



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

September 17, 2015

REQUEST: Southwest Partnership Vision Plan

RECOMMENDATION: Amendment and Adoption

STAFF: Brent Flickinger

PETITIONERS: Department of Planning at the behest of the community organizations and institutional stakeholders of the Southwest Partnership area

OWNER: Multiple Property Owners

SITE/ GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: The plan area is bounded by Mulberry Street/Route 40 to the north, Martin Luther King Boulevard to the east, the southern boundary of Pigtown/Washington Village to the south, and Monroe Street to the west.

General Area: The area is conveniently located adjacent to major streets: Russell Street and 295, 395 to 95, and Monroe Street to 295. The UMB BioPark is located just west of MLK on W. Baltimore Street, and beyond Schroeder Street this street becomes the Union Square Historic District, which is adjacent to the Hollins Market. Many historic sites, such as the B&O Railroad Museum and the Poe House are located within its borders, as is Carroll Park. Historically the Hollins Market has been the center of artistic endeavors, and Washington Boulevard is the spine of the Pigtown Main Street. The Mt. Clare Junction Shopping Center adjacent to the B&O Museum struggles. A consultant's study has evaluated the market potential in the area and recommends a retail investment strategy. A separate study of the Pigtown Main Street unfolds a plan for strengthening that area.

Much of the area is residential with a mixture of low, moderate, and middle-income households; however, it also includes significant commercial, institutional, light industrial, and open space potential. The housing stock is solid with a variety of architectural characteristics and decorative styles, though there are hundreds of vacant properties throughout the plan area. Several of the neighborhoods have stable home ownership and investment. A consultant's report provides more details. The report has estimated that a market exists for several hundred new owner-occupied units as well as new rental housing.

There are several development projects which will support the overall revitalization vision. The BioPark has a PUD that, when built out, will bring thousands of square feet of research uses into the area, along with new housing, a planned hotel, and some retail. A long-anticipated redevelopment project in Poppleton will include market-rate and affordable housing, along with

Baltimore Company Ironworks, which built an iron furnace at the mouth of the Gwynns Falls, near the current casino spurred the original growth of the area; but it was the development of the long-distance railroad that anchored the area as a major part of what has become Baltimore City. By 1852 the B&O employed approximately 1,000 men while the Hayward and Bartlett Iron Works employed approximately 350 men. Other manufacturers were also drawn to the area, creating neighborhoods mixed with uses and houses of all sizes.

Between 1830 and 1910, when the Southwest Partnership area streets were laid out, land parcels were subdivided into building lots, and rows of houses were built. Development continued after the Civil War and finally slowed to a trickle after World War I. Dozens of developers built houses while businessmen set up manufacturing facilities and warehouses. The rowhouse became the dominant architectural form in the neighborhood.

During the 1960s, the study area, like many other sections of the city, began to suffer from effects of steady population loss. There are a combination of factors which led to the city's population decline, including but not limited to suburban development and growth, urban job center loss, housing discrimination, clearance of many blocks through urban renewal, and the rise of drug abuse. These factors contributed to rising vacancies and crime, as well as a significant concentration of substance abuse and social service programs, and the adverse effects are still seen today.

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
 - Strategy 6: Create and preserve mixed-income neighborhoods in Competitive, Emerging and Stable neighborhoods with targeted disposition of City properties.*
 - Objective 2: Strategically Redevelop Vacant Properties throughout the City
 - Objective 3: Maintain and create safe, clean and 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 and mixed-use development to reinforce neighborhood centers and Main Streets.
 - Objective 4: Protect and enhance the preservation of Baltimore's historic buildings and neighborhoods.
- **LIVE Goal 3: Improve transportation access, accessibility and choice for City residents.**
 - Objective 1: Create a comprehensive transportation plan to improve mobility, accessibility and choice.
 - Strategy 2: Implement Bicycle Master Plan to create a complete bikeway system*
- **EARN GOAL 2: Improve Labor Force Participation Rate Among City Residents**
 - Objective 1: Align employers with job seekers and training resources
- **EARN Goal 3: Improve access to jobs and transportation linkages between businesses.**
 - Objective 2: Promote economic development throughout the City by improving business-to-business connectivity via transportation linkages.
- **PLAY Goal 2: Improve nightlife, entertainment, and recreation experiences for residents and visitors.**

Objective 2: Promote unique retail venues as shopping and tourist destinations.

The request conforms to the goals and objectives of the Baltimore Sustainability Plan, specifically:

- **CLEANLINESS GOALS: Towards Our Vision of a CLEAN Baltimore**
Goal 1: Eliminate litter throughout the City of Baltimore
Goal 2: Sustain a clean and maintained appearance of public land
Goal 3: Transform vacant lots from liabilities to assets that provide social and environmental benefits.
- **GREENING GOALS: Towards Our Vision of a GREEN Baltimore**
Goal 1: Double Baltimore's Tree Canopy by 2037
Goal 3: Provide safe, well-maintained recreational space within ¼ mile of all residents.
- **TRANSPORTATION GOALS: Towards Our Vision of a MOBILIE Baltimore**
Goal 1: Improve public transit services
Goal 2: Make Baltimore bicycle and pedestrian friendly.
- **GREEN ECONOMY GOALS: Towards Our Vision of an INVESTED Baltimore**
Goal 1: Create green jobs and prepare City residents for these jobs.
Goal 3: Support local Baltimore businesses.

The plan recognizes the goals in the Franklin Square, Poppleton, and Washington Village Urban Renewal plans, as well as the Union Square Historic District. The proposals are also consistent with the approved PUDs for the UMB BioPark and the Poppleton/La Cite project.

ANALYSIS

Process

The first planning effort to create an overall vision for the larger area began in February 2012. The leaders of the seven Southwest Partnership neighborhoods gathered over concern about a new, large methadone clinic that had opened in the Mt. Clare Junction Shopping Center. Determined to work together in order to show a shared vision that included the many assets in the area and have more clout, the leaders began monthly planning meetings.

From the beginning it was clear that the University's three entities—UMB, UMMS (the medical system), and the BioPark—had significant impacts in the neighborhoods, and that these institutions needed to partner with the community organizations in order for any plan to be implemented successfully. At the same time that the neighborhood leaders banded together to form the Southwest Partnership (SWP), Wexford, the developer of the BioPark, hired consultants to determine how they could be more involved in the future of the surrounding neighborhoods. The Wexford consultants brought the SWP planning team together with Dr. Perman, president of UMB, and the institutions began to attend the monthly SWP meetings, eventually committing to be partners in the plan creation and implementation. Bon Secours Medical System also joined as an institutional partner, along with the B&O Railroad Museum.

The SWP hired housing and commercial consulting firms, as well as Gensler Architects, who shepherded the plan to completion, providing high-quality graphics to present the vision. A

series of community meetings and workshops were held that engaged hundreds of stakeholders in the planning process. Five committees were established that continue to meet monthly. Once the major concepts were developed, Gensler and the SWP leaders held a series of meetings with City agencies to explain the concepts in the plan.

In the summer of 2015, Southwest Partnership was able to hire a director and an assistant. This vision plan will serve as the guide as the SWP moves forward in revitalizing this part of West and Southwest Baltimore.

Recommendations

This plan seeks to balance the desire for redevelopment while retaining housing opportunities for existing residents, and improving quality of life for current and future residents. The plan promotes redevelopment of W. Baltimore Street and the Hollins Market. The plan also focuses on “The Squares,” education and workforce development, safe and vibrant streets, and marketing and promotion.

West Baltimore Street

The major goal is to improve east to west connectivity and to be a 24/7, vibrant commercial center for the neighborhood. One key strategy is to create focused business “Clusters.” A targeted cluster strategy will help tie authentic, existing functions to a market need in the neighborhood, while leveraging existing buildings for appropriate use.

Strategies include:

- *Create focused business “Clusters”
- *Maintain historic building character
- *Increase commercial activity
- *Improve walkability
- *Increase density

Hollins Market District

Hollins Market occupies a central location within the planning area, near the convergence of Hollins–Roundhouse, Poppleton, Union Square and Franklin Square. The market is positioned to be an amenity for these four neighborhoods and beyond. The primary goal is to re-establish the market and its surrounding streets as a social and economic hub of the Southwest community.

Strategies include:

- *Create a “Market District” that links the market to Baltimore St. and the Biopark
- *Bring back Hollins St. as a market street and take market activity outdoors and to surrounding storefronts
- *Improve neighborhood access and connectivity

- *Increase activity and use of the market
- *Celebrate the historic character of the market and make it a community gathering space

B&O Heritage Corridor

The plan recommends creation of a “B&O Heritage Corridor” as a connected greenway running alongside the historic rail line connecting one of Baltimore’s major regional attractions to a premier green space and park. Multiple points of entry would create access for not only visitors to the neighborhood, but for residents and the community as well. The greenway would expand at Mt. Clare, requiring removal of some vacant properties along that edge. This would create a park-frontage for the adjacent homes and a wider green buffer for the greenway on the north side of the right of way.

Strategies include:

- *Increase connections between Carroll Park and surrounding neighborhoods
- *Enhance connections between the B&O museum and other historic assets such as the Mt. Clare Museum, Poe House, Mencken House, & RR Workers Museum
- *Support programs and development that take advantage of assets, resources, and opportunities
- *Increase density and economic activity

Streets and Public Space

Pedestrian and bike-friendly streets include street trees, handicapped-accessible sidewalks, bike lanes and pedestrian-scaled lighting. These elements contribute to a more attractive and walkable neighborhood. Washington Boulevard, Baltimore Street and Carey Street are major connectors among the seven neighborhoods.

Strategies include:

- *Build trusting relationships between Southwest Baltimore communities and police and improve police deployment
- *Beautify the public realm and increase safety for all modes of transportation
- *Increase public, private, and resident involvement in keeping the neighborhood clean and well maintained
- *Increase user access and programming at Carroll Park and other smaller parks around the neighborhood

Growing the Squares

Historically, residential development was sited around Union and Franklin Squares, and adjacent to Model Park in Poppleton. Currently, they offer prime real estate opportunities with park frontage for small scale redevelopment of existing rowhomes, and new development where the appropriate opportunities present themselves. The strength of those efforts will inevitably increase value and interest in nearby blocks. Physical connections such as bike paths, green

alleys, coordinated banners and wayfinding, as well as shared programming, are critical to promote a stronger relationship between Franklin Square, Union Square and beyond.

Strategies include:

- *Consider the squares as a networked collective of neighborhood green spaces
- *Improve amenities within the squares
- *Improve connection between schools and squares
- *Promote residential development and rehabilitation around parks and squares

Housing Development

The market study suggests that there is a diverse population of people that would be interested in living in the neighborhood. Building new units or rehabilitating older units will attract a diverse group of people to the area. The primary goal is to attract and encourage development of housing to attract newcomers to the neighborhood. At the same time, it is important to maintain and improve the quality of existing low-and-moderate income housing units.

Strategies include:

- *Identify neighborhood areas with strongest market potential and physical connectivity to the surrounding neighborhoods that are prime for rehab and new construction
- *Use code enforcement, receivership, and other strategies to improve the environment for new investment
- *Market homes through various outlets
- *Attract developers to undertake redevelopment projects within the focus area

Education and Workforce

Schools can be used as an asset, attracting families with children to a particular neighborhood. The eight schools within the Southwest Partnership catchment area have the potential to become choice schools for local residents and the city as a whole.

Unemployment needs to be addressed in order for the local residents to take advantage of the opportunities that are being presented. There are some existing programs in the area, but the reach of these programs is limited. The Southwest Partnership aims to connect existing workforce resources with residents, and also produce new workforce opportunities.

Strategies include:

- *Increase access to existing resources
- *Develop, expand, and promote quality educational programming
- *Build the voice of education and workforce stakeholders
- *Reduce barriers to employment and develop workforce opportunities in the Southwest Partnership area

AMENDMENTS

The prioritization table lists time frames in the plan as “Now”, “1-3 Years”, “3-5 Years.” It is recommended to add a “5+ Years” category. In addition, it is recommended to eliminate references to specific funding sources.

A number of minor amendments to the time frames and responsible parties are recommended as follows:

- 1.1 Establish Neighborhood Policing and Foot Patrols BCPD, UMB
Change time frame from “Now” to “Now” and “1-3 Years” (Change to SWP)
- 1.2 Improve pedestrian safety of Carey St. underpass and Monroe St. overpass DOT
Time frame is now 1-3 years.
Should add “Now” since meetings are taking place already
- 1.4 ***Remediate housing code violations... Housing
Change language to “Facilitate remediation” of housing code violations...
This should go from “Now” to ongoing
- 2.3 Engage renters, landlords and homeowners in SWP action plan
Should be ongoing (not just “Now”)
- 3.1 Renovate 2nd floor of Hollins Market into a community asset Public Markets
Change time frame to 3-5 years and 5+ years (Change Lead: SWP)
- 3.2 Provide safe, convenient access to Carroll Park from the north DOT (add R&P)
Change 1-3 years to 1-3, 3-5, 5+ years
- 3.4 Improve streetscaping and wayfinding along major corridors DOT
DOT recommends for wayfinding signage, the time frame could be 1-3 years.
For streetscape improvements, the time frame should be more than 5 years.
Will break into two recommendations
- 3.5 Implement historic building stabilization program...on priority streets Housing (add CHAP)
Change time frame from “Now” to “Now”, 1-3 years, 3-5 years
- 3.6 Modify urban renewal plans to reduce barriers to investment Planning
Change time frame from “Now” to 1-3 years
- 4.1 W. Baltimore St. will become a Main Street BDC
Change time frame from “Now” to 1-3 years (Change to SWP)
- 4.4 Secure sources for project gap financing SWP, BDC
Change wording to “Secure sources of capital for projects”
- 4.5 Create “pop-up” commercial program to support development of business nodes BDC (add SWP)
- 4.6 Create competitive grants program for “pop-up” businesses
Eliminate as this is an aspect of 4.5
- 4.9 Provide TA to business owners... BDC
Change time frame to ongoing
- 4.10 Develop forgivable loan program for retailers BDC
Strike the word “forgivable”

5.5 Eligible SWP neighborhoods will become Healthy Neighborhoods SWP
Change time frame from "Now" to 1-3 and 3-5 years

In addition, there is a recommended change to one section of the Financing Options to replace the following section about Tax Increment Financing with the following language about Access to Capital.

DELETE: A TAX INCREMENT FINANCING [TIF*] for the Southwest area that will be used to provide needed gap financing to attract potential Innovation Cluster developers, and to advance improvements in the Innovation Cluster vicinity. Current estimates are that this transaction needs to produce \$25 million in revenue for these purposes. The estimate of private sector investment that will result from this TIF is \$80 million. **A TIF is a public financing method that is used as a subsidy for redevelopment, infrastructure, and other community-improvement projects.*

ADD: Access to Capital

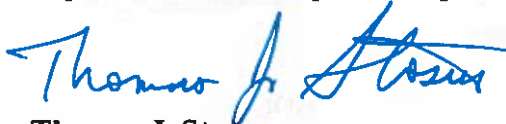
In order to provide needed financing to attract potential Innovation Cluster developers, and to advance improvements in the Innovation Cluster vicinity, various mechanisms should be explored. The City, in conversation with the SWP, should determine appropriate tools for neighborhood redevelopment, especially for local businesses. The appropriate mechanisms should be implemented consistent with the City's land use and economic development goals. In order to encourage development that would otherwise not occur but for the City's participation in the financing structure, the tools must include a significant developer/private sector contribution to the project, and must satisfy economic and risk requirements.

NOTIFICATIONS

Staff has notified by email and by post the community organizations representing the seven neighborhoods included within the planning area and other active participants in the planning process including the UMB BioPark and the W. Baltimore St. Property Owners and Business Association.

We have also notified 10th District City Councilman Edward Reisinger, and 9th District City Councilman William Welch. Other City Agencies impacted by this planning process were also notified by email of this action, including the Departments of Housing and Community Development, Transportation, Baltimore Development Corporation, and Recreation and Parks.

Copies of the Southwest Partnership Vision Plan are available on their website at <http://www.southwestpartnershipbaltimore.org/visionplan>.



**Thomas J. Stosur,
Director**