


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 #25-0053 / REZONING – 4001 EAST BALTIMORE STREET		

TO

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

DATE: April 28, 2025

At its regular meeting of April 24, 2025, the Planning Commission considered City Council Bill #25-0053, for the purpose of changing the zoning for the property known as 4001 East Baltimore Street (Block 6279, Lot 009), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat, from the I-2 Zoning District to the IMU-1 Zoning District.

In its consideration of this Bill, the Planning Commission reviewed the attached staff report which recommended approval of City Council Bill #25-0053 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 #25-0053 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
Mr. Chase Hoffberger, Applicant



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

PLANNING COMMISSION

Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director

April 24, 2025

REQUEST: City Council Bill #25-0053/ Rezoning – 4001 East Baltimore Street

For the purpose of changing the zoning for the property known as 4001 East Baltimore Street (Block 6279, Lot 009), as outlined in red on the accompanying plat, from the I-2 Zoning District to the IMU-1 Zoning District.

RECOMMENDATION: Adopt findings and Approve

STAFF: Justin Walker

PETITIONER: Chase Hoffberger

OWNER: Saffo Contracting, Inc.

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: Located midblock between South Haven and South Conkling Streets, 4001 East Baltimore Street comprises approximately 0.323 acres. The site is improved with a brick structure featuring two garage bays, along with a fenced-in parking lot in the west side yard. It is currently used as office space and storage for an ongoing infrastructure project, which is expected to conclude in 2026. The property is zoned I-2.

General Area: The subject property is located within the Baltimore Highlands Neighborhood Statistical Area on the east side of the city. The site is situated between the Highlandtown Village Shopping Center (zoned C-3) to the west and industrial properties (zoned I-2) to the east. Beyond the shopping center are blocks of R-8 zoned rowhouse residential uses. Within 500 feet of the property, there is a mix of industrial, residential, and commercial uses and zoning districts.

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 Mixed Use: Predominantly Industrial group in the General Land Use Plan. This proposed rezoning conforms to that designation.

The site is located within the boundaries of the Baltimore Highlands Community Plan, adopted in 2023. Goal #3 of the plan focuses on maintaining affordability for renters in the neighborhood. Under this goal, Strategy 3.6 includes the directive to “explore opportunities for

multifamily residential development and changing land uses.” This strategy emphasizes the need to reuse vacant buildings and identifies locations appropriate for multifamily development. The subject property at 4001 East Baltimore Street is among the lots identified for a change to multifamily. Rezoning the site to IMU-1 would allow such development to occur.

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 proposed zoning change coincides with ongoing shifts in land use patterns within the community, which have seen a move away from historic industrial uses and toward a mix of residential and commercial development. The North Haven Street corridor, located just east of the site, exemplifies this transition in both land use and zoning. Prior to 2017, the majority of the corridor was zoned M-3, the intensive industrial classification at the time. With the adoption of the Transform Baltimore in 2017, the corridor was rezoned to better align with evolving conditions: properties to the west of the site were designated C-3, while properties to the east were rezoned to IMU-2 (Industrial Mixed-Use).

These zoning changes recognize and support the area’s shift away from heavy industrial activity toward a more diverse and neighborhood-compatible mix of uses. The proposed IMU-1 zoning serves as an appropriate transitional designation, consistent with the current character and trajectory of the neighborhood. Transition is not only anticipated – it is already well underway, and the rezoning will help guide that change.

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 I-1 zoning district was appropriate during the 2017 comprehensive rezoning, as the site was formerly equipped to support heavier industrial operations. Since that time, the intensity of industrial activity on the site has decreased, with current uses limited to storage and office functions. Simultaneously, the surrounding neighborhood has experienced an increase in both commercial and residential development. Within a quarter-mile radius, there has been significant growth in multifamily and rowhouse housing over the past decade. The changes are reflected in the General Land Use Plan, adopted in 2024, which shows the site as 'Mixed Use: Predominantly Industrial,' as opposed to the industrial classification of the higher-intensity properties nearby.

This shift in the neighborhood's development pattern has introduced increased land use conflicts between residential areas and the higher-intensity industrial activities permitted under the I-2 district. The proposed IMU-1 zoning strikes a balance by allowing light industrial uses to remain, while also accommodating neighborhood-scale residential and commercial development. This designation supports a more compatible and flexible land use pattern that reflects the evolving character of the area

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 aligns with the general land use and the area master plan as noted in the 'Conformity to Plans' section above.
2. **The needs of Baltimore City:** The proposed rezoning would allow the continuation of some light industrial uses on the site while allowing transition to occur with the option for residential units on the site. Such a change supports the city's need for both employment and housing
3. **The needs of the particular neighborhood:** The IMU-1 district would allow various uses that support the needs of the neighborhood. The neighborhood outlined these needs in the Baltimore Highlands Community Plan, which identifies this site as a candidate for mixed-use redevelopment.

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;** According to the U.S. Census, the Baltimore Highlands neighborhood gained approximately 400 residents between 2010 and 2020.
2. **The availability of public facilities;** The area is well served by necessary public utilities, which are able to support redevelopment.
3. **Present and future transportation patterns;** The area is accessible by automobile via routes on North Haven Street and East Lombard Street, which connect the site to I-895, located about half a mile to the east. The site is one block away from MDOT-MTA bus stops on East Lombard Street that serve the Orange Bus Route. The size of the site and scale of the proposed redevelopment are unlikely to have significant impacts on nearby transportation.
4. **Compatibility with existing and proposed development for the area;** The proposed rezoning puts the site in line with existing redevelopment that has shifted nearby lots from industrial to commercial or residential uses. The rezoning will continue to support this redevelopment pattern.
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.** The proposed changes aligns with the City's plans as outlined above.

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 general area of the property contains a variety of uses. To the east there is a strip of formerly industrial property that were rezoned to IMU-1 in 2017 and now contain a mix of commercial uses. To the west the Highlandtown Village shopping center contains multiple commercial uses.
- (ii) **the zoning classification of other property within the general area of the property in question;** The zoning of surrounding properties within 500 feet includes IMU-2, I-2, C-3, C-1, and R-8.
- (iii) **the suitability of the property in question for the uses permitted under its existing zoning classification; and** The property has been used for light industrial uses for many years. Such uses could continue under the rezone while also allowing a wider variety of residential and commercial uses that will help keep the site viable.
- (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.** Since the current zoning was implemented, the properties across South Haven Street have been redeveloped into commercial uses. There have also been multiple multi-family and rowhouse developments along the South Haven corridor in recent years.

Below is the staff's review of the required considerations of §5-508(b)(3) of Article 32 – *Zoning*, where staff finds that this change is in the public's interest, in that it will allow for a wider range of uses that allow the site to remain productive and prevent vacancy. The rezoning will also align the site to the uses proposed in the area master plan.

Background: The applicant proposes to redevelop 4001 East Baltimore Street as a mixed-use building following the conclusion of their use of the building for an ongoing highway infrastructure project. The project includes approximately 5,000 square feet of ground-level space intended for office, commercial, and light industrial uses. The upper floors will contain 13 apartment units. The redevelopment will also provide 18 off-street parking spaces and preserve the existing mural on the building's tower. While these plans are not directly tied to the rezoning action, they offer important context for the property's future use and community impact.

Equity: The proposed rezoning of 4001 East Baltimore Street reflects a broader shift from long-standing industrial uses toward a less intensive and neighborhood-scale mix of uses. Located in a community historically shaped by industrial development and disinvestment, the site's reuse for mixed-use and multifamily purposes aligns with adopted community plans calling for affordable housing and adaptive redevelopment. The change to IMU-1 zoning enables reinvestment in ways that can stabilize housing costs, improve walkability, and support employment opportunities. By aligning zoning with community-identified goals, this action helps guide ongoing change toward more equitable land use.

Notification: In addition to the required posting on the site, the Highlandtown Community Association was notified of this proposal and provided a letter of support.



Chris Ryer
Director