

FROM	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR		CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET			
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #22-0226 / URBAN RENEWAL – CHARLES NORTH – RENEWAL AREA DESIGNATION AND URBAN RENEWAL PLAN			

TO

The Honorable President and
Members of the City Council
City Hall, Room 400
100 North Holliday Street

DATE: December 9, 2022

At its regular meeting of December 8, 2022, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #22-0226, for the purpose of permitting, the purpose of repealing the existing Charles/North Revitalization Area Urban Renewal Plan and replacing it by designating as a “Renewal Area” an area situated in Baltimore City, Maryland known as Charles North.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report, which recommended amendment and approval of City Council Bill #22-0226 and adopted the following resolutions, with seven members being present (six in favor):

RESOLVED, That the Planning Commission concurs with the recommendation of its departmental staff, adopts the findings and equity analysis outlined in the staff report, with consideration for testimony and facts presented in the meeting, and recommends that City Council Bill #22-0226 be **amended and approved** by the City Council.

If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Eric Tiso, Division Chief, Land Use and Urban Design Division at 410-396-8358.

CR/ewt

attachment

cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor’s Office
Mr. Ethan Cohen, Mayor’s Office
The Honorable Eric Costello, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Ms. Nikki Thompson, City Council President’s Office
Mr. Colin Tarbert, BDC
Ms. Rebecca Witt, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Elena DiPietro, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Liam Davis, DOT
Ms. Natawna Austin, Council Services



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Sean D. Davis, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

December 8, 2022

REQUEST: City Council Bill #22-0226/ Urban Renewal – Charles North – Renewal Area Designation and Urban Renewal Plan:

For the purpose of repealing the existing Charles/North Revitalization Area Urban Renewal Plan and replacing it by designating as a “Renewal Area” an area situated in Baltimore City, Maryland known as Charles North, bounded generally by Falls Road on the west, West Lanvale Street and Interstate 83 on the south, Calvert Street and Hargrove Street on the east, and West 22nd Street and West 23rd Street on the north; establishing the objectives of the Urban Renewal Plan; establishing permitted land uses in the Renewal

RECOMMENDATION: Amendment and Approval

STAFF: Marie McSweeney-Anderson

INTRODUCED BY: Councilmember Robert Stokes, Sr.

SITE/GENERAL AREA

General Area: Bounded generally by Falls Road on the west, West Lanvale Street and Interstate 83 on the south, Calvert Street and Hargrove Street on the east, and West 22nd Street and West 23rd Street on the north.

HISTORY

The Charles North Urban Renewal Plan was originally approved by the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore by Ordinance no. 799 on October 25, 1982. Since inception, there have been 7 amendments with the most recent being in 2007. Current legislation CB #22-0226 introduced April 25, 2022.

ANALYSIS

Background: The Charles North Community Association has been working on the repeal and replace process for two years. Originally the Charles North Association investigated historical designation. However, due to the unique positioning of having the Station North Arts District located within the Charles North area, the Association ultimately decided to pursue updates to the Urban Renewal Plan rather than historic designation.

The primary goal of this URP is to provide requirements and standards designed to ensure that any new uses and development proposed in Charles North enhance the viability, stability, attractiveness, and convenience for residents and businesses in Charles North and of the City as a whole. Additional goals of this URP include:

1. Protecting the existing architectural and historic fabric of Charles North by ensuring that the design of new structures, the rehabilitation of existing structures, and new uses will be consistent with the scale and architectural design of Charles North’s collection of historic buildings;
2. Establishing a positive and identifiable image for Charles North; and
3. Provide an opportunity for the Charles North Community Association or its successor to provide commentary on certain renewal actions taking place within the project area.

Key Components of the draft Charles North Urban Renewal Plan are:

- Land Use Provisions
- Review of Developer’s Plans
- Law
 - URP Term
 - Procedures for Amendments
 - Separability
 - Applicability
 - Waiver Process
- Appendices
 - Contributing & Landmark Structures
 - General Guidelines for Artistic Expression
 - Design Guidelines
 - Design Guidelines for Contributing Structures

The current replacement draft for the Charles North Urban Renewal Plan is substantially more streamlined than the current version. The current version of the Charles North Urban Renewal Plan is 44 pages long and the new draft is 17 pages long. The Charles North Association pared down language to preserve the most important aspects of the plan, which mainly focus on updates to the design guidelines. Instead of having land use categories like in the current version, land use in the new draft aligns with current zoning, except for 11 prohibited uses in specific zoning categories.

Table 1								
	R-8	C-1	C-2	C-3	C-4	OR-1	TOD-4	I-MU
Animal Clinic							X	
Day-Care Center: Child or Adult						X	X	
Kennel				X	X		X	
Medical/Dental Office: 4,000sq. ft. or greater		X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Motor Vehicle Service and Repair: Minor (Fully Enclosed Structure)			X					
Motor Vehicle Service and Repair: Minor (Outdoor Vehicle Storage)			X					
Retail: Big Box Establishment				X	X			
Rooming House (any size)	X					X		

The design appendices seek to encourage property owners to retain and preserve the historical characteristics of residences and properties, while also allowing for provisions related to promotion of arts and sculptures. An updated list of contributing and landmark properties is included, which names iconic Baltimore landmarks like Penn Station and The Parkway Theatre. In some respects, the design guidelines are just that – guidelines. Legal and CHAP planners reviewed the draft Plan and gave recommendations for which aspects of the design guidelines were unenforceable. The Charles North Association worked with the District Planner to review and hone language to ensure all the guidelines are legal and understood some guidelines are recommended, but cannot be required.

Recommended Amendments:

- Addition of a waiver policy: In the case of a disagreement with the URP decision, a property owner has the right to request consideration from DHCD and Department of Planning for a waiver. The Charles North Association would be able to make recommendations within 3 weeks of receiving the waiver notice. Final decision-making authority to approve or disapprove a waiver request would be the responsibility of DHCD and Planning.
- Edits to the Design Guidelines: The Planning Department and the Law Department reviewed the Charles North URP draft for legal sufficiency. In cases where items were not enforceable, language was changed from required to recommended.
- Contributing & Landmark Structures: Two properties were added to this appendix that were not previously included.

The Charles North Association has been a part of each step of the amendment process and the board has reviewed and approved the proposed amendments.

Please note: The city has no acquisition or disposition authority in either the current Plan or the current draft version.

Equity:

- Impact:
 - How might the proposal impact the surrounding community in the short or long term? There is no change to the borders and boundaries of the current Urban Renewal Plan already in place. The current draft is much more permissible and less restrictive than the current Plan in place.
 - How would this proposal impact existing patterns of inequity that persist in Baltimore? This Urban Renewal Plan targets the Charles North community, while persistently perceived as being majority white, the neighborhood statistical area is relatively evenly split, with just over 55% of residents who are Black/African American. According to 2019 data, only 15% of all residents in Charles North are homeowners and 46% of residents moved to the area after 2015. This plan will ensure that housing stock and properties are well maintained, even in the absence of long-term homeowners in the area. While it's clear that the area is growing due to investment in the Station North Arts District and Penn Station, there are high rates of commercial vacancies, especially along the North Avenue corridor. As development continues, this plan will help to ensure community engagement and partnership in the process.
- Engagement:
 - Has the community been meaningfully engaged in discussing this proposal? The Charles North Community Association has taken the lead in the repeal and replacement process along with support from the Planning Department and Councilman Robert Stokes Sr. The Association Board has worked on the Plan for over two years and has routinely discussed it at Association meetings, even throughout the pandemic. The Association and partner organizations such as Central Baltimore Partnership and Midtown Benefits District have been helpful in sharing information publicly. Additionally, prior to bringing the legislation to Planning Commission, the District Planner in partnership with the Association and Council Office hosted two public meetings for education and engagement. Mailed notification went out to over 245 property owners of the 416 properties in the Charles North URP to alert them of the public meetings. One was held in person on November 10th at Motor House, located within the Charles North area. Another meeting was held virtually on November 17th for property owners who may not live in the area. In advance of each meeting and as required by the Planning Commission, 350+ constituents of the Northern Planning District, including adjacent neighborhood leaders of Old Goucher, Barclay, Charles Village, and Harwood have all been notified of the public meetings and public hearings via e-mail communication.

- How are residents who have been historically excluded from planning processes being authentically included in the planning of the proposed policy or project? Participants in the public meeting included members of the North Avenue Mission, who work directly with people experiencing homelessness in the Charles North area and Impact Hub who work with the arts and entrepreneurship community.
- Internal Operations:
 - The District Planner has worked with the Charles North Association and the Council Office to move this process forward since joining the department in June of 2022. Internal to the Planning Department, Community Planners with expertise in historical preservation and design reviewed the draft and put forth amendments to the draft. The Planner worked with the Association to complete the amended draft and it was reviewed for legal sufficiency in September. In October, the Planner worked with the Association and Council Office to plan the community public meetings and learn the requirements of the legislative process. In November the public meetings were held and in December, the Planner will continue to shepherd the plan through the public legislative process.

Notification: Mailed notification went out to over 245 property owners of the 416 properties twice to alert them of the public meetings and public hearings for Planning Commission and Economic and Community Development Committee hearing. The Charles North Association, Council Office have been instrumental in notifying property owners and encouraging attendance at public meetings. Special notification of all public meetings and hearings went to Central Baltimore Partnership, Jubilee Baltimore, Station North Arts District to ask their support in sharing information with affected residents and property owners within the district as well. Leaders from all 52 neighborhood statistical areas in the Northern Planning District have been notified of the process, the public informational meetings, and the public hearings through the Planner's weekly communications.



Chris Ryer
Director