeable future.
3. **Present and future transportation patterns;** These properties are served by the existing City street grid, and will remain in that configuration. The reduction in the intensity of use from an industrial district to a residential district could further reduce potential impacts on traffic in the area.
4. **Compatibility with existing and proposed development for the area;** The proposed residential use for these properties will complement the surrounding residential neighborhoods, and will not have a negative impact on the community.

5. **The recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA);** For the above reasons, the Planning Department will recommend amendment of the bill to call for rezoning these properties to the R-8 district instead of the proposed B-1-3 district to the Planning Commission. The BMZA has not yet commented on this bill, but will do so separately.
6. **The relation of the proposed amendment to the City's plan.** As these properties in this M-2-2 district are currently proposed to be rezoned to the R-8 district under TrasForm Baltimore, the amendment and passing of this bill would implement that portion of the comprehensive rezoning plan.

The City Council may grant the amendment to change the zoning classification based on a finding that there was: (i) a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood where the property is located; or (ii) a mistake in the existing zoning classification. The nature of industrial use has changed in recent decades, such that small and scattered properties such as these are no longer viable for the industrial uses for which they were classified. For that reason, the amendment and approval of an R-8 district in this area will better serve the change in character for this neighborhood.

Background: Following approval of a rezoning for these properties, the applicants propose the redevelopment of these properties for approximately 47 townhomes.

Community Notification: The Locust Point Civic Association has been notified of this action.

Thomas J. Stosur
Director