



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake  
Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

### STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur  
Director

November 18, 2010

#### REQUEST:

- Uplands PUD/ Minor Amendment – Phase II Homeownership
- Final Design Approval / Uplands PUD – Phase II Homeownership

#### RECOMMENDATION:

- Uplands PUD/ Minor Amendment – Phase II Homeownership: Approval.
- Final Design Approval/ Uplands PUD – Phase II Homeownership: Approval.

**STAFF:** Anthony Cataldo

**PETITIONER:** Mayor and City Council of Baltimore City

**OWNERS:** Uplands Visionaries, LLC.

#### **SITE/GENERAL AREA**

General Area: Uplands, the former Uplands Apartment complex is located in Southwest Baltimore. The former apartment complex is approximately 61.3 acres in size and is zoned R-6. The development falls within the Uplands Urban Renewal Plan. The boundaries of the Renewal Area include Edmondson Avenue to the north, Athol Avenue to the east, Uplands Parkway to the west, Uplands Park to the south, and Old Frederick Road to the southeast. The former Uplands Apartments contained 979 units just south of Edmondson Avenue. Also included in the site area is a triangular plot bounded by Edmondson Avenue, Swann Avenue, and Old Frederick Road and a portion of the parking lot for the Westside Skills Center, zoned B-3-1 and B-2-1 respectively. The phase II area is generally located south of the West Side Skills Center to N. Athol Avenue (phase I). The interior site boundary of phase II is Old Frederick Road east to Maple Wood Drive.

Site Conditions: The site is a series of parcels in the Uplands Community bounded by Edmondson Avenue, Old Frederick, Swann Avenue, Athol Street, Uplands Parkway, Uplands forested area, and New Psalmist Church. Majority of them fall within the site known as the former Uplands Apartments, which is currently demolished. The triangle of retail properties bounded by Old Frederick Road, Swann Avenue and Edmondson Avenue are acquisition parcels in the Uplands Urban Renewal Plan. The final property is the western parking lot (along Swann Avenue) of the West Side Skill Center. The existing housing complex has been completely razed and environmental remediation is complete. The area north of Scarlet Oak

Lane, Maplewood Drive, and Cherry Way is the Phase I rental housing and is currently under construction.

## **HISTORY**

- The Uplands Apartments were built in the 1940's as market rate rental units and became low income rental units in the 1970's. Disinvestment began in the Uplands Apartments in the late 1990's with an increasing amount of units becoming empty and boarded up.
- In late 2001, after HUD foreclosed on the property, the City's Department of Housing and Community Development began the acquisition process of the Uplands Apartment complex under The Multifamily Property Disposition Reform Act of 1994 or "Right of First Refusal." Soon thereafter, in early 2002, the City became actively involved in the redevelopment of the site.
- In May of 2003, the City and Community residents collaborated to select Goody, Clancy & Associates as the architectural planning firm.
- In January of 2004, the City acquired the 52 acre Uplands Apartment site.
- The Uplands Master Plan was approved by the Baltimore City Planning Commission on September 9, 2004.
- The Uplands Renewal Plan was approved by the Baltimore City Planning Commission on September 30, 2004.
- Ordinance #04-0887, approved December 6, 2004, Uplands Renewal Plan.
- Ordinance #08-0207, approved October 23, 2008, Uplands Renewal Plan (Corrective).
- Ordinance #09-0313, approved by the Planning Commission on April 30, 2009, amended the Uplands Urban Renewal Plan.
- Ordinance #09-0314, approved by the Planning Commission on April 30, 2009, rezoned certain properties in the Uplands Renewal Area.
- Ordinance #09-0315, approved by the Planning Commission on April 30, 2009, designated the Uplands Planned Unit Development.
- On April 30, 2009 the Planning Commission approved the street closing of existing streets in the Uplands Renewal Area as well as the Final Subdivision and Development Plan for the new rights-of-way within the Uplands Renewal Area.
- On September 3, 2009 the Planning Commission approved the Final Subdivision and Development Plan for 4501 Edmondson Avenue.
- On October 8, 2009 the Planning Commission granted Final Design Approval to Phase I Rental Housing portion of the development.

## **CONFORMITY TO PLANS**

This project is consistent with the Comprehensive Master Plan's LIVE section, Goal One: Build human capital by strengthening Neighborhoods, Objective One: Expand housing choices for all residents.

## **ANALYSIS**

The applicant, Uplands Visionaries, LLC, has broken ground with the first of multiple phases of the Uplands Redevelopment Plan and is seeking design approval for phase two of the development. Phase two is the first homeownership portion of the Uplands PUD. This plan has been successfully vetted through both the community and the Planning Commission as a new, green, mixed income redevelopment that works with the unique features of the site and its

location in Baltimore City. There have been a few minor changes to building arrangements within Phase two and because the subject property is within a PUD, the Planning Commission must first approve the minor amendments and then the final design for the new Phase two buildings. The applicant has submitted to the Planning Commission for consideration the updated development plan, landscape plan, and building elevation drawings for the project. These plans make up the formal submittal to the Planning Commission for consideration of the Minor Amendment and Final Design Approval. The following is staff's review of the applicant's submittal.

Minor Amendment: Further construction of the roads and alleys, along with additional design development of phase two of the Uplands Redevelopment has led to some modifications to some of the proposed housing footprints within the site. Three single family detached homes originally along Birchwood Drive have been replaced with a row of eight rowhomes. Five rowhomes within that same block fronting Maplewood Drive have been shifted slightly south and the single family detached home facing Dunland Road has been removed along with the adjacent duplex. Parking within the alley with landscaping replaced the detached home and serves the relocated rowhomes. A proposed garage was removed in plan from the end unit rowhome at the crest of Maplewood Drive and the end unit of the building at the intersection of Maplewood Drive and Scarlet Oak Lane due to grading. An additional rowhome unit was added to the fourth row along Old Frederick as you enter off North Athol Ave. Two of the single family detached homes planned for Dawn Place have been removed and replaced with two duplex pairs. The largest change in plan was at the intersection of Maplewood Drive and Cherry Way where fourteen rowhomes were removed and replaced with six end to end rowhome units because of the severe grade change between the street and the alleyway. An additional retaining wall and plantings are also proposed at that corner.

Site Plan: The site plan has been reviewed and approved by the Site Plan Review Committee. The phase two area will contain 178 for sale units, approximately 31, of which, will be visitable. There will be a mix of two and three-story rowhomes, duplexes, and single family detached. There will be one dedicated parking space per home. Those homes that do not have garage parking will have dedicated surface parking spaces that are accessed off of the public alleys behind the buildings. Birchwood Drive and Old Frederick Road act as the main entrance drives into this phase of the redevelopment.

Building Elevations: In order to respect the existing community context and more naturally blend in with adjacent rowhomes and multifamily buildings in phase one, there are a variety of building elevations proposed within phase two. These homes are all for sale and each home may be developed slightly different due to optional upgrades and porches in some locations, but the style and 'feel' of the row of homes or duplex will be consistent with the typical building elevations submitted.

- **Brick-front Rowhomes**

In order to relate to the existing homes across Old Frederick Road as you enter from N. Athol Avenue, the proposed rowhomes in the first two blocks are envisioned with complete brick fronts. Three story models are proposed as you enter the site to create a gateway and presence with the landscaped median and open space across the street.

The second block in will be a two-story model that is more in character with the existing two-story homes across the street. The full brick facades will be in corresponding color tones to the neighbors and will have options for porches and entrance features to be added by individual owners, giving the block a variety and bit of homeowner uniqueness within the brick composition. The end units are envisioned with a gable and slight projection in order to finish the row with a stately gesture. The gables are proposed with a fiber cement panel siding with a compatible painted finish. Asphalt shingles will be used on the roofs.

- **Mixed Material Rowhomes**

Throughout the interior of the development, phase two is proposing rowhomes that are a mix between the traditional all brick rowhomes as well as those found within the surrounding neighborhood areas. These homes are a mix of façade materials and roof forms, all working together to create an interesting neighborhood mix. These rowhomes also relate to the multifamily buildings that are being constructed in phase one. The two story models are proposed along Maplewood Drive and Scarlet Oak Lane. Three story units are proposed to make up the balance of the rowhomes throughout the development phase. Similar to the all brick façade versions, these too will have options for porches and entrance features to be added by the individual homeowners. The facades differ in that they propose a base level of brick with homeowner options to add additional brick above or to clad the remainder of the façade with painted fiber cement panel siding. The end units are proposed with gables and interior units are also envisioned with gable roofs in the center of the block. The features of these rowhomes will help bridge the range in architectural style from the traditional rowhomes to the single family detached homes to be constructed within the development. The end units will also wrap the façade treatments around to the sides of the buildings to avoid just a thin application of material only along the front facades. Asphalt shingles will be used on the roofs.

- **Traditional Duplexes**

Most of the duplexes within phase two are traditional in terms of their arrangement with a shared long common wall. The proposal is to have the architecture of these homes reflect a more traditional home, including large front porches and hipped roofs with dormers. Clad in painted fiber cement panel siding, these homes will present a stately edge to the streetscaping as they march along the street. They are interspersed throughout the blocks so that most of the blocks include a mix of rowhomes and duplexes, adding to the architectural variant of the street. Asphalt shingles will be used on the roof of these buildings.

- **End to End Rowhomes**

There is a great range in topography throughout the phase two development site. In a few locations along Cherry Way, the topographic change from the street elevation to the rear alley elevation is too large to be accomplished within the given distance between the two paved areas. In order to negotiate the grade, end to end rowhomes have been proposed. Their narrow depth absorbs the grade so that one side of the house is two levels and the other side is three. Homeowners share the short side of the

building, rather than the long side as in traditional duplex and rowhome construction. Six of these homes are proposed at the corner of Cherry Way and Maplewood Drive. Their architectural style mimics the mixed material rowhomes by providing a base of brick and the upper levels clad in painted fiber cement panel siding. There is a gable roof on both the side and front façades of the building, all clad in asphalt shingles. Entrance elements lead you to the front door of each home and the façade is articulated in order to add interest to the long elevation.

- **Single Family Detached**

There are five single family detached homes proposed in phase two of the Uplands Redevelopment. Four are located along Scarlet Oak Lane across from the open space, and one is retained along Dawn Place. These homes are envisioned to be a mix of architectural style and materials to relate to a traditional neighborhood being developed over time and by individual owners. Individual owners will be able to select brick or siding options along with hipped or gable roofs. Entrance features and front porches will also be available for incorporation into the building's design. The material paint and brick colors will work with the other homes within the development. The mix of detached homes within the rowhome, duplex, and multifamily structures built within the phase and prior phase, will add to the architectural richness of the Uplands Redevelopment as a whole.

Forrest Conservation/ Landscape Plan: A Forest Stand Delineation (FSD) was submitted for the overall PUD and approved on February 12, 2008. As such, phase one and two have the required street tree plantings as part of their 100% Construction Document submittal to the Department of Transportation. As the development progressed from 2008, underground utilities have been reorganized below Old Frederick Road and the number of street trees increased with the addition of trees within the median as you enter off N. Athol Avenue. The submitted landscape plan exceeds the minimum requirement with the incorporation of a variety of foundation plantings, shrubs, and grasses throughout the site. Street trees line each of the streets and increased shrubs, plantings, and knee walls are used in locations where parking may be visible from the public right-of-way to help minimize their visual impact. Flowering trees and accent shrubs and ground covers will also be planted along sides of buildings and along alleyways, where feasible, as part of the typical planting package offered to homeowners.

- **Open space**

There are a variety of open spaces within phase two of the development. The corner of Maplewood Drive and Cherry way is envisioned with shade and ornamental trees within the open space. Open intersections and hillsides within the development are also planned to be planted and maintained by the HOA of the development. The major open space within this phase is located at the corner of Old Frederick Road and Birchwood Drive. This location will have the same street tree and sidewalk pattern as the rest of the development, but the interior will be designed with more public amenity and open space. The development team has been and will continue to work with the community on the outfitting of that space, but it is envisioned to incorporate both active and passive lawn space along with a hardscaped terrace area. Site furniture, ornamental trees, groundcovers, and swale areas are also proposed within the open space.

Sustainability: Material Selections are environmentally friendly and designed for durability and long term performance with reduced maintenance. This is accomplished as follows:

- Building exterior incorporates a mix of highly durable materials of brick and fiber cement board.
- High performance asphalt roofing with 30-year minimum warranty for pitched shingled roofs.
- Green alley to be built under the City DoT Contract.
- Public street lighting will meet LEED dark sky requirements.
- Bike lanes are being integrated along Old Frederick Road and coordinated with the City's bicycle Master plan.
- Traffic calming mechanisms are incorporated into the site design including landscaped bump-outs, speed humps, and reduced cartway widths.
- Roadway base will use recycled crushed concrete from former apartments.
- The Enterprise Green Communities Criteria will be used for this phase of the development, in the same manner it was for phase one.
- All new homes will follow the Energy Star for New Homes Program.

The following groups were notified by mail: Uplands Community Association, Southwest Development Committee, Rognel Heights Community Association, Edmondson Village Community Association, Lower Edmondson Village Community Association, Hunting Ridge Community Association, Ten Hills Community Association, Irvington Community Association, West Hills Community Association, Westgate Community Association, Saint Josephs Community Association, the Edgewood Community Association, Edmondson High School, business owners and city agencies.

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