



*Stephanie Rawlings-Blake*  
Mayor

## PLANNING COMMISSION

*Wilbur E. "Bill" Cunningham, Chairman*

### STAFF REPORT



*Thomas J. Stosur*  
Director

**July 9, 2015**

**REQUEST:** City Council Bill #15-0525/ Rezoning – 600, 700, and 706 South Eden Street and 711 South Central Avenue

For the purpose of changing the zoning for the properties known as 600, 700, and 706 South Eden Street and 711 South Central Avenue, as outlined in red on the accompanying plat, from the M-3 Zoning District to the B-2-4 Zoning District.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval

**STAFF:** Alexandra Hoffman

**COMPREHENSIVE PLANNER:** Alexandra Hoffman (Downtown South District)

**PETITIONER:** Councilman James B. Kraft on behalf of Harbor East Development Group

**OWNER(S):** D-Center Development, LLC and Central Avenue, LLC

#### **SITE AREA**

The subject area for this rezoning is the 600 and 700 blocks of South Eden Street which are bounded by Fleet Street to the north, Eden Street to the east, Lancaster Street and the Chesapeake Bay to the south, Central Avenue to the west and bisected by Aliceanna Street (see Figure 1, attached). These blocks are within the Inner Harbor East neighborhood as it transitions to the surrounding historic districts of Little Italy and Fells Point, comprised of mostly two- and three-story rowhouses that include both commercial and residential uses. Formerly an industrial area, Harbor East is generally improved today with a series of high-density, mixed-use buildings concentrated around the President Street traffic circle, with the few industrial uses remaining in the eastern portion of the neighborhood.

#### **HISTORY**

Although the Planning Commission has taken no previous actions specific to these parcels, they previously recommended favorably in the adoption of the Inner Harbor East Urban Renewal Plan (now expired) that enabled the transformation of the Inner Harbor East neighborhood from industrial to mixed-use.

## **ANALYSIS**

City Council Bill #15-0525 recommends the rezoning of 600, 700, 706 South Eden Street and 711 South Central Avenue from M-3 to B-2-4.

Currently, this juncture of Little Italy, Harbor East and Fells Point is primarily zoned either commercial or industrial. Most of the Harbor East is zoned B-2-4, with the Little Italy neighborhood to the north predominately zoned B-3-2 and Fells Point to the east predominately B-1-2. This request would extend the existing B-2-4 zoning in Harbor East one block to the east between Fleet Street and Lancaster Street.

The requested B-2-4 zoning district is a neighborhood business district designation that allows for high density residential with a minimum of 200 square feet of lot area per dwelling unit and a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 7.0. The permitted use list provides for a variety of residential, office and commercial uses that are suitable for the area. No interior side yard setbacks are required, but if one is provided, it must be at least 10 feet. The current request is consistent with the B-2-4 zoning which exists to the west.

In completing its analysis, the Department of Planning Staff not only studied the request based on the Maryland Land Use Article, but also the character of the site. The current zoning of M-3 is intended for heavy industrial. In terms of recent development trends, much of the new construction has been high-density commercial or mixed-use development.

### **Petitioner Request**

The developer, Harbor East Development Group, has a proposal to create a high rise mixed-use development on 600 South Eden Street, with a later phase anticipated on the block to the north. In order to move forward with a high-density, mixed-use development at this site, a zoning change is needed.

## **CONFORMITY TO PLANS**

**Comprehensive Master Plan:** This bill is compatible with the Comprehensive Master Plan for Baltimore City, specifically:

### **LIVE**

#### **Goal 1: Build Human and Social Capital by Strengthening Neighborhoods**

*Objective 1:* Expand Housing Choices for All Residents

*Objective 2:* Strategically Redevelop Vacant Properties throughout the City

#### **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

**TransForm Baltimore:** This bill is consistent with the mapping recommendations under TransForm Baltimore, the draft new Zoning Code (amended and approved by the Planning Commission on September 21, 2013), for this site, as well as for Harbor East, to C-5. This

category is a downtown zoning category, so the proposed density allowed in the B-2-4 zoning category is consistent with the recommendation of TransForm Baltimore.

### **MARYLAND LAND USE CODE REQUIRED FINDINGS**

The Maryland Land Use Code requires the Planning Commission to study the proposed changes in relation to: 1. the plan; 2. the needs of Baltimore City; and 3. the needs of the particular neighborhood in the vicinity of the proposed changes (*cf.* Md. LAND USE Code Ann. 2012, §10-305). In reviewing this request, the staff finds that:

1. The Plan: see the “Conformity to Comprehensive Master Plan” section, above. The Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan is not so specific as to recommend land use and/or zoning changes for the properties in question. But as stated previously, this request is in-line with the goals and objectives of the Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan to redevelop vacant properties and Promote Transit Oriented Development (TOD) and Mixed-use Development to Reinforce Neighborhood Centers and Main Streets.
2. The Needs of Baltimore City: The proposed B-2-4 zoning district supports the City’s master plan goal to strengthen neighborhoods and strategically redevelop vacant properties throughout the City.
3. The Needs of the particular neighborhood: The proposed B-2-4 zoning district also supports the specific neighborhood needs to provide additional housing choice for existing residents as well as potential new residents by implementing a long-term vision of creating a mixed-use neighborhood that allows people to live, work and play in the same neighborhood, expanding the strong residential and commercial market that exists in Harbor East.

Similarly, the Land Use article requires the City Council to make findings of fact (*cf.* Md. LAND USE Code Ann. 2012, §10-304). The findings of fact include:

1. Population Change: Per our Neighborhood Statistical Area Map, this parcel lies within the Harbor East neighborhood, where there has been a population increase between the 2000 and 2010 Census of 142.8%.
2. Availability of Public Facilities: The properties are well served by City services, with no expected impacts as a result of rezoning.
3. Present and Future Transportation Patterns: This site is at the intersection of several major streets that are closely monitored by the Department of Transportation. Though the exact future impact is not known at this time, as a matter of course, commercial and mixed use developments often share parking, thereby reducing the total impact on the area. That being said, any specific impacts related to a higher density use and resulting mitigation measures for this site will be discussed with the Department of Transportation. The Central Avenue reconstruction is underway and is expected to provide traffic relief to President Street as a major north-south connection between Interstate 83, downtown and waterfront communities.
4. Compatibility with Existing and Proposed Development for the Area: The rezoning proposal is consistent with the existing zoning in the area. The subject parcel is adjacent

to a large B-2-4 zoning district which exists along the west side of President Street and south of Fleet Street. The resulting massing is also consistent with the existing development in the area to the west which typically consists of high-density residential, mixed-use, commercial, and office uses.

5. Recommendations of the Baltimore City Planning Commission and the BMZA: For the above reasons, the Planning Department will recommend approval of the rezoning request to the Planning Commission. The BMZA has not yet commented on this bill.
6. Relationship of the Proposed Amendment to Baltimore City's Plan- As mentioned above, the proposed zoning changes are compatible with the Baltimore City Comprehensive Master Plan.

#### Substantial Change

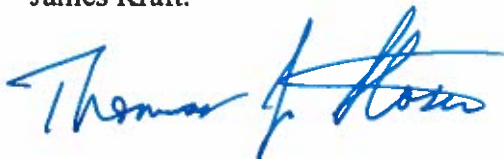
The City Council may grant the change to the zoning classification based on a finding that there was either a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood where the property is located, or that there was a mistake in the existing zoning classification. In this case, the neighborhood is undergoing substantial change in character that is reflected in the Planning Department analysis below.

Although there are still several parcels in the area that are zoned for heavy industrial, most of the area has been rezoned to a commercial zoning category. Historically, the area was comprised of industrial uses that either served the water or downtown, but many of the warehouse buildings have become vacant and the reuse of the buildings for an industrial use has become obsolete. This market shift drove the change in the long-term land use vision for the Harbor East area from primarily industrial to predominantly mixed-use. In response, the Inner Harbor East Urban Renewal Plan outlined a master plan that included not only a mix of uses and high density redevelopment. It also called for a comprehensive rezoning from industrial to commercial.

This proposed rezoning would constitute an expansion of the B-2-4 zoning district that currently exists directly to the west and is the underlying zoning for the existing Harbor East development, which features buildings that range from 150 feet to 300 feet tall. As stated earlier, the B-2-4 zoning category allows for an FAR of 7.0. While an exact height of building depends on the design, it is not infeasible that a building of at least 150 feet could be constructed.

#### **COMMUNITY NOTIFICATION**

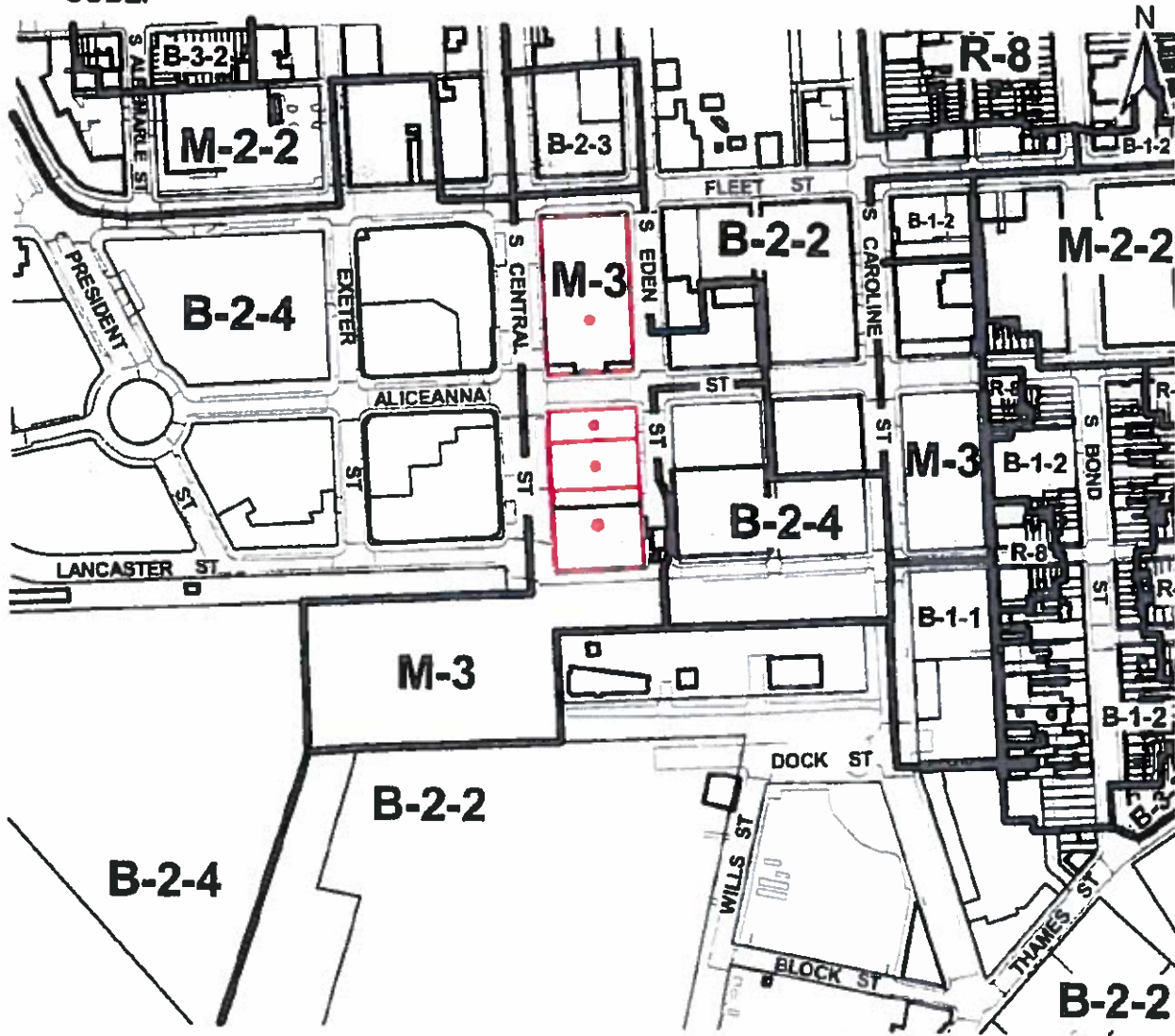
Staff mailed notification of this hearing to the Little Italy Business Association, Little Italy Community Organization, Little Italy Property Owners Association, Fells Point Homeowners' Association, City Council President Bernard C. "Jack" Young and the First District Councilman James Kraft.



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

Figure 1: Block Plat

SHEET NO. 56/68 OF THE ZONING DISTRICT MAP OF THE BALTIMORE CITY ZONING CODE.



1" = 300'

**Note:**

In Connection With Properties Known As  
 Nos. 600, 700 And 706 SOUTH EDEN STREET And 711 SOUTH CENTRAL AVENUE.  
 The Applicant Wishes To Request  
 The Conditional Use Of The Aforementioned Properties  
 From M-3 Zoning to B-2-4 Zoning,  
 As Outlined In Red Above.

WARD - 3 SECTION - 6  
 BLOCK - 1804 LOT - 1  
 BLOCK - 1805 LOTS 1, 2 & 4

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 MAYOR

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 PRESIDENT CITY COUNCIL

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