



Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Sean Davis, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur
Director

November 9, 2017

REQUEST: Pimlico Elementary Middle School INSPIRE Neighborhood Plan

RECOMMENDATION: Approval and Adoption

STAFF: Mary Colleen Buettner

PETITIONERS: Department of Planning at the request of the community organizations and institutional stakeholders of the Pimlico Elementary Middle School INSPIRE area

OWNERS: Mayor and City Council and Multiple Private Property Owners

SITE/ GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions:

Pimlico Elementary/Middle School (EMS), located at 4849 Pimlico Road, is one of two 21st Century and INSPIRE schools in the Park Heights area. The other is Arlington Elementary/Middle School located approximately one mile away. The quarter-mile INSPIRE area around the school includes the neighborhoods of Cylburn and Central Park Heights. Pimlico EMS No. 223 is situated on a 6.9 acre parcel. The site is bordered on the north by Oakley Avenue and Thorndale Avenue to the south, with Pimlico Road to the west. The east side of the school is bounded by a 25-foot alley.

Prior to the modernization of Pimlico EMS, it consisted of a series of buildings organized around a formal quad. The original site of the 20,660 square foot, two-story Elementary/Middle School was built in 1910. Building additions in 1924 and 1972, plus a 2008 portable eventually created a school that totaled 164,034 square feet. The Pimlico parcel also contained a parking lot, a small playground, and a freestanding building facing Oakley Avenue, which houses Callowhill Aquatics Center. Once the renovation is complete, the school size and overall student capacity will be smaller than before, at 117,600 square feet and a capacity of 761. The expected pre-kindergarten through 8th grade-student-population will increase however, through the absorption of some students who previously attended Langston Hughes Elementary and middle school students who previously attended Arlington Elementary/Middle School. Langston Hughes closed in June 2014; Arlington, which will undergo modernization through Phase 1 of the 21st Century program, will not retain a middle school. Design Collective is the architect and engineer for the project and Dustin Construction, Inc. and Brinjac Engineering, Inc. are the construction team. The project represents a \$45 million investment.

General Area:

Pimlico Elementary/Middle School is located in the Cylburn Neighborhood, but sits on Pimlico Road, the border between Cylburn and Central Park Heights. The INSPIRE plan area covers both neighborhoods and within a one-half mile radius of the school there are many major institutional, educational, and recreational assets; Pimlico Racetrack, Cylburn Arboretum, LifeBridge Health Sinai Hospital (Sinai) and Levindale, Callowhill Aquatic Center, C.C. Jackson Recreation Center, a new Ripken Field, Edgecombe Elementary School and Recreation Center, Kipp Academy, and the 60-acre Major Redevelopment Area.

Housing and Land Use

The housing markets, building styles, and density of the two neighborhoods that Pimlico sits between are very different from each other. The western side of the school, in Central Park Heights, features mostly single-family row houses. An exception is Palmer Courts, a 115-unit development across the street from the school that is surrounded by row homes. The development is ripe for modernization. While Central Park Heights has suffered decline, the City is leading an effort to improve row homes adjacent to the school and to demolish nearby dilapidated structures on Woodland Avenue. The homes on Woodland Avenue are located in the upper-most part of Park Heights' "Major Redevelopment Area" (MRA), which is a 60-acre area surrounding Park Heights and Woodland that is being prepared for mixed-income, mixed-use redevelopment.

In contrast, Cylburn features 1950s-era single-family detached houses built of brick, with yards and neighborhood trees on well-kept blocks. Although there has been a recent rise in mortgage foreclosures in this area, this community has remained more stable than Central Park Heights. Bordering Cylburn to the north is the neighborhood of Levindale, which is also a leafy community with well-maintained blocks and single-family residences adjacent to Sinai Hospital. In both Cylburn and Levindale, the majority of the homes are owner-occupied and there are relatively few vacant lots and buildings. Both communities enjoy a short walk to the Cylburn Arboretum.

Recreation and Open Space

The Pimlico school area is well-served by both indoor and outdoor recreation spaces. Two recent renovation phases have made the C.C. Jackson Fitness and Wellness Center an exemplary regional recreation center. The first phase, completed in November 2013, in partnership with the Cal Ripken Sr. Foundation, created new baseball fields that replaced vacant and dilapidated housing. The second phase, completed in spring 2016, added an enlarged gymnasium, locker rooms, fitness area, and program and game rooms. Directly across from C.C. Jackson, on the corner of Park Heights and Garrison, is a brand new KaBOOM! playground, built by the community in fall of 2016 in partnership with Sinai, Neighborhoods United, and Park Heights Renaissance. Callowhill Aquatic Center – located on the same parcel as the school – is operated by BCRP and houses an Olympic-sized indoor swimming pool.

Cylburn Arboretum is a significant amenity located one-half mile down Oakley Avenue east of the school. The public 207-acre arboretum grounds are comprised of gardens, woodland trails,

and a historic mansion. The site houses the Johns Hopkins Center for a livable Future Aquaponics Project, which demonstrates the capacity for raising edible plants and fish in an economically viable and ecologically sound environment. It is also home of the Jones Falls Trail, a 10-mile hiking and bicycling trail that runs mostly along the length of its namesake (Jones Falls).

Park Heights is also home to the Pimlico Racetrack, a live horse racing venue. Host to the famed Preakness, the Race Course is a historic source of pride for Park Heights and all of Baltimore. Future studies will determine whether this site is suitable for redevelopment of the current racecourse or other development opportunities. As a result of being adjacent to the Racetrack, Local Impact Aid (slots funding) is available within Park Heights. A spending plan is prepared annually to allocate these funds towards implementing the Park Heights Master Plan.

Transportation

Park Heights sits in the heart of Northwest Baltimore and major regional arterial roads run through it. Major north-south streets are Park Heights Avenue, Reisterstown Road, and Greenspring Avenue. Major east-west streets are Cold Spring Lane, Belvedere Avenue, and Northern Parkway. Interstate 83 is easily accessible via Cold Spring Lane and Northern Parkway. The high-volume and high speeds create an unsafe environment for students, especially as they cross Park Heights avenue daily. Safety concerns are compounded because of a lack of safe and adequate intersection crossings, and students and other residents often do not use designated intersections.

Public transportation is a vital mode of transportation for the community. Approximately 44% of residents do not have a car and 33% have just one vehicle in the household. The neighborhood is served by the MTA BaltimoreLink bus service. The main LocalLink lines that serve the area are 91, 94, 31, 85, and 28. The Metro Subway Link also serves the area, with stops at Coldspring and Rogers Avenue; it provides convenient access to Owings Mills, downtown and Hopkins Hospital.

In conjunction with the Baltimore Bicycle Master plan and the Green Network Plan, Oakley Avenue represents an opportunity for walking and bicycle improvements, to connect the neighborhood around Pimlico EMS to the Cylburn Arboretum and the Jones Falls Trail. Many residents and students do not know that these are public amenities in their community. The Green Network Plan identifies Oakley Avenue as a key pedestrian and bicycle connection linking the MRA, the school, and these assets.

Healthy Food Environment

A food environment can be defined as the set of systems, both physical and social, that may influence where an individual shops for food and what kinds of foods they purchase and ultimately eat. In the Pimlico INSPIRE area, 70% of residents live in a food desert--areas where residents lack both access and the economic resources to purchase healthy foods. Within the area, 29% of households have an income below the poverty level. For every 10,000 residents, there are 14.4 carry-out restaurants and 18.6 corner stores, both higher than the city average. While food retail is present, healthy options are scarce.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The request conforms to the goals and objectives of:

1. The Park Heights Master Plan, adopted in 2006 and amended in 2008
2. 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.
 - Strategy 1: Implement Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) Standards.*
 - Strategy 2: Target housing and sanitation code enforcement using the Housing Typology*
 - Objective 4: Target Neighborhood Planning to Leverage Investment

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 MOBILE Baltimore
 - Goal 2: Make Baltimore bicycle and pedestrian friendly.

ANALYSIS

The 21st Century School Buildings Program

In the fall of 2010, groundwork was laid to address Baltimore City's aging and inadequate public school buildings. Communities, education advocacy groups, the school system, and other stakeholders built a coalition of support for legislation and funding to modernize Baltimore's public schools. The promise of replaced and renovated schools is meant to help transform student opportunities and achievement, provide jobs and resources to families, and help revitalize neighborhoods.

INSPIRE Mission and Objectives

Each modernized 21st Century school represents tens of millions of dollars of public investment in the neighborhood it serves.

To leverage this investment, and to enhance the connection between the schools and the surrounding neighborhoods, the Department of Planning launched a new program called INSPIRE, which stands for Investing in Neighborhoods and Schools to Promote Improvement, Revitalization, and Excellence. This planning program focuses on the neighborhoods surrounding each of the schools, specifically in the quarter-mile radius around the schools.

Focusing on a limited geographic area allows plans to concentrate impact around the school so that assets and investments support the school as a community resource, build on each other, and continue to expand further into the neighborhood. Recommendations in the plan don't simply stop at a quarter-mile marker; a guiding principle is considering concentration of impact. In this way, the INSPIRE plans respond to the aspirations of the neighborhood and school stakeholders in a way that is achievable.

INSPIRE plans seek to lead to improvements in the environment and in the quality of life for students, their families, and neighborhood residents. The plans will also articulate the community's long-term vision for guiding private investment, and address environmental, social, and economic conditions.

Pimlico Elementary Middle School INSPIRE Process

From January 2016 to September 2017, Department of Planning staff worked with members of the school and neighborhood communities to better understand their neighborhood experiences, concerns, and needs. Through various community engagement processes – including community, student and parent workshops, meetings with the grandparents club at Pimlico, Family Night participation, attending community organization meetings, surveys, developer tours and multiple walking tours – stakeholders have helped inform the plan. Recommendations from previous plans – the amended Park Heights Master Plan (specifically the section related to the Major Redevelopment Area), Sinai's Community Health Needs Assessment, Pimlico's Community Schools Planning Process and Action Plan – were evaluated and included where appropriate. Workshop participants also included representatives from Sinai, merchants groups, local developers, and staff from the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers (ABAG).

City Councilwoman Middleton and her team, as well as state elected officials and staff from City agencies, including the Department of Planning (DOP), Housing and Community Development (HCD), Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Recreation and Parks (BCRP), the Department of Public Works (DPW), the Department of Health (Health), and the Baltimore Development Corporation (BDC) also participated in meetings and/or the walking tours, and worked with DOP staff to address stakeholder priorities. Stakeholders, community staff, and community organization leaders helped ensure community participation in the process thus far. In addition, DOP worked with the National Resource Network (NRN) to help identify strategic opportunities to collaborate with Sinai and identify potential funding resources to implement INSPIRE and/or Sinai's work.

Presentations and notes from workshops can be found on INSPIRE's website:
<https://planning.baltimorecity.gov/inspire-plans/pimlico-elementary-middle-school>

Recommendations

There are two categories of recommendations, Primary Walking Routes Standard Improvements, and Pimlico Area Recommendations.

Primary Walking Routes Standard Improvements

To strengthen the connection between the school and community, the first set of recommendations focuses on blocks that have been designated as "primary walking routes." Standard improvements along these routes will help ensure that students and other community members have safer and more walkable access to the school. To further assist with implementing these improvements, INSPIRE and the Department of Transportation were awarded the State Safe Routes to School grant.

Through commitments from many City agencies, these key improvements will be made along the primary walking routes:

- Bringing sidewalks up to a safe and standard condition
- Repainting or adding crosswalks
- Installing or repairing ADA ramps at intersections
- Marking Safe Routes to School footprints
- Assessing crossing guard deployment
- Pruning and planting street trees
- Assessing street lighting
- Boarding open vacant buildings
- Picking up trash and maintaining vacant lots

Pimlico Area Recommendations

To address environmental, social, and economic conditions, and to help guide future investment, the second set of recommendations is divided into six goals. Recommendations for the Pimlico Elementary Middle School Planning Area fall under these goals and strategies:

- **Investing in Housing and Market- Strengthening Development Opportunities**
 - Increase Quality Housing
 - Promote Strategic Redevelopment Opportunities
 - Improve Retail Businesses and Seek Quality Entrepreneurs in the Community
- **Improving Safety**
 - Work with the Northern and Northwestern Police Districts
- **Creating Connectivity and Access**
 - Improve Traffic Conditions, Pedestrian Safety, and Walkability in the Neighborhood
- **Creating Opportunities for Health and Well-being**
 - Enhance the Healthy Food Environment

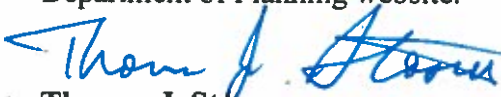
- Continue Community Engagement to Improve Connections and Use of Recreational Opportunities
- **Creating a Sustainable Neighborhood**
 - Use Code Enforcement to Improve Appearance and Safety
 - Create a Clean and Green Community
- **Provide Opportunities for Economic Self-Sufficiency**
 - Provide Training and Access to Jobs

NOTIFICATIONS

Staff has notified by email the Park Heights Renaissance Corporation, Neighborhoods United, Cylburn Community Association, Levindale-Sunset Community Association, the Pimlico Merchant Association, the principal, faculty, staff, parents, the grandparents club and US Dream Academy at Pimlico EMS, the Family League of Baltimore, LifeBridge Sinai representatives, Palmer Court Apartments, ACLU, Live Baltimore, and leaders of the 21st Century Schools Team from Baltimore City Public Schools.

We have also notified 6th District Councilwoman Sharon Middleton and members of the 41st Legislative District, including Senator Nathaniel Oaks, Delegate Angela Gibson, Delegate Bilal Ali and Delegate Sandy Rosenberg. Other City Agencies impacted by this planning process were also notified by email of this action, including the Baltimore Police Department, Housing and Community Development, Transportation, Recreation and Parks, and General Services, Baltimore Development Corporation, Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts, and Department of Public Works.

Copies of the Pimlico Elementary Middle School INSPIRE Plan will be available on the Department of Planning website.



**Thomas J. Stosur,
Director**