



Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION
Sean Davis, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

August 2, 2018

REQUEST: Historic Upton Neighborhood 2026 Master Plan

RECOMMENDATION: Acceptance

STAFF: Chad Hayes

PETITIONERS: Upton Planning Committee, and Bethel Empowerment & Wellness Center.

OWNERS: Mayor and City Council and Multiple Private Property Owners

GENERAL AREA

Upton is located in central west Baltimore bounded by the neighborhoods of Madison Park, Druid Heights, Sandtown-Winchester, Harlem Park, Heritage Crossing, and Seton Hill. Its northernmost boundary is Bloom Street, easternmost boundary is Madison Avenue, southernmost boundary is George Street, and western boundary is N. Fremont Avenue. Upton is a neighborhood of approximately 60 square blocks.

Upton has a diverse housing stock that includes two and three-story brick rowhomes, three-story apartment complexes, and high-rise apartment buildings. Upton has several recreation amenities such as Upton Boxing Center, Robert C. Marshall Park, and Shake and Bake Family Fun Center. The Upton neighborhood has fairly easy access to public transit options including the Upton Metro Station at the southern corner of Laurens Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. There is also convenient access to I-83 to the north and I-95 to the south.

Upton is known for being the historical center of African-American heritage and culture in Baltimore City. It was the heart of Baltimore's civil rights movement and it was once the home to the Baltimore chapter of the NAACP. Many famous historical figures were raised in Upton including Thurgood Marshall and Cab Calloway.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS & POLICIES

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 3: Maintain and Create Safe, Clean, & Healthy Neighborhoods

Strategy 1: Implement Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards

•LIVE Goal 2: Elevate the Design and Quality of the City's Built Environment

Objective 3: Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) 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

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

•CLEANLINESS GOALS: Towards Our Vision of a CLEAN Baltimore

Goal 2: Sustain a clean and maintained appearance of public land

•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 MOBILE Baltimore

Goal 2: Make Baltimore bicycle and pedestrian friendly.

The request conforms to the Neighborhood Plans Policy, adopted by the Planning Commission on January 11, 2018. During its planning process, which spanned over several years, The Upton Planning Committee fulfilled the following aspects of the policy:

- Meet with DoP staff to discuss the nature of the plan, proposed boundaries, preliminary stakeholders identified, etc.;
- Host at least three (3) open, public meetings during the process with broad notification;
- Provide documentation of all meeting notifications; and
- Meet with stakeholders who will be affected by the plan's recommendations (property owners, institutions, public agencies, other neighborhoods, etc.).
- Good-faith effort to address any geographic boundary issues or conflicts during the planning process.

Additionally the plan document is:

- Consistent with the City's Comprehensive Master Plan and other City policies;
- Includes standardized topics such as process, existing conditions, background data, goals, strategies, recommended action steps;
- Includes a detailed implementation chart, in a format acceptable to the Planning Department; and
- In a well-designed, easy to read format.

ANALYSIS

The Historic Upton Neighborhood 2026 Master Plan is a community-managed plan developed by Upton Planning Committee and Bethel Empowerment & Wellness Center. While this plan was not initiated by any City agency, the Department of Planning was involved in the development of the plan and the recommendations were reviewed by the appropriate City agency staff. All of the guidelines listed in the Neighborhood Plans Policy have been met making this plan eligible for acceptance as a community-managed plan by the Planning Commission.

Purpose & Plan Scope

The Historic Upton Neighborhood 2026 Master Plan (the Plan) was created to help guide the future of the Upton community. The plan's overarching vision is to reclaim the vestiges of Upton's distinct African-American heritage and to be the hub of a cultural revitalization where the memory of the great entertainers, artists and civic leaders who proudly proclaimed Upton as their neighborhood will serve as a beacon drawing investments back into the community. It is a comprehensive plan that focuses on the residential, commercial, open space, transit, and safety aspects of the neighborhood.

Process

Beginning in 2015, community leaders sought technical assistance to develop a master plan that would address community needs. Upton Planning Committee and Bethel Empowerment & Wellness Center jointly applied for, and were selected as, a Wells Fargo Regional Foundation's Neighborhood Grants Program National Pilot awardee. In early 2016, Lamar Wilson Associates and Interface Studio were selected to help develop a resident-driven strategic plan.

Throughout the 2 year process of the plan's development there were over 300 residents and stakeholders engaged in the process. There were several public forums, multiple stakeholder interviews and hundreds of door to door surveys completed. Public input guided the action items that were included in the plan which was finalized in December 2017. The Historic Upton Neighborhood 2026 Master Plan recommends the following implementation strategies for the plan area:

Housing & Community Development

- 1.1 - Garner resources for historic preservation
- 1.2 - Educate the community on the value of historic preservation
- 1.3 - Provide CHAP designation supports
- 1.4 - Support redevelopment that maintains the character of the neighborhood
- 2.1 - Market the Upton Community
- 2.2 - Create Upton community development clusters
- 2.3 - Create developer network in Upton
- 3.1 - Create a community homeownership pipeline
- 3.2 - Develop a mixed-income neighborhood

3.3 - Work collectively with all Upton communities

4.1 - Manage demolition and maintenance in the community

Economic Development

1.1 - Promote current heritage trail and Upton's destinations

1.2 - Re-brand and market Pennsylvania Avenue as a tourist destination

1.3 - Identify cultural heritage oriented development opportunities in Upton

2.1 - Establish standards for commercial development on Pennsylvania Avenue

2.2 - Strengthen Main Street organization and UPC infrastructure

2.3 - Create a comprehensive commercial development design for Pennsylvania Avenue Main

2.4 - Strengthen coordination of Upton economic development opportunities by implementing a

2.5 - Establish a technical assistance program that supports developers and helps them access

2.6 - Court banking institutions and quality businesses needed in the community

3.1 - Partner with workforce development programs in Upton and promote opportunities to

3.2 - Establish programs that foster entrepreneurship and provide workforce development opportunities on Pennsylvania Avenue.

3.3 - Implement development standards that require developers to use local workers.

Green Space/Public Safety

1.1 - Green Space revitalization in Upton

1.2 - Vacant building community cleanup

1.3 - Coordinate community-wide cleanup activities

1.4 - Strengthen Upton's tree canopy

2.1 - Increase community street lighting

2.2 - Community patrol programs

2.3 - Create community safe spaces

Transportation

1.1 - Strengthen community streetscapes

1.2 - Traffic light signal review

1.3 - Red light and speed camera utilization

2.1 - Publicize State of Maryland's new bus schedule

2.2 - Highlight Pennsylvania Avenue Metro Station

2.3 - Identify strategies for improving public transportation in the community

3.1 - Strengthen community transit oriented development

Quality of Life

1.1 Establish a farmer's market in the Upton community

1.2 Publicize fresh food options in the community

1.3 Work to attract healthy food options and restaurants to the Upton community

2.1 Support community school activities at Upton schools

2.2 Strengthen adult education supports

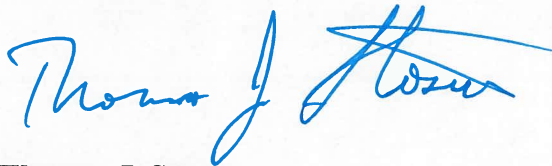
- 3.1 Publicize the importance of a medical home
- 3.2 Provide healthcare information in the community
- 4.1 Promote community cleanliness
- 4.2 Celebrate community strengths

Community Engagement

- 1.1 - Build on community strengths and publicize all community neighborhood meetings
- 1.2 - Work collectively with all Upton constituencies
- 2.1 - Expand operational capacity of the Upton Planning Committee
- 3.1 - Market the Upton Community
- 3.2 - Develop a robust social media campaign for the Upton Community

NOTIFICATIONS

Staff has notified by email the Upton Planning Committee, Bethel Empowerment & Wellness Center, Heritage Crossing Residents Association, Marble Hill Community Association, and Councilman Eric Costello.



**Thomas J. Stosur,
Director**