



*Catherine E. Pugh  
Mayor*

## PLANNING COMMISSION

*Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman*

### STAFF REPORT



*Thomas J. Stosur  
Director*

**March 23, 2017**

**REQUEST:** Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School INSPIRE Neighborhood Plan

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval and Adoption

**STAFF:** Kyle B. Leggs

**PETITIONERS:** Department of Planning at the behest of the community organizations and institutional stakeholders of the Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School INSPIRE area.

**OWNERS:** Mayor and City Council and Multiple Private Property Owners

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

**Site Conditions:** The new Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School #88 is located in the Lyndhurst Community at 621 Wildwood Parkway in Southwest Baltimore. The area is part of a larger consortium of neighborhoods commonly referred to as Edmondson Village. The INSPIRE Plan area encompasses the neighborhoods within a half-mile around the school although the primary focus is on the quarter-mile around the school. This area includes the neighborhoods of Lyndhurst, Edmondson Village, Edgewood, Allendale, and Rognel Heights and a small portion of the Uplands Community. The approximate street boundaries are Gelston Drive on the north, Edmondson Avenue to the south, Wildwood Parkway on the west, and Lyndhurst Avenue on the east.

**General Area:** The area is primarily a residential neighborhood, and the majority of housing consists of two-story row house units with front and back yards. This area also encompasses a large 262-unit, 3-story apartment complex at the northernmost part of the neighborhood, the Wildwood Garden Apartments, built in 1950. In 2008, the Uplands community – of which a small part is in the southwest corner of the INSPIRE area – began to undergo significant revitalization with the development and construction of a multi-phase 761 affordable and market-rate mixed income housing project, with ongoing construction phases projected for the next five years.

Much of the area directly surrounding the school is stable, with a homeownership rate slightly higher than the city's. According to the Census, over 76% of the residents have lived in the neighborhood since at least 2010, and 37% have lived there for at least 15 years. There are some vacant buildings scattered throughout the INSPIRE area, with a slightly higher concentration of vacancies south of Edmondson Avenue and east of the school. Much of the neighborhood falls into what the City's Housing Market Typology calls "middle" markets.

In August 2016 Baltimore's Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) voted to nominate Edmondson Village as a National Historic District. The application is currently being considered by the National Park Service.

Edmondson Village is also well-served by natural and recreational assets. Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School is located a few blocks south of the Gwynns Falls Leakin Park, one of the largest urban parks in the country.

In 2007, the *Edmondson Village Area Master Plan* was adopted by the Planning Commission. This plan focused primarily on community revitalization and building on existing strengths – including the Gwynns Falls Leakin Park, neighborhood schools, churches, the history of the community, and its leaders. Specific areas of focus included housing, retail, public safety, sanitation and transportation.

In 2008, the communities of Edmondson Village, Lyndhurst, and Edgewood became part of the Healthy Neighborhoods program and together, established an Edmondson Village Healthy Neighborhoods Collaborative. The Collaborative initially had an office in the community, but fiscal constraints led the office to close. The Healthy Neighborhood's liaison now operates out of the G0-Northwest Housing Resource Center located in Garwyn Oaks.

Active involvement in each of the neighborhood groups remains strong and a number of improvements the community envisioned some 10 years ago, in many ways, contributed to the priority of addressing the needs as identified in the INSPIRE Plan.

## 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.

*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 21<sup>st</sup> Century School Buildings Program

In the fall of 2010, groundwork was laid to address Baltimore City's aging and inadequate public school buildings. Community, 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 21<sup>st</sup> Century school represents tens of millions of dollars of public investment into 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 the quarter-mile 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 however, 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.

#### Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School INSPIRE Process

Between October 2014 and February 2017, Department of Planning staff met with over 150 members of the Lyndhurst and Rognel Heights school communities (principals, staff, parents, and students), along with residents in the Edmondson Village, Edgewood, and Allendale neighborhoods to better understand their neighborhood experiences, concerns, and needs. Through a combination of the workshops, community meetings, surveys, and walking tours, numerous other community leaders and stakeholders have helped inform the recommendations presented in the plan.

- On October 11, 2014 Department of Planning Staff held the kick-off INSPIRE meeting for Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School and conducted a Strengths, Weaknesses, and Opportunities workshop with representatives from the school, neighborhood, and stakeholder organizations.
- On January 28, 2015 Department of Planning Staff held the second workshop with the community, along with city agencies and discussed recommendations in the areas of housing, sanitation, transportation, public safety, recreation and open space.
- DOP facilitated student workshops at Lyndhurst Elementary School in January 2015, and at Rognel Heights in March 2015. There were 41 students who participated altogether.
- DOP administered 33 surveys to parents, family members, and teachers during student pick-up and drop-off in front of Lyndhurst Elementary and Rognel Heights Elementary/Middle School, and conducted 10 stakeholder interviews. The survey was also distributed at community meetings and available online.
- Residents volunteered to participate in an INSPIRE Steering Committee (previously called the CORE Team) to help DOP staff target, guide, and prioritize specific improvements in the community for inclusion in the Plan. These Steering Committee members also played a significant role by identifying areas to target for improvements during walking tours.
- DOP conducted walking tours with members of the Steering Committee on August 2015 that included walks of the larger Edmondson Village and Allendale community.
- In April 2015, DOP staff participated in meetings with the Family League's Community Engagement Specialist, school Principal, parent group representatives, teachers, support staff, community representatives, and staff from the University of Maryland School of Social Work to create an "Action Plan" for Community School implementation.
- In June 2016, DOP shared the Draft INSPIRE Recommendation Report with representatives from the school and neighborhood, elected officials, and stakeholder organizations at community meetings that included church leaders, representatives from Neighbors without Borders, Southwest Better Neighbors, and staff at the Edgewood/Lyndhurst Recreation Center. These stakeholders also provided feedback to inform the final plan.

Staff from City agencies, including the Baltimore City Police Department, Baltimore Development Corporation, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Public Works, Department of Recreation and Parks, and Department of Transportation participated in the tours, and/or field visits.

### Recommendations

There are two categories of recommendations, Primary Walking Routes Standard Improvements, and Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School 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.

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
- Implementing Safe Routes to School
- Assessing crossing guard deployment
- Pruning and planting street trees
- Assessing street lighting
- Boarding open vacant buildings
- Picking up trash and maintaining vacant lots

#### Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School INSPIRE 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 Lyndhurst Elementary/Middle School Planning Area fall under these goals and strategies:

- **Invest in Housing and Market-Strengthening Development Opportunities**
  - Identify and Support Strategic Redevelopment Opportunities
  - Create and Maintain High-Quality, Affordable Housing for Rent and Sale
  - Support and Increase Homeownership
  - Remove Blight
  - Improve Retail Businesses and Seek the Quality Entrepreneurs in the Community
- **Create Environmentally-Sustainable Neighborhoods**
  - Beautify Highly-Visible Public Spaces
  - Contribute to the Green Network through Lot Restoration
- **Create Opportunities for Health and Wellness**

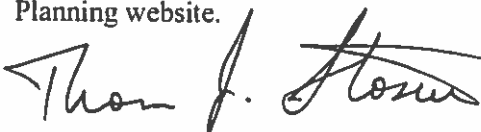
- Improve and Create New Places for Play and Recreation in the Community
- Enhance the Healthy Food Environment
- **Improve Resident Safety**
  - Target Nuisance Corner Stores for Loitering and Crime
  - Reduce Crime through Community-Based Activities, Environmental Design, and Partnerships
- **Improve Sanitation**
  - Keep the Neighborhoods Clean
- **Create Connections and Access**
  - Improve Traffic Conditions, Pedestrian Safety, and Walkability
  - Make Transportation Enhancements

There are a several community projects that have been identified that Planning Staff will work with the community to determine what project(s) to move ahead with. These include: Beautifying the triangular lot in the 600 block of Woodington Road with decorative treatments to honor military veterans, landscaping the vacant lot at 700 Denison Street in collaboration with the Morgan State University School of Architecture students as part of their 2017 fall curriculum, and providing façade improvement matching grants to help local businesses create positive visual impacts in the community.

#### **NOTIFICATIONS**

Staff has notified by email or phone the Lyndhurst, Edmondson Village, Edgewood, Roguel Heights, and Allendale Community Associations. Staff also notified 8<sup>th</sup> District City Councilman Kristerfer Burnett, State Senator Nathaniel Oaks, and State Delegate Samuel Rosenberg. Other City Agencies and/or institutions impacted by this planning process were also notified by email of this action, including the Departments of Housing and Community Development, Transportation, Recreation and Parks, the Police Department, the Department of Public Works, Baltimore Development Corporation, and Baltimore City Public Schools.

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



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