



Catherine E. Pugh  
Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman

### STAFF REPORT



Thomas J. Stosur  
Director

September 28, 2017

**REQUESTS:** Street Closing/Closing of Several Streets and Alleys Lying in Blocks 1165B, 1166, 1167, and 1168 (Barclay St., Brentwood Ave., Forrest St., Nursery Pl., and associated alleyways between E. Biddle St. and E. Chase St.)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval

**STAFF:** Matthew DeSantis, AICP

**PLANNING DISTRICT:** Eastern

**PETITIONER:** Baltimore Housing (DHCD)

**OWNER:** The Mayor and City Council

#### **SITE/GENERAL AREA**

Site Conditions: The majority of the properties adjacent to these proposed streets and alleys to be closed are vacant lots. There are extant, vacant rowhomes on E. Biddle Street between Barclay Street and Brentwood Avenue and also between Forrest Street and Nursery Place. There are also three extant rowhomes located on Brentwood Avenue.

General Area: The streets/alleys proposed to be closed are located in the Johnston Square neighborhood in East Baltimore. The area is roughly bounded by the Jones Falls Expressway to the west, E. Biddle Street to the north, Greenmount Avenue to the west, and E. Chase Street to the south.

#### **HISTORY**

There are no previous legislative or Planning Commission actions regarding this site.

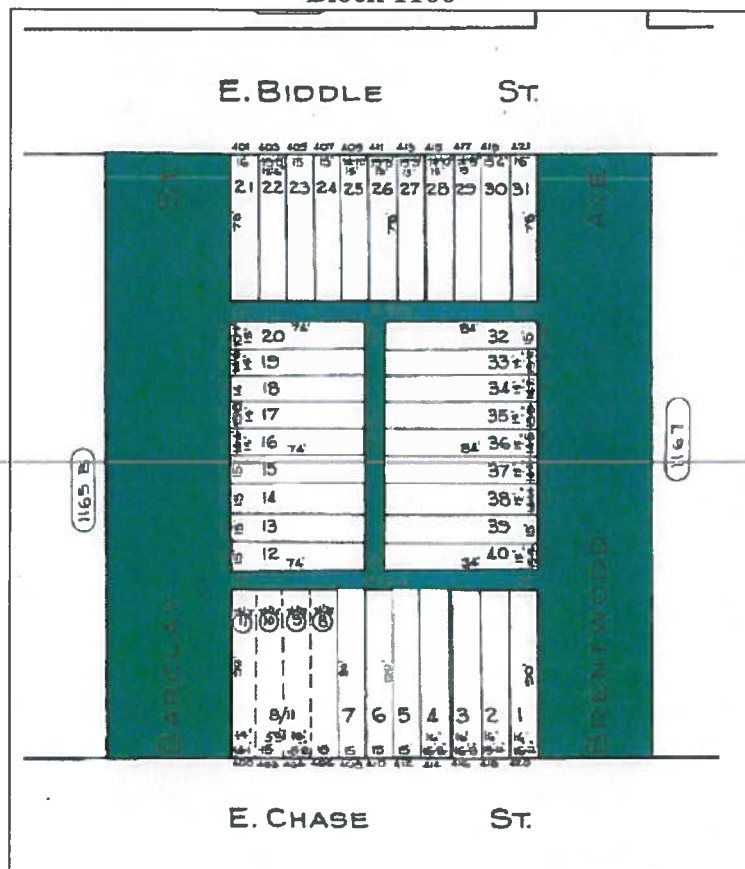
#### **ANALYSIS**

Proposal: The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has requested the Department of Transportation to close several streets and alleys lying in blocks 1165B, 1166, 1167, and 1168 as indicated on the plats below:

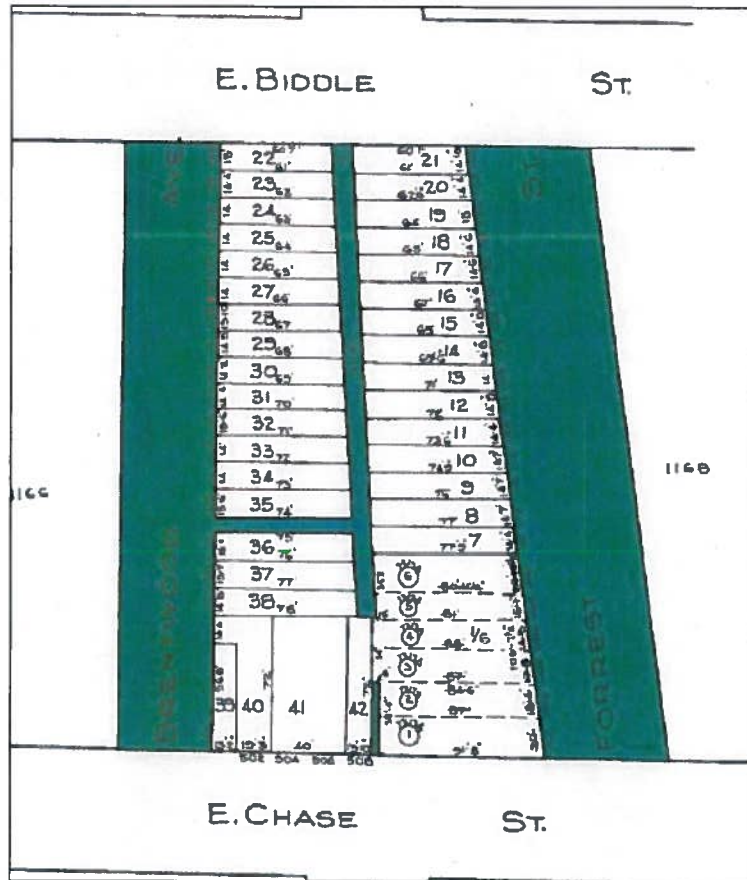
**Block 1165B**



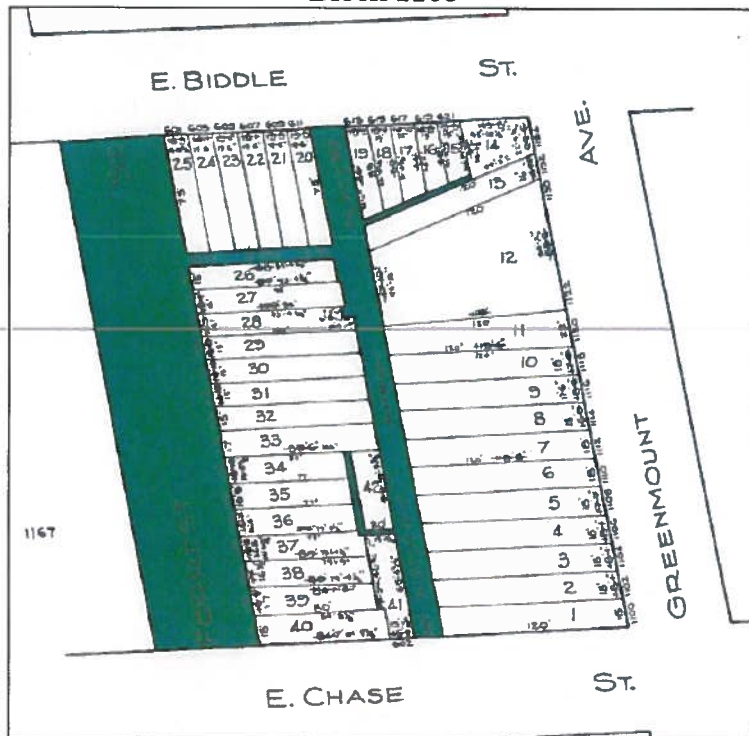
**Block 1166**



Block 1167



Block 1168



The majority of the properties adjacent to the streets and alleys proposed to be closed are owned by the Mayor and City Council. This is the result of many years of active acquisition on the part of the City in effort to reduce blight and consolidate parcels for future redevelopment. The Johnston Square neighborhood has seen much recent redevelopment activity, from the completed Lillian Jones apartment building, the recent closing of Proctor Street in order to facilitate a future residential project, and the closing of alleyways in the proximity of Ambrose Kennedy Park in order to enable its renovation and expansion.

The City has been actively pursuing the outstanding adjacent properties that it does not currently own. Eleven of these properties are either vacant lots or unoccupied structures. The other three properties in question are currently occupied. DHCD has been working with the owners/occupants of these properties throughout this entire acquisition process. Due to the length of the property acquisition and street closure processes, DHCD has requested that this proposal be considered by the Planning Commission at this time. The property owners of all of these non City-owned properties have been notified of this Planning Commission hearing.

This action has been referred to the Planning Commission for review as an extension of the Master Plan review authority assigned by the City Charter, Art. VII, §§72 and 74. Given that the streets proposed for closure are overwhelmingly surrounded by Mayor and City Council properties and as this request is consistent with years worth of blight removal and property acquisition, staff recommends that the Planning Commission find that there is no further need for public use of the street and alleys and that they can be closed. Needless to say, a resolution will need to be had between the City and any private property owners – especially any occupants – before any of the proposed streets or alleys are legally closed through the City Council Ordinance process.

**Community Notification:** The Rebuilding Johnston Square community association has been notified of this action.



**Thomas J. Stosur**  
**Director**