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Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

### STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur  
Director

June 23, 2016

**REQUEST:** Port Covington Master Plan

**RECOMMENDATION:** Adoption

**STAFF:** Tamara Woods

**PETITIONER:** Sagamore Development Company

#### **SITE AREA**

**General Area:** The Port Covington Master Plan area is on the South Baltimore peninsula. Included in the plan area is a mix of manufacturing, production and utility uses, as well as several parks. The City's Ferry Bar Park is adjacent to the southwest corner of Port Covington. South Hanover and McComas Streets provide access to East Cromwell Boulevard. Those three streets handle major traffic in all directions and provide access to and from Interstate 95. Just beyond those streets to the north are the South Baltimore and Riverside neighborhoods, with the Locust Point neighborhood to the northeast.

**Site Conditions:** The 240-acre Port Covington Master Plan area is located at the southwest end of the South Baltimore peninsula along the Middle Branch of the Patapsco River. Port Covington is part of Baltimore's Critical Area; portions of the area fall within Baltimore's 100 Year Floodplain and the Critical Area's 100 Foot Buffer.

#### **CONFORMITY TO PLANS**

This request is compatible with the Comprehensive Master Plan for Baltimore City, specifically:

- EARN Goal 1: Strengthen Identified Growth Sectors *Objective 1*: Retain and Attract Businesses in all Growth Sectors;
- PLAY Goal 2: Improve Nightlife, Entertainment, and Recreational Experiences for Residents and Visitors *Objective 2*: Promote Unique Retail Venues as Shopping and Tourist Destinations; and
- PLAY Goal 3: Increase the Health of Baltimore's Natural Resources and Open Spaces for Recreation and to Improve Water Quality *Objective 3*: Ensure Public Access to the Waterfront.

In addition, the Port Covington Master Plan is compatible with both the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan and the Middle Branch Master Plan. Among other items, the Port Covington Master Plan shares the following overarching goals:

- Outline strategies for fostering a community that is economically strong and offers all residents a chance to live healthy lives and build vibrant futures.
- Promote sustainability, innovation and transformative initiatives, including the redevelopment of the Middle Branch Park to be a recreational and environmental amenity for surrounding neighborhoods and the City at large.
- Stresses connectivity of all transportation modes to increase access to the area.
- Sustainable Communities that invest in human capital.

The fourth plan that will impact the Port Covington Master Plan is the Maritime Master Plan. This plan, unlike the three other plans listed above, does speak to current approvals within the Port Covington plan area, but will also govern future approvals. The Maritime Master Plan governs the following:

- Approves locations for three recreational marinas within Port Covington:
  - Port Covington along east Cromwell Street is approved for up to 400 slips. No slips have been constructed to date;
  - Nick’s Seafood off of Insulator Drive is approved for, and is documented as having, 197 slips; and
  - Ferry Bar Park is shown as being permitting up to 34 slips. None currently exist.
- The Maritime Master Plan will require additional reviews prior to permits for several components of the Port Covington Master Plan. Review would include:
  - Water taxi stops
  - Kayak or small boat “take-out” locations
  - Floating wetland locations

## **ANALYSIS**

The Port Covington Master Plan proposes to transform the more than 60 properties which represent approximately 260 acres of underutilized industrial land and three miles of waterfront into a dynamic mixed-use community where people can work, live, shop, recreate and enjoy the natural beauty of Baltimore and its waterfront. It is the future home and global headquarters of Under Armour. Currently, Port Covington is an aging, underutilized industrial area. Due to its location and the road network it is disconnected from the rest of the City, but has tremendous potential to be a thriving, active and inclusive waterfront neighborhood. The proposed redevelopment will mean thousands of new jobs, new businesses, better transit to jobs, more than 40 acres of parks, new space for manufacturing, opportunities for innovation and entrepreneurship, and new ways to reach the waterfront.

## **Plan Vision**

The overarching vision of the Plan is to create a mixed- use destination for the City of Baltimore that is exemplified by innovation and resiliency. The goal is that the site will serve as a best-practices model for the public realm. Port Covington’s streets, utilities and parks will invite users to understand the ecology of the peninsula and Patapsco River. The site will be a modern example for transforming an area with aging infrastructure in disrepair to a smart, efficient and resilient green development for all to enjoy. The overarching Planning and Design Principles are to:

- Create a sense of arrival and make it a destination
- Make strong connections between uses, ecology and people.
- Induce multi-modal behaviors through great design and investment in the public realm.
- Make it walkable.
- Include multiple points of view to ensure diversity and plan resiliency.
- Innovate.

## **Plan Components**

The Plan is organized into several sections that follow very clearly the planning and design principles. The major plan components focus on Multi Modal Connectivity, Ecology & Parks, Resilient Infrastructure, Innovative District Approaches, Land Use and Zoning, and Civic Uses. They are summarized in the sections below.

### **Multi-Modal Connectivity**

The plan recognizes that as the redevelopment of Port Covington proceeds there will be a significant impact on existing traffic patterns, provide many travel options within the plan area and reevaluate transportation needs at all stages of development. One major plan goal is strive for a modal split goal of 50 percent non-auto travel. In addition to new streets, the plan contemplates options for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit riders.

The planned street network will include what is referred to as “A” and “B” streets. “A Streets” are for the active street frontages, while “B Streets” are geared towards less intensive uses such as loading. The goal of the pedestrian and bicycle connections is to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle trips between uses on the site and to provide the vital connection for transit users and connect to existing and planned routes as designated in the City’s master plan. The plan calls for new pedestrian and bicycle connections to the adjacent South Baltimore and Westport neighborhoods to be created in the following locations:

- A bridge under the I-95 viaduct and over the CSX rail yard connecting McComas Street to Light Street;
- A designated bicycle route in the Baltimore City Bike Master Plan incorporating the Spring Garden Swing Bridge alignment as a pedestrian and bike facility; and,
- Creating a connection to the Gwynns Falls Trail through Westport.

In addition, there are several other improvements outlined in the Plan. These improvements include two new light rail spurs along McComas Street, potential new expanded bus and circulator service, as well as potential improvements along I-95 consisting of a mixture of new construction and reconstruction of ramps for the I-95 interchanges with MD 295, I-395, Hanover Street and Key Highway.

### **Ecology and Parks**

Enhanced ecology is one of the main focuses of the Port Covington Master Plan. The strategies seek to build on those outlined in the South Baltimore Gateway Master Plan and the Middle Branch Master Plan. The master plan ecological strategies for Port Covington are:

- *Shoreline enhancement.* Restore aquatic habitat along the shoreline and near-shore areas of the Middle Branch.
- *Integrated Water Strategies.* Implement water conservation strategies including rainwater harvesting, grey water reuse, and cooling water reuse. Explore treating all stormwater through an interconnected blue/green infrastructure network.
- *Integrated Urban Ecology.* Restore and maximize habitat for waterfowl, neo-tropical songbirds and indigenous resident birds and bats. Explore ecological function of parcels prior to development; create temporary landscape installations beneficial to wildlife and water management. Use biomimicry to design urban habitat and water features.

In addition to restoration of the shoreline, the enhancement of existing parks and the creation of new parks in the plan area is paramount. Currently, the plan area has three existing parks: Swann Park, Ferry Bar Park and West Covington Park. The Plan re-envisioned the parks and greenspace by not only having larger more active parks, but also pocket parks. In addition to Ferry Bar Park, the newly imagined parks system outlined in the master plan consists of over forty acres and includes:

- East Waterfront Park- An approximately eight acre park of waterfront fastland and pier.
- West Shore Park- An approximately twenty-seven acre park of waterfront fastland.
- Founders Park – An approximately two acre park to be located centrally in the project and surrounded by larger development.
- Greenway –An approximately one and a half acre linear park stretching from Founders Park to the urban plaza and waterfront.

### Resilient Infrastructure

Green or resilient infrastructure is a significant component of the Port Covington Master Plan. This includes environmental site design which encompasses stormwater management, flood resilience, Dark Sky compliance, smart lighting systems and district-based utilities. The master plan design approach is to set all habitable space at least three feet above the 100- and 500-year floodplains to provide 50% greater flood resiliency than required by FEMA and Baltimore City.

### Land Use and Zoning

The goal of the redevelopment of Port Covington is to change the current primarily industrial plan area to a high density mixed-use area that not only retains industrial uses, but folds in residential, office and commercial uses. Currently, most of the peninsula is zoned M-3, heavy industrial, with only a small portion of the area zoned commercial (the intersection of McComas and Hanover Streets). In addition to the heavy industrial zoning, portions of the plan area are governed by an Urban Renewal Plan (URP) and Planned Unit Development (PUD) that covers approximately 68 acres on the eastern side of the peninsula.

### Civic Uses

In a master plan area and redevelopment proposal of this scale, new civic uses had to be contemplated. The master plan outlines initial consideration of accommodating public services such as public schools, emergency services and public libraries in addition to the public open space and recreational facilities. As the master plan is implemented there will be continued

coordination with all of the relevant City Agencies to locate any new public facilities within the plan area.

### **The Built Environment and Massing**

The major plan components in the section above outline those items that are common concepts that thread throughout the entire plan. The Built Environment and Massing section of the plan identifies the sub-areas of the plan and lays the framework for the physical design and vision for the redevelopment of Port Covington, and identifies the sub-areas and the character envisioned for each of those areas. Below are the major overarching principles that guide the physical redevelopment:

- Significant height will be centered in the north-central and Under Armour campus districts of the plan;
- Buildings on the west side of Hanover Street will be stepped in height away from the waterfront parks;
- The waterfront buildings east of Hanover Street will be spaced to allow and encourage pedestrian circulation to the waterfront;
- Parks on the waterfront will be publicly accessible, with signage both inviting and educating the public and nearby occupants or property owners on park rules and amenities; and
- Parks and open space will provide respite to people as well as ecosystem services throughout the site.
- Hanover Street is a primary gateway of the project and the street wall will be boulevard scale to balance the intensity of the Hanover Street transportation plan.

The plan area is divided into sub-areas called districts. The districts are:

- East Waterfront- Port Covington's East Waterfront district will be home to the development's signature mixed-use retail district and the urban plaza in the heart of the development.
- Hanover – This is the connector thoroughfare that will feature office uses with residential above. This street will be designed to carry a large volume of traffic.
- Cromwell - Cromwell Street is the primary East-West corridor connecting the East and West End Waterfront parks. A generous green allée accompanies this primary route to the Under Armour Campus. Dedicated bicycle lanes along this ecological corridor are inspiration to the innovative maker spaces and residences, which line Cromwell Street.
- Founders Park- This district will feature an open space that will be framed by development. The massing of this district is planned to be significant and iconic.
- East End -The East End is planned to offer a mix of uses with access to I-95 and the light rail station. The district is also adjacent to an urban playground under I-95. The massing is planned to vary, but be very pedestrian-oriented.
- West End – This district seeks to build upon the existing fabric of City Garage and the Schuster building. A diversity of housing types including townhomes, lofts and maisonettes with immediate access to the recreational waterfront will be unique to the

district. The buildings on the west end should be massed to step away from the waterfront parks and up toward Hanover Street.

- Under Armour Campus - The campus is designed to contain approximately 3.9 million square feet of office, studio, process innovation, sport and recreation, and other ancillary uses on 50 acres.

### **Implementation**

The Port Covington Master Plan is anticipated to take 20 or more years to implement. Over the course of time, the plan may need to be modified to allow for new technologies or behaviors, new points of view and fresh ideas that will develop in the future. Two of the core principles of this plan are to continuously innovate and seek to include many perspectives to ensure plan resiliency.

In order to facilitate the redevelopment of Port Covington from mostly larger industrial parcels to a full street grid that is envisioned to have varying scale mixed-use buildings, there are many steps that are required. The plan outlines the following areas as major points for implementation:

- Port Covington Master Plan
- Public Involvement
- Land Use and Zoning
- Multi Modal Transportation
- Parks and Open Spaces
- Establishment of the Urban Grid
- Utility Infrastructure
- Development of Parcels

### **Land Use Approvals**

While many of the items included in the list above are on-going and will incrementally happen over the course of many years, there are several items that are outlined to happen in the first couple of years to set the stage for development. These items include:

- Repeal of the Urban Renewal Plan
- Amend or Repeal the Planned Unit Development
- Modify the impending new City of Baltimore Zoning Code
- Create new streets and subdivide parcels for new development

As mentioned above, the City of Baltimore is in the process of creating a new zoning code, under an effort called TransForm Baltimore. Neither the current zoning code, nor what is proposed in TransForm Baltimore allows for the breadth of uses, density or massing that proposed in the master plan. To that end, Sagamore Development Company is intending to propose new zoning categories in TransForm Baltimore that will be specific to the Port Covington Plan area. They are as follows:

- Port Covington Waterfront (PC-1): This area is proposed for a portion of the shoreline between the Under Armour Campus area and the Sagamore Whiskey Distillery. This area

will allow for the distillery (a manufacturing use), retail, hotel, open space uses, waterfront and maritime uses. Buildings in this district would be limited in height.

- Port Covington East of Hanover Street (PC-2): This area allows for residential, office, a wide variety of retail, hotels, open space and industrial uses. The industrial use for this area includes maker space, the innovative manufacturing and light industrial uses. Height limits are not proposed for this area.
- Port Covington West of Hanover Street (PC-3): Allows more industrial uses than the area East of Hanover Street. This area also proposes height limits of 200 feet. One of the reasons for allowing more flexibility of industrial uses is to accommodate uses and structures that currently exist in this portion of the plan since this portion of the mixed-use project may be developed in later stages; and to accommodate the reuse of the City Garage and the Schuster buildings.
- Port Covington Under Armour Campus (PC-4): This proposed zoning district would accommodate the headquarters office and innovation space, the light industrial needed for prototype development, as well as open space, recreational facilities and other amenities for this unique campus. Height limits are not proposed for this area.

### Phasing

In addition to some improvements that have already begun throughout Port Covington, the phasing outlined in the plan is as follows:

- Infrastructure phasing will commence first on the east side of Hanover Street, along Cromwell Street and north. The infrastructure development will be followed by construction of the East Waterfront District.
- Following the East Waterfront District, infrastructure along Cromwell westerly toward Hanover Street and Hanover Street along the spine of the project will be constructed. Both the Cromwell and Hanover Street districts will follow this infrastructure completion.
- The West End district infrastructure relies heavily on nearby highway improvements and light rail installation for completion on its northern edge; however, much of the southern portion of the West End can be completed independently. This is one area already partially occupied with businesses.
- The final phase of the redevelopment is likely to be the Founders Park District, at the location of the existing Baltimore Sun printing and distribution facility.

### Public Infrastructure Financing

In order to enable the Port Covington redevelopment, Sagamore Development Company requested tax increment financing (TIF) from the City for local (non-highway) public infrastructure including, streets, sidewalks, utilities, parks, resilient and green infrastructure such as bio-retention and stabilized shorelines, and ecological/habitat interventions. As a condition to the introduction of TIF legislation in the Baltimore City Council, the Sagamore Development Company entered into three memoranda of understanding (MOU's) with the City setting forth requirements for local hiring, minority and women business inclusion in the project and inclusion of affordable housing in Port Covington.

Community Engagement

Throughout the development of the Master Plan, there was significant public input and this engagement is planned to continue throughout the implementation of the Master Plan. In addition to numerous community meetings and conversations, Sagamore Development Company developed a website ([www.buildportcovington.com](http://www.buildportcovington.com)) that assists community members to stay engaged. Appendix I of the master plan provides a list of groups that were included in the community outreach.

**COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION**

Notification for this item was done via email to a list of approximately 4,600 recipients, which includes both individuals and organizations. In addition, the following community organizations have been notified of this action: Community of Curtis Bay Association, Concerned Citizens For A Better Brooklyn, Cherry Hill Community Coalition, Westport Neighborhood Association, Lakeland Community Association Partnership, Mt. Winans Community Association, South Baltimore Neighborhood Association, Riverside Neighborhood Association, Sharp-Leadenhall Planning Committee, Inc., Locust Point Civic Association, Inc., Federal Hill Neighborhood Association, Inc, Federal Hill South Neighborhood Association, Sharp-Leadenhall Improvement Association and The Honorable Eric Costello.



**Thomas J. Stosur**  
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