



Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Sean Davis, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

August 2, 2018

REQUEST: East Baltimore Revitalization Plan

RECOMMENDATION: Acceptance

STAFF: Marshella M. Wallace

PETITIONERS: Southern Baptist Church and Southern Baptist Community Development Corporation

OWNERS: Southern Baptist Church, Ark Church, Greater Gethsemane Baptist Church, Israel Baptist Church, United Baptist Church, Mayor and City Council, and Multiple Private Property Owners

GENERAL AREA

The Broadway East community and a large area within the South Clifton Park community comprise the majority of the study area for the East Baltimore Revitalization Plan. Borders along the adjacent Berea, Middle East, and Oliver communities are referenced in the Plan.

The expansive Broadway East community is bounded by North Avenue, E. Biddle Street, N. Milton Street and N. Broadway and encompasses approximately 100 whole and partial blocks. The Baltimore East/South Clifton Park National Historic District includes Broadway East and South Clifton Park. Neighboring communities are South Clifton Park, Berea, Middle East and Oliver.

The South Clifton Park community forms the northern border of the study area and is bounded by Sinclair Lane, North Avenue, Belair Road and Gay Street. Darley Park East Baltimore Midway, Broadway East, Berea and Clifton Park are adjacent to South Clifton Park.

Broadway East

The historic development of Broadway East and South Clifton Park prior to 1888 established the two and three story rowhouses that form the predominant land uses in the area. However, N. Gay Street, which bisects Broadway East in a north to south direction, is a reflection of the commercial and industrial history of the area. Six breweries were established along N. Gay Street between 1853 and 1867, with the former American Brewery surviving as an extraordinary community and national landmark. The five-story, ornamental brew house dominates views throughout the district and was rehabilitated in 2012 for offices for the non-profit Humanim. Several former Broadway East schools such as the Patrick Henry School and Eastern High School are also listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

A number of former industrial sites, commercial corner stores, and churches have been developed in Broadway East. Collington Square Elementary School and Collington Square Recreation Center are located adjacent to Collington Square, the major open space area within the community.

In 2017, the Broadway East community, Department of Planning and Department of Recreation and Parks established a new triangular park in the 1500 block of Gay Street. The Gay Street Park is the first Green Network pilot project completed for East Baltimore. The new 5.5 acre Eager Park is located south of Broadway East in the Middle East community, while the historic Clifton Park provides a nearby open space amenity. Additionally, Broadway East is well-known for its community gardens which include the Duncan Street Miracle Garden, Mura Street Garden and Tha Flower Factory, a commercial agricultural site. Expansion of the Duncan Street Miracle Garden is a mid-range goal planned for the Green Network.

Broadway East boasts strong community bonds, faith-based institutions and non-profit, community and for-profit organizations that have worked diligently to address challenges related to an extensive number of vacant properties and limited retail options and labor force opportunities. Over the past two decades, several development initiatives were planned and are now nearing permitting or construction phases. Current projects include the Baltimore Food Hub, an incubator for food business entrepreneurs, which is under construction (1801 East Oliver Street). Another project is the renovation of the former Hoen Lithograph Building (2101 East Biddle Street), an 80,000 square foot renovation project that will ultimately create office space for Strong City Baltimore, a non-profit community development organization, a workforce training center, creative writer's workshop, a coffee shop, and a bookstore.

The Southern Baptist CDC has begun design work for a new wellness center at 1501 N. Chester Street, and Southern View, a new multi-family housing complex that will be located at 1515 N. Washington Street, across from the new Gay Street Park.

East North Avenue, North Broadway, North Gay Street, East Preston Street and East Biddle Street are the primary transportation corridors that serve Broadway East. North Milton Avenue, North Patterson Park Avenue and the North Wolfe Street/North Washington Street one-way pair also traverse the community. Increased opportunities for access to non-vehicular modes of travel are needed in Broadway East and surrounding communities. Despite the major corridors that define much of Broadway East, several interior blocks and spaces are walkable. Most bus transit options traverse the periphery of the neighborhood on East North Avenue and along North Gay Street. The MTA MARC commuter rail system travels through the heart of Broadway East. Land abutting this system presents challenges related to trash dumping and removal and opportunities for the greening and beautification of smaller parcels of land created by related overpasses.

South Clifton Park

The South Clifton Park community works in partnership with the nearby CHUM and Darley Park communities to improve housing conditions, traffic concerns, and plan for future development sites. This engaged and committed community encompasses approximately 30 whole and partial blocks.

The majority of the blocks in the northern section of South Clifton Park are occupied by residents and the percentage of vacant properties is low. Eastern and southern community areas include a significant number of vacant lots. The northeastern sector of South Clifton Park is defined by a significant cluster of vacant industrial sites, including the former Goetze Meat Packing Plant that is identified in the *Plan* for as a redevelopment site.

The Clifton Park and the Rita Church Recreation Center are important and convenient amenities for the South Clifton Park community. The Real Food Farm located in the 1900 block of Perlman Place is a community gardening resource operated by Civic Works. The former Paquin School, 2200 Sinclair Lane, is slated for sale to a charter school for girls. The historic Columbus School was redeveloped for affordable rental units in 2014.

Belair Road, North Avenue and North Broadway define South Clifton Park's major arterials. Several long blocks define South Clifton Park, but the interior of the community remains walkable. High volumes of vehicular traffic within the South Clifton park neighborhood present challenges for pedestrian access to Clifton Park.

Current Planning Initiatives

The East North Avenue LINCS plan, MTA/Baltimore City DOT North Avenue Rising, and the Fairmount-Harford Heights INSPIRE planning initiatives are underway and include the northern section of Broadway East and sections of South Clifton Park.

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

- Target homeownership and rehabilitation loans as well as financial counseling using Housing Typology
- 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

- Develop a vacant housing reclamation strategy for Transitional and Distressed Neighborhoods

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

Objective 4: Target Neighborhood Planning to Leverage Investment

- Create Area Master Plans in a targeted manner

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 (TOD) and Mixed-use Development to Reinforce Neighborhood Centers and Main Streets

- Ensure all residents are within 1.5 miles of quality groceries and neighborhood Services.

Objective 4: Protect and Enhance the Preservation of Baltimore's Historic Buildings and Neighborhoods

Goal 3: Improve Transportation Access, Accessibility and Choice for City Residents

Objective 1: Create a Comprehensive Transportation Plan to Improve Mobility, Accessibility and Choice

EARN

Goal 1: Strengthen Identified Growth Sectors

Objective 1: Retain and Attract Businesses in all Growth Sectors (See also LEARN, Goal 2, Objective 2)

Goal 2: Improve Labor Force Participation Rate Among City Residents

PLAY

Goal 1: Enhance the Enjoyment, Appreciation, and Stewardship of Baltimore's Historical and Cultural Resources

Objective 2: Increase Everyday Historical and Cultural Encounters for Baltimore City Residents

Objective 3: Improve Local Participation in City Recreational Activities

- Develop a strategic recreational plan that will target recreational opportunities to address the City's needs

- Implement the Bicycle Master Plan to provide recreational opportunities for residents

Goal 3: Increase the Health of Baltimore's Natural Resources and Open Spaces for Recreation and to Improve Water Quality and to Improve Neighborhood Social, Economic, and Environmental Well-Being

Objective 1: Maintain a Well-managed System of Parks & Open Spaces

Objective 2: Protect and Enhance Baltimore's Natural Habitat and Environmental Resources

- Increase Baltimore's green infrastructure by increasing the number of trees and tree canopy size (See LIVE, GOAL 1, Objective 3, Strategy 6)

LEARN

Goal 1: Improve Public Schools and Libraries

Objective 2: Enhance Schools and Libraries as Neighborhood Assets

•Ensure reuse of surplus school facilities is timely and compatible with surrounding Neighborhoods.

Goal 3: Encourage a Culture of Learning by Enhancing Educational and Vocational Opportunities for all Baltimoreans

Objective 2: Improve and Expand Workforce Development and Job Readiness through Education and Job Training

(See EARN, Goal 2, Objective 1)

CITY AGENCY REVIEW

City agencies have reviewed the *East Baltimore Revitalization Plan*. The Plan's recommendation for overlaying setbacks in order to provide wider sidewalks, bike lanes, street trees, and lighting is under review by the Department of Transportation and may require revision.

ANALYSIS

The East Baltimore Revitalization Project, EBRP, is a strategy developed through a coalition of churches and community stakeholders located within and adjacent to the Broadway East community and is considered a community managed plan. Bishop Donte Hickman, pastor of the Southern Baptist Church, led this effort in partnership with Ark Church, Greater Gethsemane Baptist Church, Israel Baptist Church, and United Baptist Church. Over the years, the aforementioned Churches collectively acquired 22 acres of property. Southern Baptist, with 9 acres of vacant land, completed the Mary Harvin Senior Housing Center in 2013.

The final Plan document was completed in December 2017 after a series of community charrettes and meetings with community associations, elected officials, non-profit partners and organizations, and institutions. Southern Baptist established a Steering Committee comprised of a mix of stakeholders from the faith community, neighborhood, institutions, and public, non-profit and private sectors. Architecture and planning firm, Ayers Saint Gross, ASG, provided extensive planning and design support for this plan. Additional and ongoing engagement with community associations, churches, residents and other stakeholders is recommended.

The planning process for the Planning Department's Green Network Plan coincided with the EBRP's planning process, therefore, Planning Department staff coordinated its green network work with Bishop Hickman and ASG. Several opportunities for "greening" along and adjacent to the Gay Street corridor are identified in the Plan and are anticipated to complement proposed development.

The East Baltimore Revitalization Project identifies recommendations for addressing the poverty and severely deteriorated physical conditions that challenge portions of Broadway East. Overarching strategies include "better connecting and building on assets in East Baltimore" and "recommending strategic infill in Broadway East to provide opportunities for people of all walks of life". Development proposals are focused along corridors with the highest vacancy rates, specifically, Gay Street and Chester Street. Chester Street is envisioned as multi-modal connector to Johns Hopkins University's Homewood Campus. Strategies for residential,

commercial, office, medical/health and community development sites are proposed for strategic locations within Broadway East.

This request conforms to the Neighborhood Plans Policy, adopted by the Planning Commission on January 11, 2018. The East Baltimore Revitalization Project is a community-managed Plan that includes recommendations, implementation strategies and a list of anticipated partners. The EBRP offers a vision for planning in the study area, however, future community and market conditions may precipitate revisions for various recommendations.

The planning process incorporated key elements of the Policy as listed below:

- Meet with Department of Planning 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.

Key East Baltimore Revitalization Plan Recommendations

Governing Plan Themes

Empower People

- Embolden community leaders
- Build trust
- Provide mentorship
- opportunities
- Create social programs and
- services
 - Young adult activities
 - Job training
 - Family support services

Rebuild Place

- Improve the environment
 - Parks and open space
 - Community gardens
 - Streetscaping
 - Maintenance
- Invest in housing
 - Vacancy – demolition or rehabilitation
 - Housing type diversification

Enliven Program

- Improve public transportation and access
- Diversify and expand retail
- Increase population density
- Improve opportunities for recreation
- Provide locations for jobs
- Expand partnerships
- Actively recruit light industry and service job opportunities

Green Network and Key Connections

- Develop Chester Street as a connector between Eager Park and Clifton Park – explore opportunities for introduction of new housing and retail development.
- Support and maintain primarily residential character of N. Patterson Park Avenue. Explore opportunities for retail redevelopment as Patterson Park Avenue crosses North Avenue.
- Promote infill residential development and streetscaping to support higher residential occupancy levels along N. Washington Street.
- Develop strategic mixed-use infill development along N. Gay Street to better reinforce the connection between Eager Park and Clifton Park.
- Coordinate greening recommendations with Green Network Plan. Build upon Gay Street Park focus area located in Broadway East

Larger Planning Area Recommendations

- Support and complement the goals of existing area plans.
- Continued coordination of development efforts among partner churches.
- Focus redevelopment work along key corridors: North Avenue, Gay Street, Broadway, Wolfe Street, Washington Street, Chester Street, Patterson Park Avenue, Preston Street, Biddle Street, Madison Street, Monument Street and Orleans Street.
- Explore support of development goals identified by individual Church partners.

Study Area Recommendations

Leadership

- Successful leadership is fundamental to the implementation of this plan.
- Establish a team of leaders who will help connect resources, secure funding, communicate with the community, and ensure the plan is executed.
- Support the Broadway East Community Association and explore opportunities for partnerships and projects lead by them.

Urban Form

- New development should employ best design practices to respect the existing neighborhood character and ensure proper urban form.
- Focus large-scale new development strategically where there is high vacancy along North Ave., Gay St., and Chester St. to minimize displacement.
- Orient buildings along the street, with parking accommodated in the middle of the block, to frame and activate the public realm.
Animate the ground level with retail, lobbies, building amenity spaces, and other public/semi-public uses. Parallel street parking should be provided, where feasible, to support these ground level uses.

Open Space

- The creation and maintenance of well programmed, beautiful outdoor spaces can greatly improve the urban environment.
- Focus streetscape investments along Gay Street and Chester Street, connecting from Eager Park to Clifton Park.
- Improvements should include bike lanes, wider sidewalks, street trees, street furniture, and pedestrian-scaled lighting. The City should explore expanding the right-of-way or instituting a setback that allows appropriate space for these facilities.
- Establish a central open space at the intersection of Gay and Chester Street that serves as the neighborhood's town square. This space should have areas to relax, eat, meet, watch outdoor movies, and have a water feature such as a splash fountain. This space should be a mixture of paved and vegetated areas. Allow the Duncan Street Miracle Garden to expand north and east to North Avenue. Demolish the abandoned houses along Chester Street to the west to allow for adjacent community open space with seating, a playground, and other community uses.

Residential Development

- Providing housing opportunities for people of all walks of life to move to the neighborhood is critical to revitalization.
- Diversify housing types in the neighborhood to attract all kinds of families and individuals by developing mixed-use, multi-family housing (4-6 story) on large sites along Gay Street, North Avenue, parts of Chester Street that is a combination of workforce, affordable, and market rate units.
- Encourage the renovation of blighted rowhouses along streets with moderate occupancy to preserve the historic neighborhood fabric. Prioritize the rehabilitation of vacant rowhouses and partner with developers such as The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) and others to ensure a mix of affordable and market rate options.
- Promote homeownership and help existing residents finance repairs and upgrades to their property through tax relief opportunities.

Retail and Commercial

- Development should provide opportunities for future retail in strategic locations, even if the market does not exist today.
- Focus ground floor retail on Gay Street, North Avenue, and Chester Street.
- Pursue opportunities that support local businesses, such as the renovation of the old theater at 1601 N. Washington Street into a space for small businesses, local food vendors, and/or community gathering, similar to that of R. House in Remington.
- Support ongoing new developments such as the Baltimore Food Hub and the Hoehn Lithograph projects.
- Work with a market consultant and adjacent neighborhoods as a next phase of this study to identify future retail growth and opportunities in the study area.

Social Amenities

- Social amenities are critical to helping not only rebuild the neighborhood, but restore people who need help.
- Support school functions returning to the former Paquin School site. The Lillian May Carroll Jackson School expressed interest in relocating their facilities from Chinquapin Middle School to this site.
- Develop a Wellness Center in partnership with Johns Hopkins or another medical institution to provide both services and jobs to neighborhood residents.
- Renovate the abandoned Rutland Elementary School (1600 N. Rutland Ave.) into the new Eastern District Police Station, allowing for community space such as a shared gym or sports courts.

- Provide resources that help renters become homeowners and teach financial literacy as it related to homeownership. The Southeast CDC is a good resource for this as they have had much success in Highlandtown and Patterson Park.
- Develop a recreational and social hub, similar to The Arc in Washington DC, along Oliver Street between Washington and Chester Streets where there are a high number of vacant units. Residents on this block should have priority to move into newly renovated rowhouses in the neighborhood if they so desire.

Employment and Job Training

- Employment opportunities are fundamental to generating vibrancy and sustainability in the neighborhood.
- Build an urban agriculture hub at the Perlman Place site that incorporates Civic Works' Real Food Farms, but expands farming practices to provide jobs and healthy food to the community. Any market or retail component on this site should front North Avenue to encourage future retail infill.
- Redevelop the abandoned Goetze Meat Factory site by securing an anchor tenant that would provide jobs for people in the community. Examples include but are not limited to light manufacturing, tech companies, or a federal agency anchor.
- Support Humanim's mission of job training and placement and continue to grow collaborative relationships. Consider opportunities to use their deconstruction program, Details, to strengthen the workforce in the neighborhood.
- Improve public transportation and access to major job areas such as BWI, Sparrows Point, Hunt Valley, White Marsh, etc. Work with the City and State to ensure bus routes adequately serve the community.

Strategic Demolition

- Strategic demolition can create new opportunities for infill and reduce blight in the neighborhood.
- Demolition funding should be focused in areas that are largely vacant where there is interest and pressure for new development and where the Master Plan proposes new building footprints.
- Remaining demolition funding should be focused towards alley streets (Register, Durham, Chapel, Castle, Duncan, Bradford, and Port) that are over 80 percent vacant. In the near term, these sites should be greened with the City paying select residents or the Broadway East Community Association to maintain the lots. In the long-term, these sites can be redeveloped into smaller scale housing as residents return to the community and the market demand increases.

NOTIFICATIONS

Staff notified by email the New Broadway East Community Association, Collington Square Community Association, HEBCAC, South Clifton Park Community Association, CARE, Fort Worthington Community Association and the Oliver Community Association.



Thomas J. Stosur,

Director