

ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

FINDINGS OF FACT

MOTION OF THE CHAIR OF THE ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE, AFTER A PUBLIC HEARING AT WHICH AGENCY REPORTS AND PUBLIC TESTIMONY WERE CONSIDERED, AND PURSUANT TO SECTIONS 10-304 AND 10-305 OF THE MARYLAND LAND USE ARTICLE AND SECTION 5-508 OF THE BALTIMORE CITY CODE, THE CITY COUNCIL ADOPTS THESE FINDINGS OF FACT CONCERNING:

City Council Bill No: 23-0365

Rezoning - 601 through 621 East Biddle Street, 1101 through 1129 Forrest Street, 602 East Chase Street, and 1110 Nursery Place

Upon finding as follows with regard to:

(1) Population changes;

The Johnston Square neighborhood's population had a small increase from the 2010 Census population of 1,906 to the 2020 Census population of 1,993.

(2) The availability of public facilities;

As a result of this rezoning a library would become an anchor tenant of the ground floor of this building. The addition of a library would add a public facility to this neighborhood.

(3) Present and future transportation patterns;

The rezoning alone is not likely to change present transportation patterns through Johnston Square. Future development is likely to add car traffic to the block but it is unlikely to have a negative impact on the neighborhood.

(4) Compatibility with existing and proposed development for the area;

The rezoning is directly aligned with proposed redevelopment plans for the area and is directly called for in two of the extant plans for the area.

- (5) The recommendations of the City agencies and officials, including the Baltimore City Planning Commission and the Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals;

The Planning Commission voted to recommend approval of the bill and the BMZA deferred to the Planning Commission’s recommendation. The City agencies to which the bill was referred made the following recommendations:

Planning Commission	Favorable
Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals	Defers to Planning
Department of Transportation	Favorable
City Solicitor	Favorable
Department of Housing and Community Development	Favorable
Baltimore Development Corporation	Favorable
Parking Authority	Not Opposed

- (6) The proposed amendment’s relationship to and consistency with the City’s Comprehensive Master Plan.

There has been a significant change in the Johnston Square neighborhood since the previous comprehensive rezoning of the entire City, due to the creation of the Johnston Square Impact Investment Area. Given the City commitment to reinvestment and redevelopment in Johnston Square and the creation of plans calling for higher density development, the rezoning to C-1 is appropriate.

- (7) Existing uses of property within the general area of the property in question;

The surrounding area is zoned primarily R-8, and the remainder of the block these properties are located within and the area immediately to the Southeast are zoned C-1. Johnston Square is predominantly townhouse residential in character, with the housing stock primarily built in the 1920s. There are multifamily buildings in the neighborhood, primarily along Greenmount Avenue. The neighborhood also has some small-scale commercial uses.

- (8) The zoning classification of other property within the general area of the property in question;

The rest of the block on which the subject parcels are located is zoned C-1. The property across Biddle Street to the North and Forrest to the West is zoned R-8. There is a cluster of parcels zoned C-1 to the Southeast of the subject parcels.

- (9) The suitability of the property in question for the uses permitted under its existing zoning classification;

The properties are currently vacant lots which under the current zoning could be developed as any of the several primarily residential uses allowed under the R-8 zoning classification.

- (10) 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 classification;

These parcels are in the priority area of the Johnston Square Impact Investment Area, an area that did not exist at the time of the most recent Comprehensive Plan. Extensive building rehabilitation, demolition, and new construction have occurred in Johnston Square in recent years. This rezoning is in line with the current planning and implementation efforts in the neighborhood.

- (11) For a rezoning based on a SUBSTANTIAL CHANGE IN THE CHARACTER OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD, the following facts establish the substantial change since the time of the last comprehensive rezoning:

There has been a significant change in the neighborhood since the previous comprehensive zoning due to the creation of the Johnston Square Impact Investment Area and the subsequent building rehabilitation, demolition, and new construction that has occurred. The continuing trend of change and progress in the area moving towards higher-density residential options with supporting light commercial uses demonstrates a significant change in the neighborhood.

- (12) For a rezoning based on a MISTAKE in the existing zoning classification, the following facts establish that at the time of the last comprehensive zoning the Council failed to consider then existing facts, or projects or trends which were reasonably foreseeable and/or that events occurring subsequent to the comprehensive zoning have proven that the Council's initial premises were incorrect:

N/A

SOURCE OF FINDINGS (Check all that apply):

[X] Planning Report – Planning Commission’s report, dated April 28, 2023.

[X] Testimony presented at the Committee hearing.

Oral – Witness:

- Jeff Hochstetler, Law Department
- Imani Jasper, Planning Commission
- James Turner, Department of Transportation
- Stephanie Murdock, Department of Housing and Community Development
- Luis Cardona, Baltimore Development Corporation
- Fran Burnszynski, Parking Authority
- Sophia Gebrehiwot, Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals

Written:

- Planning Commission Report – Dated April 28, 2023
- Department of Transportation, Agency Report – Dated June 21, 2023
- Board of Municipal and Zoning Appeals, Agency Report – Dated April 3, 2023
- Law Department, Agency Report – Dated May 23, 2023
- Department of Housing and Community Development, Agency Report – Dated May 2, 2023
- Baltimore Development Corporation, Agency Report – Dated June 23, 2023
- Parking Authority, Agency Report – Dated April 11, 2023

COMMITTEE MEMBERS VOTING IN FAVOR

Sharon Green Middleton, Chair
John Bullock
Mark Conway
Ryan Dorsey
Odette Ramos
Robert Stokes