

FROM	NAME & TITLE	CHRIS RYER, DIRECTOR <i>Chris Ryer</i>	CITY of BALTIMORE MEMO	
	AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS	DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING 8 TH FLOOR, 417 EAST FAYETTE STREET		
	SUBJECT	CITY COUNCIL BILL #25-0021 / REZONING – 3221 FREDERICK AVENUE		

TO

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

DATE: March 17, 2025

At its regular meeting of March 17, 2025, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0021, for the purpose of changing the zoning for the property known as 3221 Frederick Avenue (Block 2123A, Lot 002), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat, from the I-1 Zoning District to the IMU-1 Zoning District; and providing for a special effective date.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report which recommended approval of City Council Bill #25-0021 and adopted the following resolution, with eight members being present (eight 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 #25-0021 be **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
The Honorable John Bullock, Council Rep. to Planning Commission
Ms. Rebecca Witt, BMZA
Mr. Geoffrey Veale, Zoning Administration
Ms. Stephanie Murdock, DHCD
Ms. Hilary Ruley, Law Dept.
Mr. Francis Burnszynski, PABC
Mr. Luciano Diaz, DOT
Ms. Nancy Mead, Council Services
Ms. Lisa Sui Dang, applicant



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

March 13, 2025

REQUEST: City Council Bill #25-0021/ Rezoning – 3221 Frederick Avenue

For the purpose of changing the zoning for the property known as 3221 Frederick Avenue (Block 2123A, Lot 002), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat, from the I-1 Zoning District to the IMU-1 Zoning District; and providing for a special effective date.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt findings and Approve

STAFF: Caitlin Audette

PETITIONER: Nate Pretl, on behalf of Lisa Sui Dang

OWNER: Balti Investment, LLC

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: The property at 3221 Frederick Avenue occupies the block width between Frederick Avenue and Stafford Street and includes a number of buildings including a five-story brick industrial building and a brick office building fronting on Frederick Avenue.

General Area: The property is located near the intersection of Frederick Avenue and Caton Avenue in west Baltimore, directly east of the corner commercial buildings. The area is unique in that a wide variety of building types and uses are found within a relatively small geography. These include industrial, residential, and commercial properties as well as the railroad right-of-way and two cemeteries.

HISTORY

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

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore was enacted by Ordinance #24-426, dated December 2, 2024. The subject property is designated in the Industrial group in the General Land Use Plan. This proposed zoning change from I-1 to IMU-1 does not conform to that designation.

ZONING CODE REQUIREMENTS

Below are the approval standards under §5-508(b) of Article 32 – *Zoning* for proposed zoning map amendments:

(b) *Map amendments.*

(1) *Required findings.*

As required by the State Land Use Article, the City Council may approve the legislative authorization based on a finding that there was either:

- (i) a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood where the property is located; or
- (ii) a mistake in the existing zoning classification.

(2) *Required findings of fact.*

In making the determination required by subsection (b)(1) of this section, the City Council must also make findings of fact that address:

- (i) population changes;
- (ii) the availability of public facilities;
- (iii) present and future transportation patterns;
- (iv) compatibility with existing and proposed development for the area;
- (v) the recommendations of the City agencies and officials; and
- (vi) the proposed amendment's consistency with the City's Comprehensive Master Plan.

(3) *Additional standards – General*

Additional standards that must be considered for map amendments are:

- (i) existing uses of property within the general area of the property in question;
- (ii) the zoning classification of other property within the general area of the property in question;
- (iii) the suitability of the property in question for the uses permitted under its existing zoning classification; and
- (iv) the trend of development, if any, in the general area of the property in question, including changes, if any, that have taken place since the property in question was placed in its present zoning classification.

ANALYSIS

The property was historically the long-term location of both the Rennous, Kleinle & Co. Inc. Brush Manufacturers and the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Co. (PPG Industries) which according to 1928 Sanborn maps shared the site at the time. In 1990 the property was sold from PPG Industries to the Maryland Brush Company a newly created union-organized employee-owned company. After a remarkable 30 years, the members voted to sell the business in 2020, which led to the location's closure. The property was last sold to Balti Investment, LLC in 2021, but has not been active since the closure of the Maryland Brush Company.

Required Findings:

Per §5-508(b)(1) of Article 32 – *Zoning*, and as required by the State Land Use Article, the City Council may approve the legislative authorization based on a finding that there was either: (i) a substantial change in the character of the neighborhood where the property is located; or (ii) a mistake in the existing zoning classification.

Change: The use of I-1 zoning was appropriate during the last comprehensive rezoning in 2017, as the site continued to function as its long-term use of a steel brush manufacturing company. However, the sale and relocation of the company and five years of vacancy, is a substantial change. Additionally, the property more closely aligns with the intent and definition of the IMU-1 zoning.

Maryland Land Use Code – Requirements for Rezoning:

The Land Use Article of the Maryland Code requires the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (BMZA) 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 Code, Land Use § 10-305 (2023)). In reviewing this request, the staff finds that:

1. **The Plan:** The proposed rezoning is not contemplated in any existing plans.
2. **The needs of Baltimore City:** The rezoning from I-1 to IMU-1 would allow the continue use by light industrial, while also providing the option for additional residential units. Meeting needs of the city for both employers and housing.
3. **The needs of the particular neighborhood:** The community would benefit from an active and appropriate use on the vacant site. The change to IMU-1 would allow the property to be reused in more varied ways, appropriate for its unique location along a commercial corridor but also adjacent to residential properties.

Similarly, the Land Use article, also adopted by Article 32 – *Zoning* §5-508(b)(2), requires the City Council to make findings of fact (MD Code, Land Use § 10-304 (2023)). The findings of fact include:

1. **Population changes;** The Gwynns Falls Neighborhood saw a decline in population between 2010 and 2020 of 232 people.
2. **The availability of public facilities;** This area is well served by public utilities, which will continue to serve the area.
3. **Present and future transportation patterns;** The proposed change may create some limited additional vehicular traffic, depending on the use of the site.
4. **Compatibility with existing and proposed development for the area;** There is no other proposed development in the immediate vicinity, so the proposed change is not in conflict.
5. **The recommendations of the Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals (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. **The relation of the proposed amendment to the City's plan.** No plans for the area identify the development of these sites outside their current zoning.

There are additional standards under Article 32 – *Zoning* §5-508(b)(3) that must be considered for map amendments. These include:

- (i) **existing uses of property within the general area of the property in question;** the immediate area includes residential, industrial, commercial and open space uses.
- (ii) **the zoning classification of other property within the general area of the property in question;** the surrounding properties are zoned C-2, R-6, and I-1.
- (iii) **the suitability of the property in question for the uses permitted under its existing zoning classification; and** the property has been used for industrial purposes for over 150 years.

- (iv) **the trend of development, if any, in the general area of the property in question, including changes, if any, that have taken place since the property in question was placed in its present zoning classification.** There has been no recent development in the immediate area.

Below is the staff's review of the required considerations of §5-508(b)(3) of Article 32 – *Zoning*, staff finds that this change is in the public's interest, in that it will allow a wider range of uses that are more appropriate for the historic buildings on the site and the adjacent residential community.

Background: The applicant intends to redevelop the property for mixed-use development that will reuse the existing historic buildings.

Equity:

- Impact:
 - How might the proposal impact the surrounding community in the short or long term?
 - How would this proposal impact existing patterns of inequity that persist in Baltimore?

The proposal would allow for a broader range of uses on the site allowing it to be activated more easily. These uses are also more appropriate for the unique historic buildings on the site which are adjacent to residential communities. The proposed change would allow the property to be adaptively reused after 5 years of vacancy.

- Engagement:
 - Has the community been meaningfully engaged in discussing this proposal?
 - How are residents who have been historically excluded from planning processes being authentically included in the planning of the proposed policy or project?

The community has met with the owner regarding the proposed zoning change and reuse.

- Internal Operations:
 - This may include staff commentary regarding impact on staff time or resources devoted to a project.

Staff does not anticipate any undue impact to staff time or resources.

Notification: The Gwynns Falls Community Association has been notified of this action.



Chris Ryer
Director