



Brandon M. Scott  
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR  
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION**

Tom Liebel, Chairman

**STAFF REPORT**



Chris Ryer  
Director, Planning

**February 9, 2021**

**REQUEST:** Concept review - Construct a five-story apartment building

**ADDRESS:** 3535 Clipper Road (Woodberry Historic District)

**RECOMMENDATION:** Disapproval and return to Commission with revised proposal to address massing and scale by reducing height by one story.

**STAFF:** Walter W. Gallas, AICP

**APPLICANT:** Gordon Godat, AIA, JP2 Architects

**OWNER:** 3535 CLIPPER, LLC

**SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT**

The property is located within the Woodberry Historic District (*Image 1*). Situated immediately west of the Jones Falls, and abutting the northern boundary of Druid Hill Park, the Woodberry district preserves and adapts aspects of its industrial heritage and maintains some of the physical integrity of the mill village and company town it once was. The street plan reflects its development over 175 years—irregular near the channel of the falls at its eastern edge, while more planned and grid-like in the northwest quadrant. Portions of the former Poole & Hunt Foundry and Machine Works have been adapted for commercial and residential uses incorporating new construction. The southern section of the former Poole & Hunt land has been filled in with a 21<sup>st</sup> century residential development of modernist design. In the southeast corner of the district, Brick Hill is its own tiny enclave of company-built workers' duplexes.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: The site of the proposed new construction is in the oldest portion of the historic district on the east side of Clipper Road where Druid Park Drive intersects Clipper Road. A metal warehouse sits on the site (*Images 2 & 3*). The 1914-1915 Sanborn map shows the site at one time contained 3535-3537 Clipper Road (then Railroad Avenue), a 2 ½-story double house, one of four such stone houses on the east side of the street (*Images 4 & 5*), which was company-built housing for the mill workers. The four houses were constructed in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, and appear in the 1928 and the 1953 Sanborn maps as well (*Images 6 & 7*). Sometime in the latter 20<sup>th</sup> century, 3535-3537 Clipper Road was demolished, and the warehouse was constructed (*Image 8*). On May 21, 2019, the two southernmost double stone houses at 3511-3513 and 3523-3525 Clipper Road were unexpectedly demolished, leaving the stone duplex at 3605-3607 Clipper Road as the sole surviving duplex of the original four on this block (*Image 9*). The warehouse is a non-contributing building in the district.

## **BACKGROUND**

See November 10, 2020, CHAP staff report for activities with Planning Department and CHAP staff from July 13 to October 30, 2020.

- November 10, 2020 – At CHAP hearing, staff recommended concept approval with conditions: 1) Further reduce height by either removing at least one floor or stepping down a portion of the fifth floor to be more compatible with the surrounding 2 ½-story houses, and 2) Return to commission to confirm final design and materials. At the hearing, the Commission unanimously approved the following motion:  
Disapprove staff recommendation and disapprove proposal and have the applicant come back [to the Commission] after addressing community concerns. [In addition,] rethink massing and scale to make the design more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.  
Commissioners found that the proposal was too large in the residential context of Clipper Road and Druid Park Drive and did not meet CHAP guideline 2.3 Scale and Form.
- November 17, 2020 – Architect team met with CHAP and Planning directors, two Commission members, and CHAP staff for a work session on the design and manipulating a digital model to break up the building mass.
- January 12, 2021 – The design revision based on the November 17 exercise was presented by the design team in a virtual meeting of the Woodberry Neighborhood Association. About 20 people participated, including CHAP staff. Community members provided comments and received responses from the design team. The meeting was recorded, and the design team compiled notes.
- January 18, 2021 – Based on the neighborhood association meeting, the team submitted the present revised plans to CHAP for consideration by the Commission. Responses to the community comments were incorporated in the presentation.
- January 27, 2021 – Following the CHAP tentative agenda attended by Commission chair and vice-chair and CHAP staff, additional comments on the submitted design were forwarded to the design team.

## **PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES**

The applicant is proposing the following scope of work: “Construction of a 5-story wood framed, multifamily residential building in the Woodberry neighborhood. The ground floor will have a leasing office, bike storage, shared amenity areas, restroom, and space for a café or similar small tenant. The building will include approximately 50 studio/efficiency units” (*Images 10-13*).

Staff applied the following sections\* of the *Baltimore City Historic Preservation Design Guidelines* in reviewing this proposal:

### **2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design**

### **2.2 Site Design**

### **2.3 Scale and Form**

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\* Staff also applied Chapter 5 Guidelines for Archeology and determined there was low potential for archeological resources at the site given the disturbance caused by the warehouse construction.

## 2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design

- Avoid demolishing historic buildings, structures, and landscapes when designing new construction projects.
- Identify the character-defining features of the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Design new buildings to visually relate to the historic environment. Respect the established design precedent in the immediate area.
- Contemporary architectural design that reflects its current time, place, use, and culture is accepted, provided that the design is compatible with the character of the historic district.
- Radically contrasting building designs are discouraged within local historic districts.
- New buildings that are similar to existing buildings in materials, form, massing, and architectural features are accepted as long as the new buildings can be distinguished from historic buildings.

### Application of Guidelines

The proposed building will be on a site which hasn't had a historic structure on it for decades, so no historic fabric is being lost. The contemporary design—in its previous form and in the revised version—doesn't pretend to be historic, and so meets the spirit of the guiding principles. The design challenge continues to be how to visually relate this new building to the surrounding historic buildings and streetscape. Another building for this development, 3511 Clipper Road, located immediately to the south is finalizing permit review based on an approved design from the Planning Department's Urban Design and Architecture Advisory Panel (UDAAP). This review was prior to the designation of the Woodberry historic district.

CHAP design guidelines speak to “historic” context. The context is Clipper Road and Druid Park Drive. The historic building to the immediate north is a 2 ½ story stone house, the last remaining house of a row of four that originally lined this side of Clipper Road (*Image 14*). Farther south on the same side across the lots where the demolished stone houses stood, is the old company store/post office, a two-story masonry building (*Image 15*). To the west across Clipper Road and across a parking lot, on a hill above this site is Shiloh Church (originally the Woodberry Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church) along Druid Park Drive, an imposing stone building (*Image 16*). South of Druid Park Drive on the west side of Clipper Road are the rows of two-story stone houses built in the 1840s by the owners of the Woodberry Factory (*Image 17*).

While the design materials are not finalized, this revised design proposes the use of stone at the first and second floors as both a way to break up the building mass and as a nod to the neighboring two-story stone buildings.

Added to the historic context is the potential context of new buildings in the vicinity which are in various stages of approval. 3511 Clipper Road, the proposed companion building directly south of this project is one. 3511 and 3535 Clipper Road are intended to be under the same management company though they will have different ownership teams, and the owners want the two buildings to be visually related. Another development, comprised of

3-story townhouses, is proposed on the higher elevation of the Poole & Hunt lot, to the rear of the stone houses on the west side of Clipper Road (*Image 18*). Should all of these be developed as planned, the character of this portion of the district will be significantly impacted.

## 2.2 Site Design

- Retain established property line patterns, street and alley widths, setbacks, primary and secondary building orientation, and landscape elements.
- Incorporate character-defining site design features of the historic district into the designs of new construction projects.
- In areas with varied setbacks, the setback for new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of those of neighboring buildings. Variations to these setback guidelines may be warranted in some cases, but decisions should be carefully considered with respect to their impact on the overall streetscape.
- The spaces between buildings help define the historic character of the neighborhood. Design new construction to follow the existing pattern of building widths and spacing between buildings.
- Primary buildings should have a similar orientation and relationship to the street as the existing buildings. Primary entrances and facades should be located, oriented, and sequenced to be consistent with the pattern of entrances and facades in the neighborhood.
- New construction projects should reinforce existing patterns of open space and enclosure created by existing vehicular and pedestrian circulation routes, fences, walls, yards, courtyards, gardens, and landscaping.
- New construction at corners or abutting public spaces require special consideration in the design of entrances and multiple, publicly visible facades.

### Application of Guidelines

To fit the program, the building fills the site (*Image 19*). Responding to community comment about the existing 5-foot wide sidewalk, the design team responded by shifting the building slightly to the east to maintain a 6-foot wide sidewalk for the length of the property. In addition, at the entrances to the building lobby and the proposed retail space, the storefront will be set back an additional 2 feet to allow for better circulation. For context, the two remaining buildings along the east side of Clipper Road have little or no setbacks at the front of each lot, with some side and rear yards. The houses along the west side are set back from the street somewhat, but not a great deal, so the building's siting along the street meets the setback guideline (*Image 20*).

The proposed 5-story building would sit about 30 feet from the 2 ½-story stone house at 3605-3607 Clipper Road, a recently completed rehabilitation for single family use (*Image 21*). The design places the new building's entrance facing Clipper Road, which meets the guideline regarding the relationship to the street. The building has four exposed elevations, and the design will be seen from many vantage points, not just from up and down Clipper Road, but from Druid Park Drive, from Union Street looking up at the building from across the light rail tracks, from the 41<sup>st</sup> Street viaduct, and from Interstate 83. This impact on the larger viewshed means that the building's compatibility with the surrounding historic

context is critical (*Image 22*). The design meets aspects of these guidelines, namely maintaining the general setback from the street, but the treatment of all four of the elevations will continue to need refinement once height and massing are approved.

### 2.3 Scale and Form

- The scale and form of new buildings must be compatible with the height and depth of surrounding buildings. Where there is variation of building height within the immediate neighborhood, the new building should generally relate to the predominant pattern.
- New buildings must complement the massing of surrounding buildings, including the proportion of solid surfaces (walls) to voids (window and door openings). Respect the characteristic rhythm (fenestration, bays, rooflines, etc.) of existing buildings.
- Design the new building to be proportional to surrounding buildings. Consider important building proportions such as floor-to-floor heights, the size and placement of windows and doors, the scale of articulated elements such as porches, overhanging cornices, and bay windows.
- Floor-to-floor heights in new construction should be within ten percent (10%) of the floor-to-floor heights of adjacent historic buildings.
- Design rooflines to be compatible with those found on surrounding buildings.

#### Application of Guidelines

The continuing design challenge with this project has been how to insert a structure with this program into a setting containing smaller scale historic buildings that have stood for over 175 years. The Woodberry district contains some massive historic structures from its industrial past which have been adapted to contemporary uses. The district also contains numerous examples of modern design. But the proposed site for this project is not on Clipper Park Road or Union Street, where those large industrial and modern buildings are the overarching physical context. This context is two- or two-and-a-half-story stone houses.

In November 2020, the Commission disapproved the staff recommendation, which was to remove at least one floor or step down a portion of the fifth floor, and recommended that the design team “rethink massing and scale to make the design more compatible with the surrounding neighborhood.” At the Woodberry neighborhood meeting, the feedback was that the building massing remained too large for this area and that the entire fifth floor should be eliminated along with a portion of the fourth floor. The design team’s response was to set back the portion of the fifth floor that is on the north side of the central stair tower 10 feet from the Clipper Road elevation. At the central stair tower the fifth floor is set back 5’-6”. At the south side of the central stair tower the fifth floor is set back 17 feet from the Clipper Road elevation. The visible height of the façade along Clipper Road, according to the revised design, is 43’-4”. To the sides and rear, the building measures 54’-2” to the parapet (*Images 23-25*).

Clipper Road rises in elevation as one travels north from Union Street and the light rail station. With 10’-2” floor-to-floor heights, the five-story section of 3535 Clipper Road is about the height of the proposed 3511 Clipper Road at grade. Along Clipper Road, 3535 Clipper Road would be 9’-6” lower than 3511 because of the setback. When compared to the stone houses on the west side of Clipper Road, the top of the new front edge of 3535 is

about 7 feet above the ridgeline of 3540 Clipper Road. Setting back a portion of the fifth floor made a difference. In the previous full five-story design the proposed building (at 51'-4" to the roof) was 15'-8" taller. The five-story building is nearly 30 feet taller than its northern neighbor at 3605-3607 Clipper Road (*Images 21 & 26-28*).

The applicants have responded to the feedback of Planning and CHAP staff, commissioners, and the neighborhood association to rethink the massing and scale. Their revised submission shows a reduction in the visible height on the Clipper Road side to 43'-4" by setting back the fifth floor anywhere from 10 to 17 feet. The previous height at the Clipper Road side was 51'-4". The façade along Clipper Road has been broken up into sections with the removal of balconies at the center and creating a recess. The northside stair tower has been reduced as much as the interior plan allows. The massing of the east elevation could benefit from adopting the same principles used on the west elevation. Looked at in perspective view from the north, south or from the west, one can appreciate that recessing the fifth floor makes a big difference (*Images 29 & 31*). That is why a maximum height for the entire building of four stories would most effectively relate to the historic context.

## **NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS**

Residents of the Woodberry Neighborhood Association have met virtually with the design team and have provided comments, and the applicant has provided this revised plan in response. The neighborhood association architectural review committee has submitted a statement regarding this latest version of the plan.

## **SUMMARY ANALYSIS**

The applicant is proposing a five-story apartment building of about 50 units along Clipper Road. When paired with a similar building proposed immediately adjacent to the south, the result will alter the character of this street. CHAP staff recognizes that the TOD-2 zoning for the parcel allows a maximum height limit of 60 feet. CHAP staff also recognizes its role and responsibility to review new construction with an eye to its impacts upon the historic district into which the construction will be introduced. In November 2020, CHAP staff presented a building design to the Commission that had achieved a total height reduction of 7'-4" from the original design. This had been done in response to CHAP staff's request that the height be reduced by at least one floor to more effectively relate to the immediate neighborhood of mostly 2 ½-story houses. The floor-to-ceiling heights had been reduced, but the design was still a five-story building. The November design proposal also included the addition of a level built below grade into the eastern slope of the property enabling the creation of additional housing units below the main floor.

Through the November 2020 work session with CHAP staff, the planning director and two CHAP commission members, and the January 2021 meeting with the Woodberry Neighborhood Association, the design team has continued to move this design in a direction more consistent with CHAP's design guidelines. Seeing the renderings and the historic context, CHAP staff believes that a maximum height of four stories for the entire building would better fit into the historic residential context.

**RECOMMENDATION**

**Disapproval and return to Commission with revised proposal to address massing and scale by reducing height by one story.**



**Eric Holcomb  
Director**

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## MAP AND IMAGES

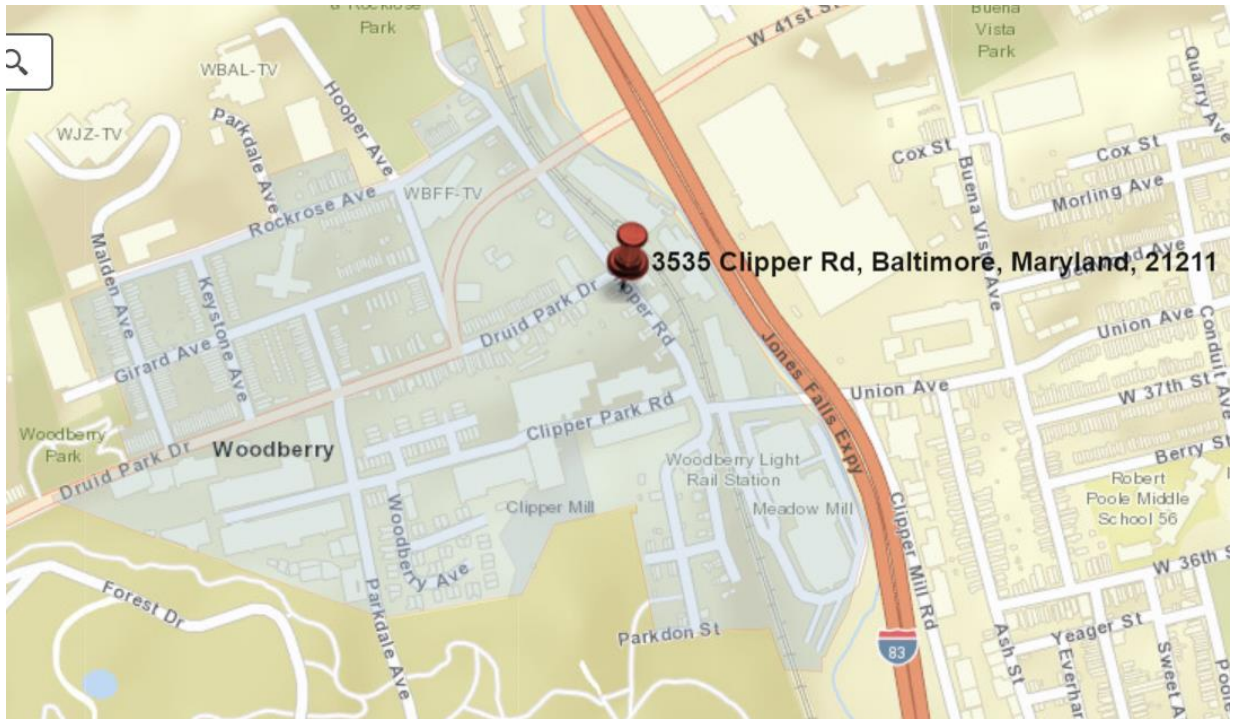


Image 1 – 3535 Clipper Road in the Woodberry Historic District (blue shaded area)



Image 2: 3535 Clipper Road site – Aerial view from south, December 8, 2019





Image 3: 3535 Clipper Road site – Aerial view from southeast, December 8, 2019

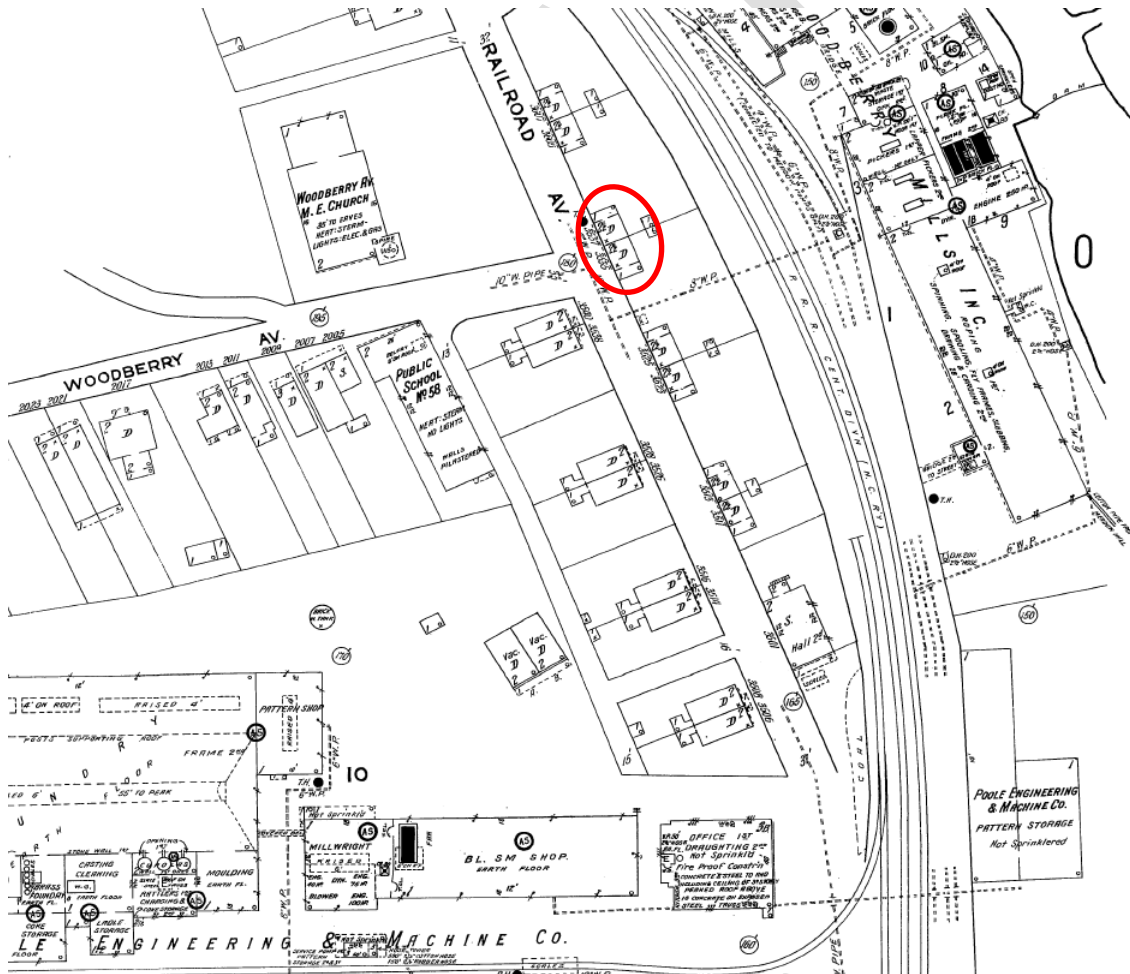


Image 4: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1914-1915 Sanborn Map

3535 Clipper Road (Woodberry Historic District) — Concept review - Construct a five-story apartment building

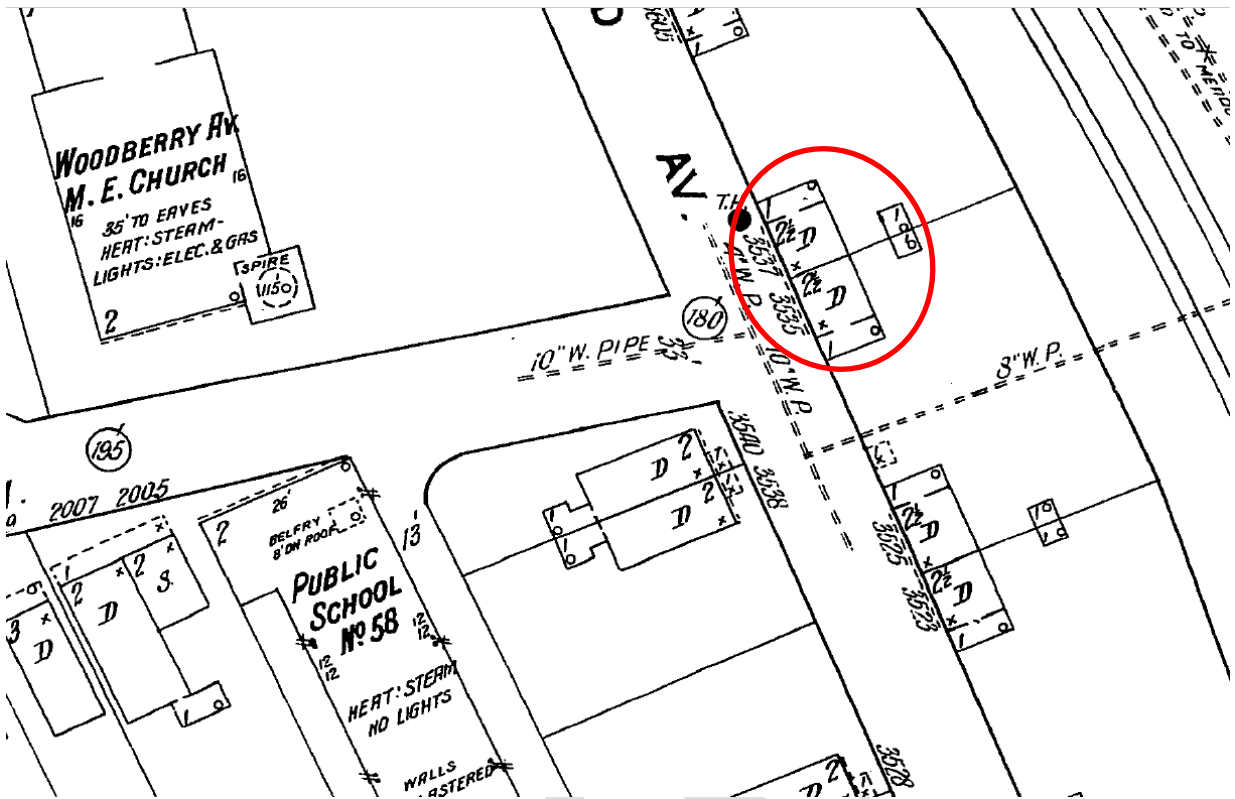


Image 5: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1914-1915 Sanborn Map, detail

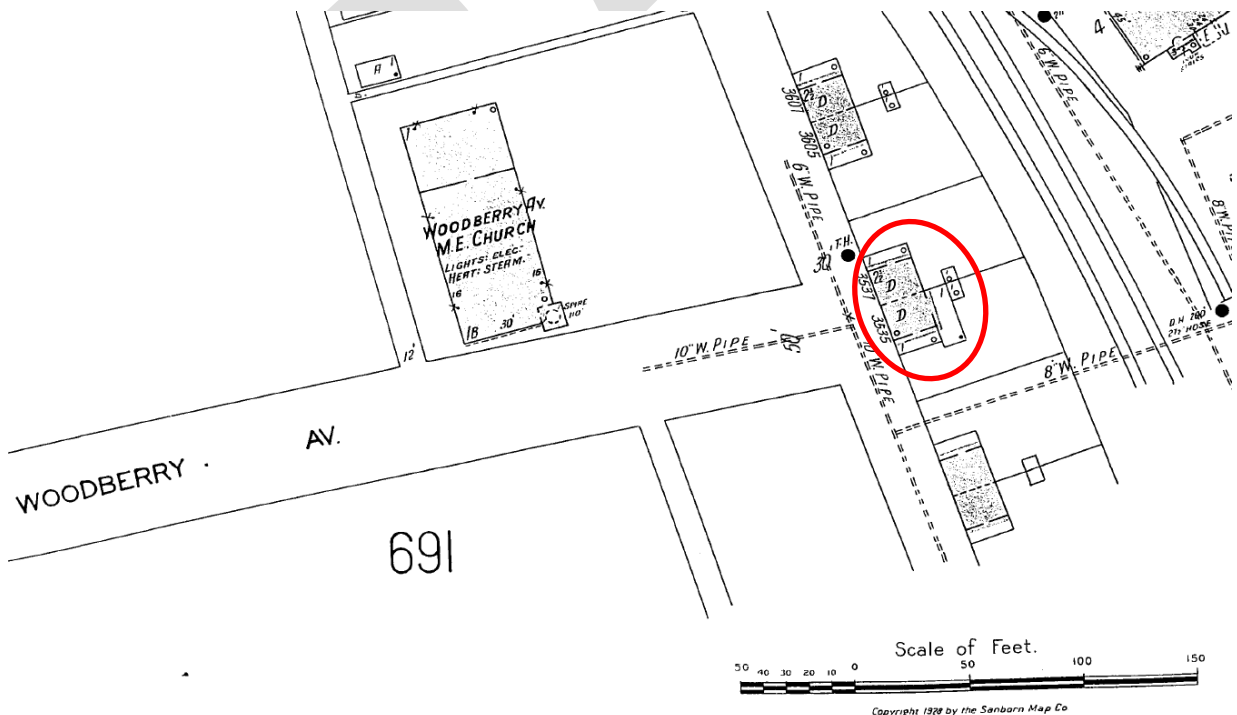


Image 6: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1928 Sanborn Map, detail

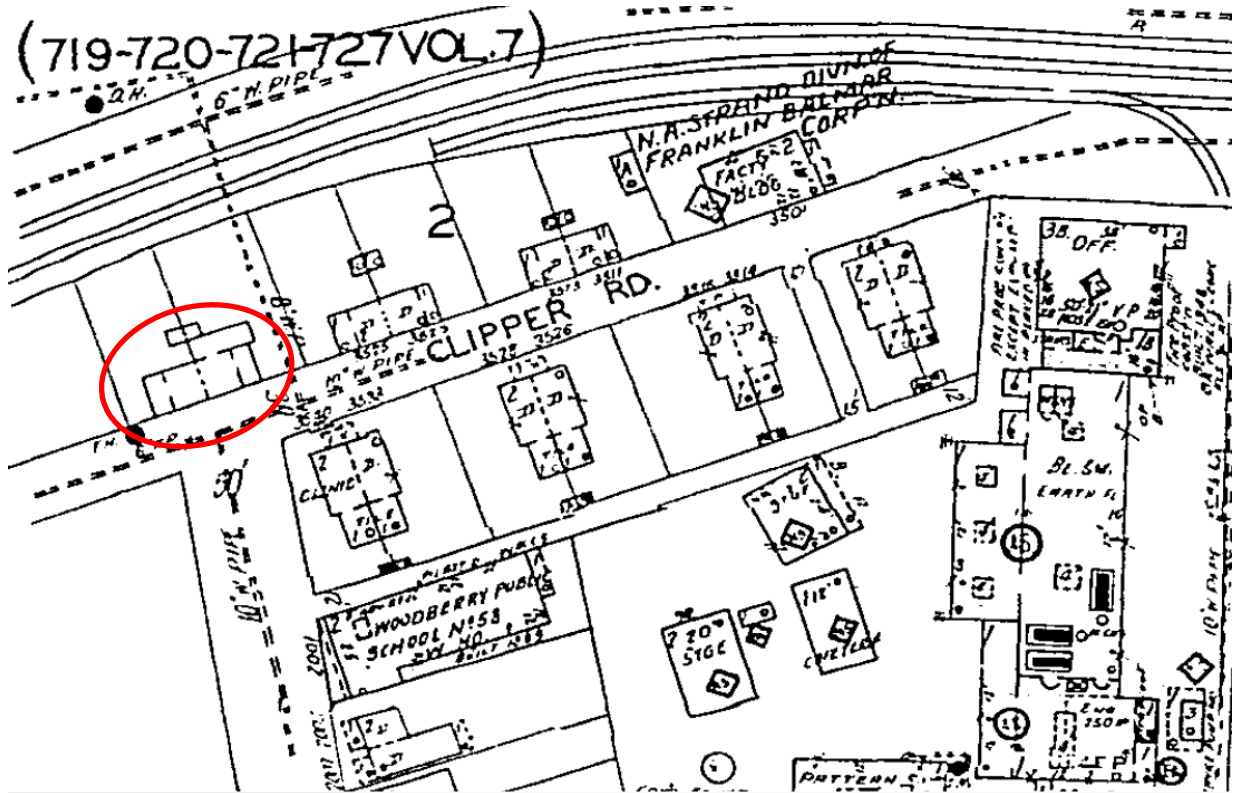


Image 7: 3535 Clipper Road, 1953 Sanborn Map, detail



Image 8: 3535 Clipper Road, October 6, 2019



Image 9: 3605-3607 Clipper Road (stone house) and 3535 Clipper Road (right), August 27, 2020



Image 10: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed west elevation



Image 11: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed east elevation



Image 12: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed south elevation



Image 13: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed north elevation



*Image 14: 3506-3507 Clipper Road looking south, with 3535 Clipper Road at arrow*



*Image 15: 1700 Union Avenue (center) looking north with 3535 Clipper Road at arrow, October 6, 2019*



*Image 16: Druid Park Drive looking west from Clipper Road, Shiloh Church, right, August 27, 2020*



*Image 17: 3535 Clipper Road, left, looking south, August 27, 2020*



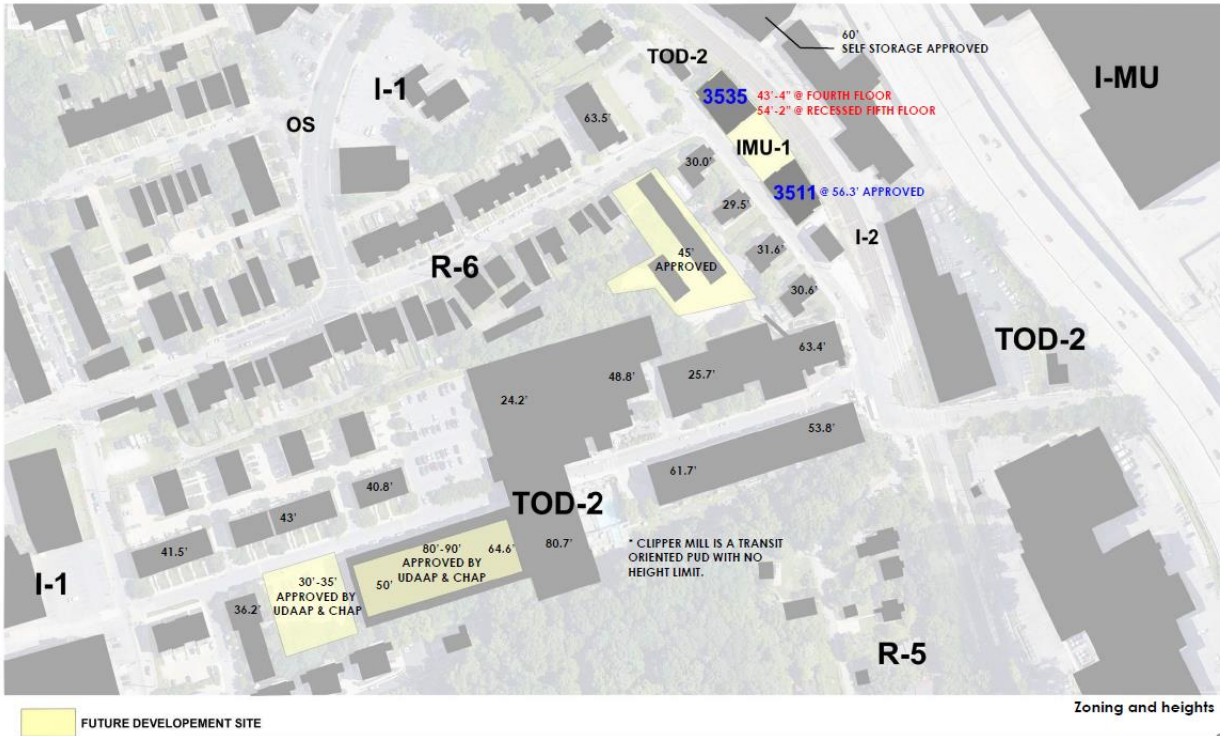


Image 18: Future development – zoning and heights



Image 19: Overall Site Plan – 3535 Clipper Road



Image 20: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed plan superimposed over existing streetscape

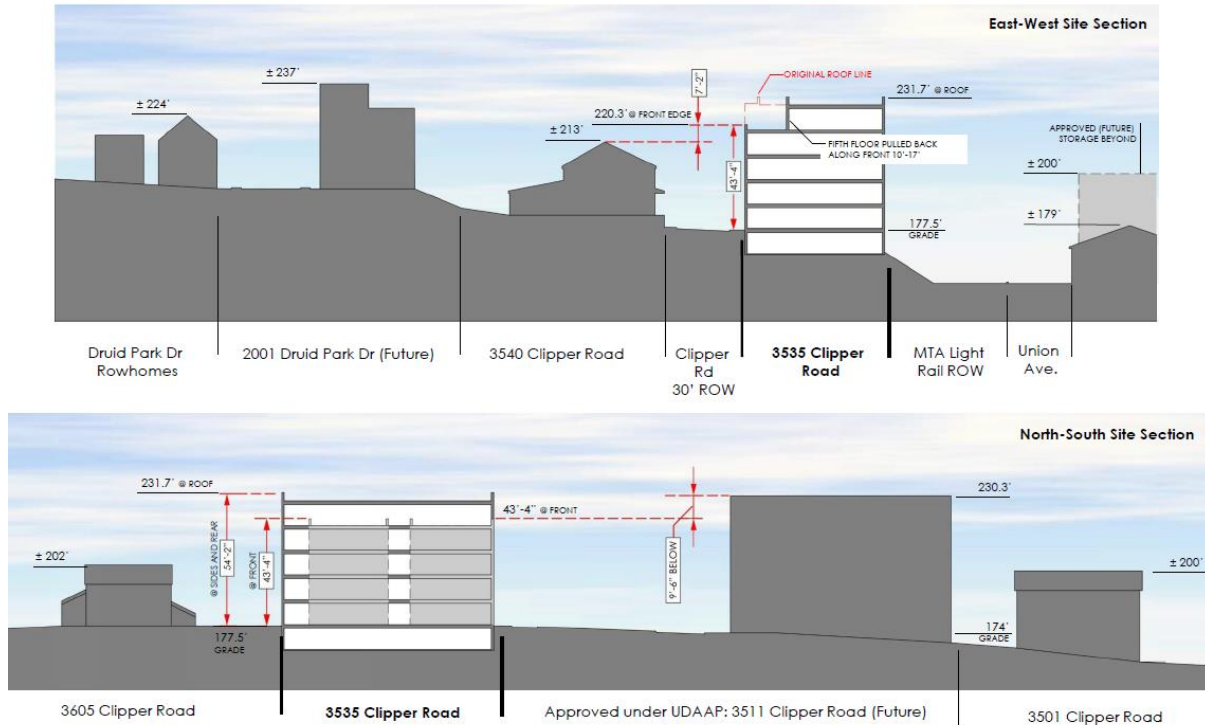


Image 21: East-West and North-South Site Sections

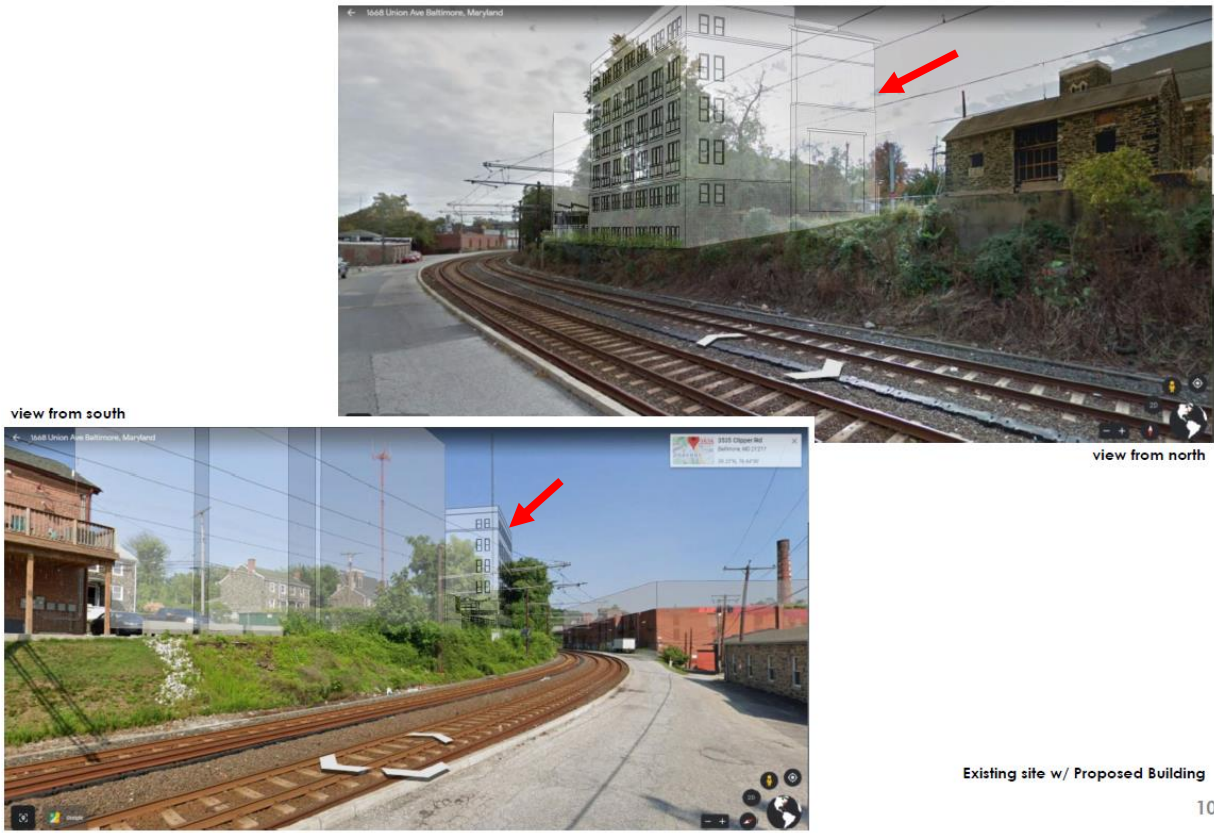
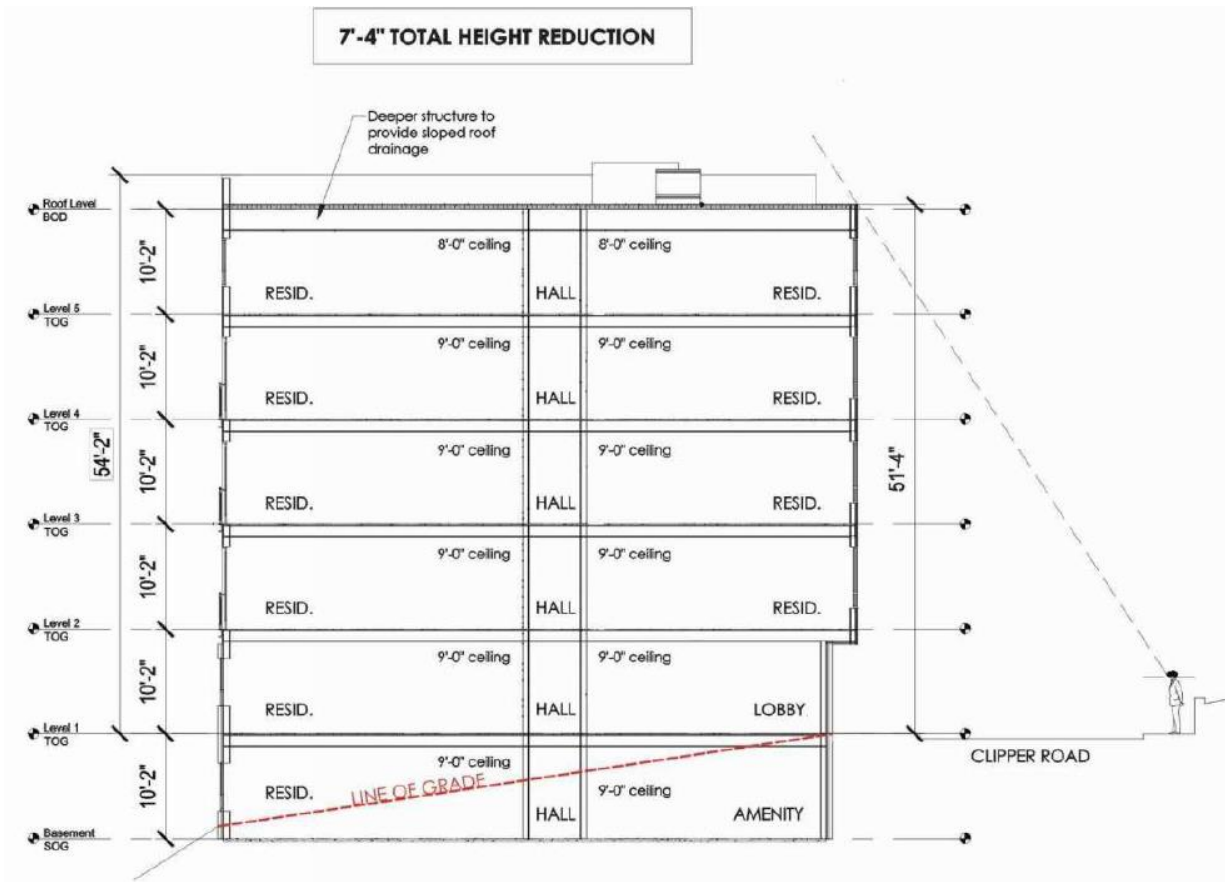


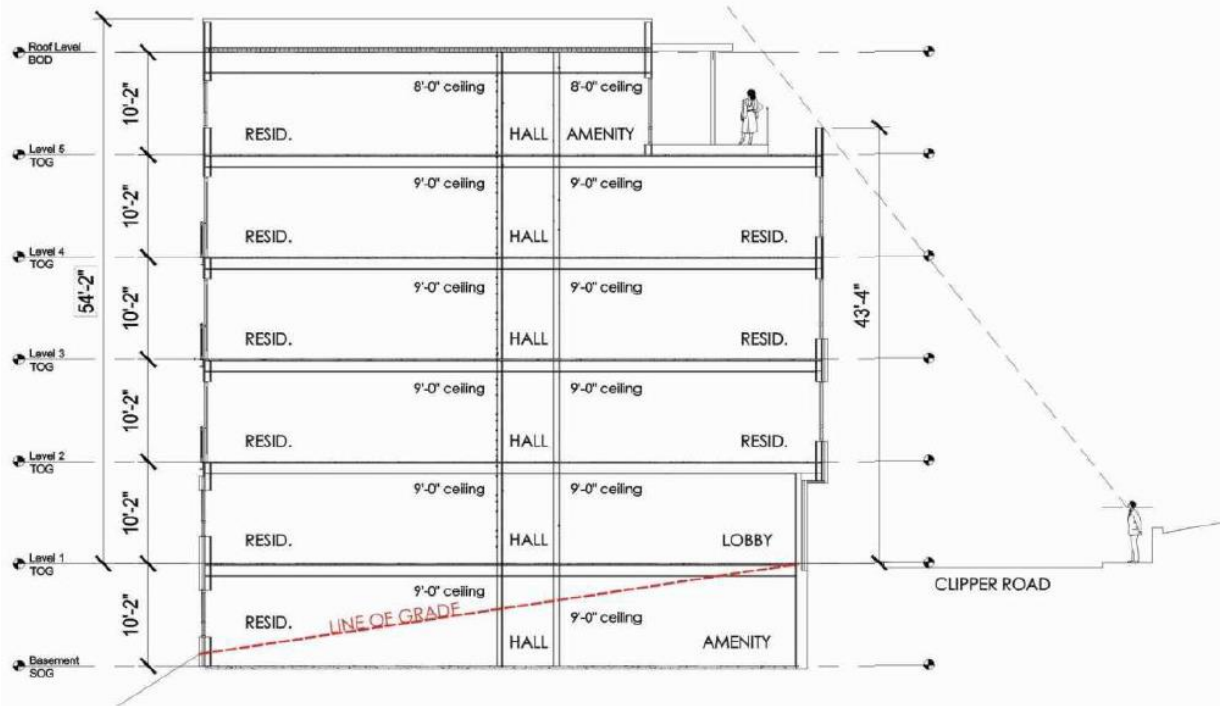
Image 22: 3511 and 3535 Clipper Road (arrow) superimposed over existing streetscapes

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**PREVIOUS SUBMISSION**

Image 23: 3535 Clipper Road section reviewed at November 10, 2020 CHAP hearing



**PROPOSED**

Image 24: 3535 Clipper Road section – Current proposal



Previous Submission



Proposed

Image 25: 3535 Clipper Rod – Previous and Proposed Massing



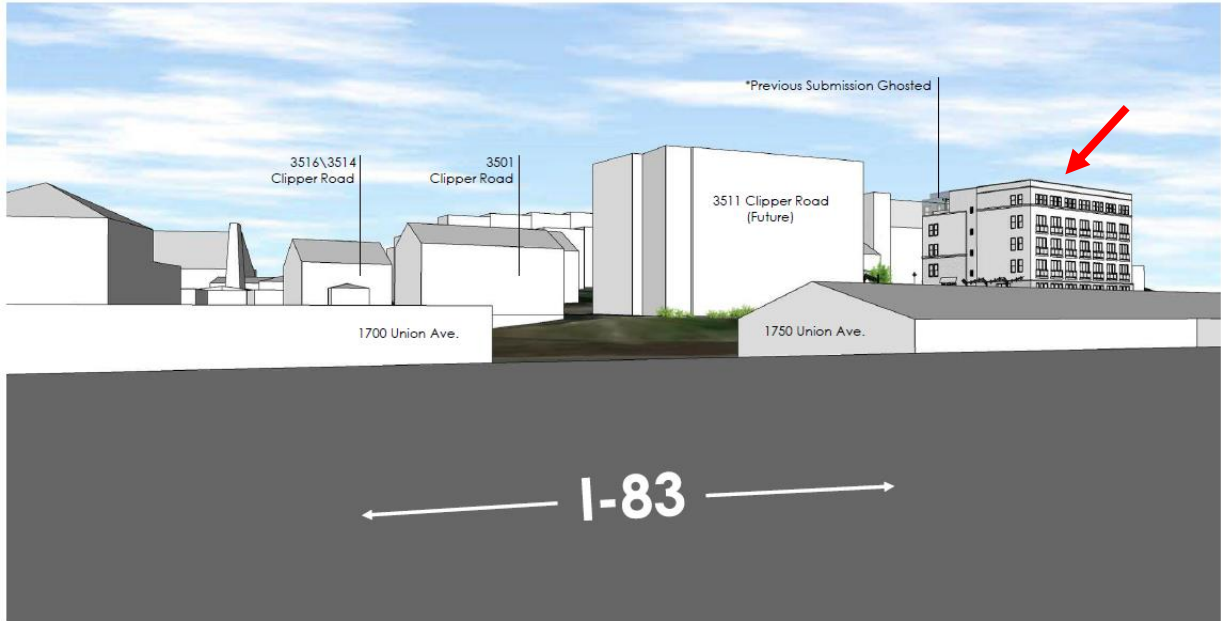
Additional Context View – Looking North West on Clipper Road

Image 26: Context View – Looking North West on Clipper Road, 3535 Clipper Road at arrow



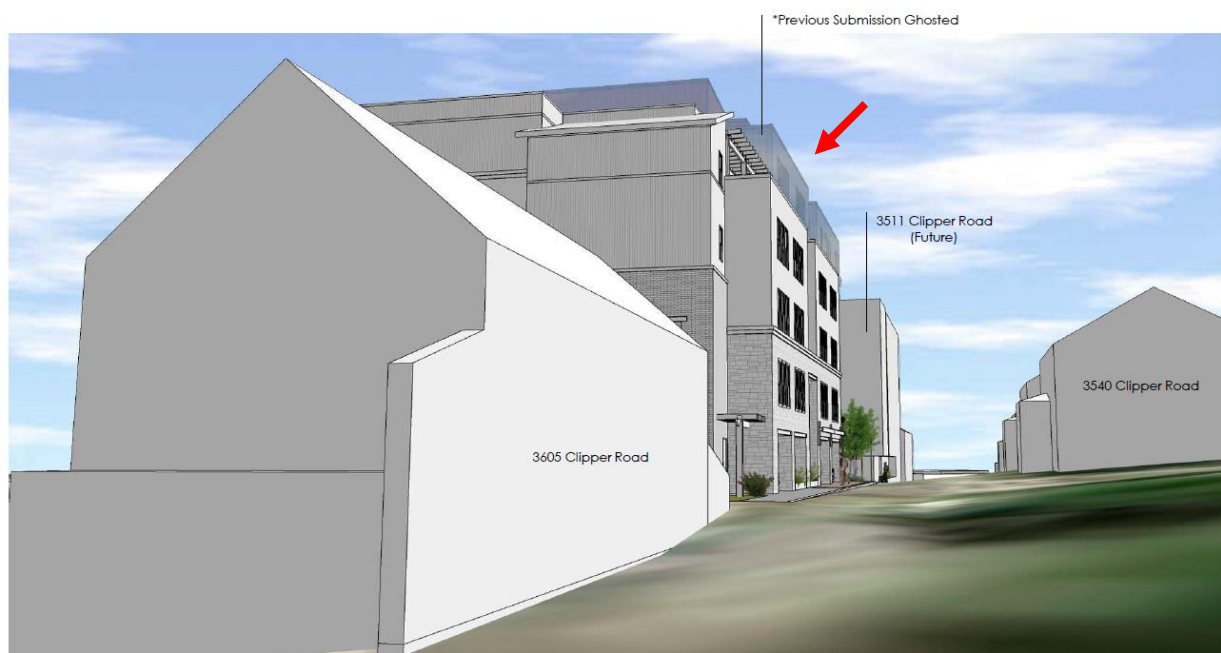
Context View – Looking North East on Clipper Road

Image 27: Context View 1- Looking North East on Clipper Road (edge of 3511 Clipper Road at right)



Massing Context - I-83 View heading northbound

Image 28: Massing Context – View 3, looking west, 3535 Clipper Road at arrow



Massing Context - Street Level View looking south on Clipper Road

Image 29: Massing Context – Street level view looking south on Clipper Road (3535 at arrow)



Massing Context - Street Level View looking north on Clipper Road

Image 30: Massing Context – Street Level View looking north on Clipper Road



Massing Context - Street Level View looking east on Druid Park Drive

Image 31: Massing context – Street Level View – looking east on Druid Park Drive