



Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION**

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT



Chris Ryer
Director, Planning

April 13, 2021

REQUEST: Concept review - Construct a four-story apartment building

ADDRESS: 3535 Clipper Road (Woodberry Historic District)

RECOMMENDATION: Concept approval of height, return to Commission for final design

STAFF: Caitlin Audette & 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 21st 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-19th century and appear in the 1928 and the 1953 Sanborn maps as well (*Images 6 & 7*). Sometime in the latter 20th 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.
- February 9, 2021 – The Commission voted to approve the staff recommendation of disapproval and return to Commission with revised proposal to address massing and scale by a variety of treatments [such as]: reducing height by at least one story; reducing the width (“thin-up”) of the building by increasing setback from property line for whole or portion of building; playing with step-backs of floors; and breaking up east façade.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

The applicant is proposing the following scope of work: “Construction of a 4-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 studio/efficiency units, the number of which will be confirmed following concept approval. (*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

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*).

* 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.

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 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 comments about the existing 5-foot wide sidewalk, the design team is maintaining the design provided in February where they are shifting the building slightly to the east to maintain a 6-foot wide sidewalk for the length of the property. Similarly, the design team is maintaining a design change proposed in February in response to community concerns where the entrances and 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 minimal 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 4-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 41st 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 February 2021, the Commission approved the staff recommendation, to “approve the staff recommendation of disapproval and return to Commission with revised proposal to address massing and scale by a variety of treatments [such as]: reducing height by at least one story; reducing the width (“thin-up”) of the building by increasing setback from property line for whole or portion of building; playing with step-backs of floors; and breaking up east façade.” The rest of the design remains similar to the previous proposal

with a central stair set back from the Clipper Road elevation. The height of the building according to the revised design, is 44'-4" at all sides of the building (*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 four-story building is lower in height than the proposed 3511 Clipper Road. When compared to the stone houses on the west side of Clipper Road, the top of the front edge of 3535 is about 7 feet above the ridgeline of 3540 Clipper Road. The four-story building is nearly 20 feet taller than its northern neighbor at 3605-3607 Clipper Road (*Images 21 & 26-29*).

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 overall height to 44'-4" by reducing the building from five-stories to four-stories. The previous height at the Clipper Road four-story portion of the building was 43'-4". The design retains elements from the February design including the removal of balconies at the center, creating a recess and the reduction of the northern stair tower. The massing of the east elevation could benefit from adopting the same principles used on the west elevation. The new height of four stories more effectively relates to the immediate historic context.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

Residents of the Woodberry Neighborhood Association have previously met virtually with the design team and provided comments. The neighborhood association intends to submit a statement regarding this latest version of the plan.

SUMMARY ANALYSIS

The applicant is proposing a four-story apartment building along Clipper Road. The design team initially proposed a 5-story building with a height of 58'-8". This was reduced at the November 2020 CHAP hearing by 7'-4" through the lowering of floor-to-ceiling heights, 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.

The next iteration presented at the February CHAP hearing retained 5-stories but included a setback along Clipper Road. As presented today, it is a four-story building with an overall height of 44'-4", for a total reduction of 14'-4" from the original proposal. This responds to one aspect of the Commission's motion in February, however it fails to address the other concerns of the commission which included reducing the width of the structure, increasing the setback from the property line for the whole or a portion of the building, playing with setbacks of floors and breaking up the east façade.

RECOMMENDATION

Concept approval of height and scale with the project to return to the full Commission for final design. Staff further recommends that the design team addresses the below design concerns prior to returning for final review.

- Reduce the width of the structure with setbacks or visual cues;
- Break up the east façade;
- Modify design to create clear visual hierarchy;
- Clearly identify with design cues various entrances and public spaces.



Eric Holcomb
Director

DRAFT

MAP AND IMAGES

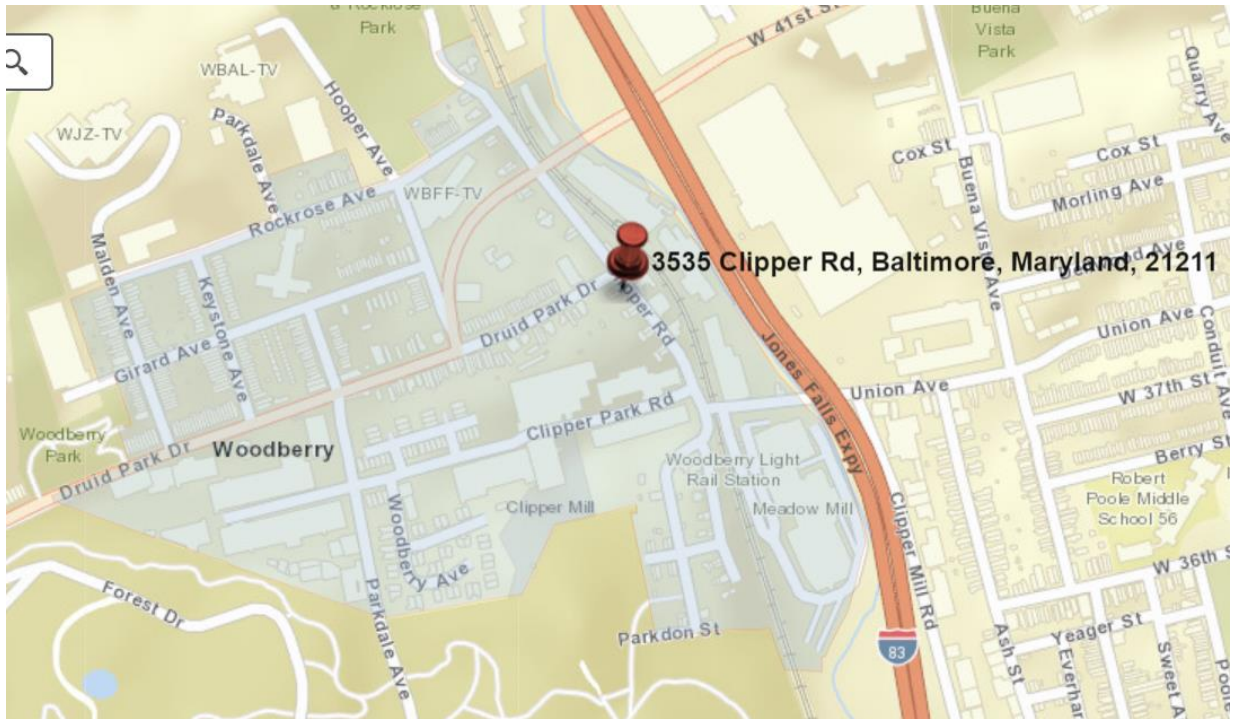


Image 1– 3535 Clipper Road in the Woodberry Historic District (blue shaded area)



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

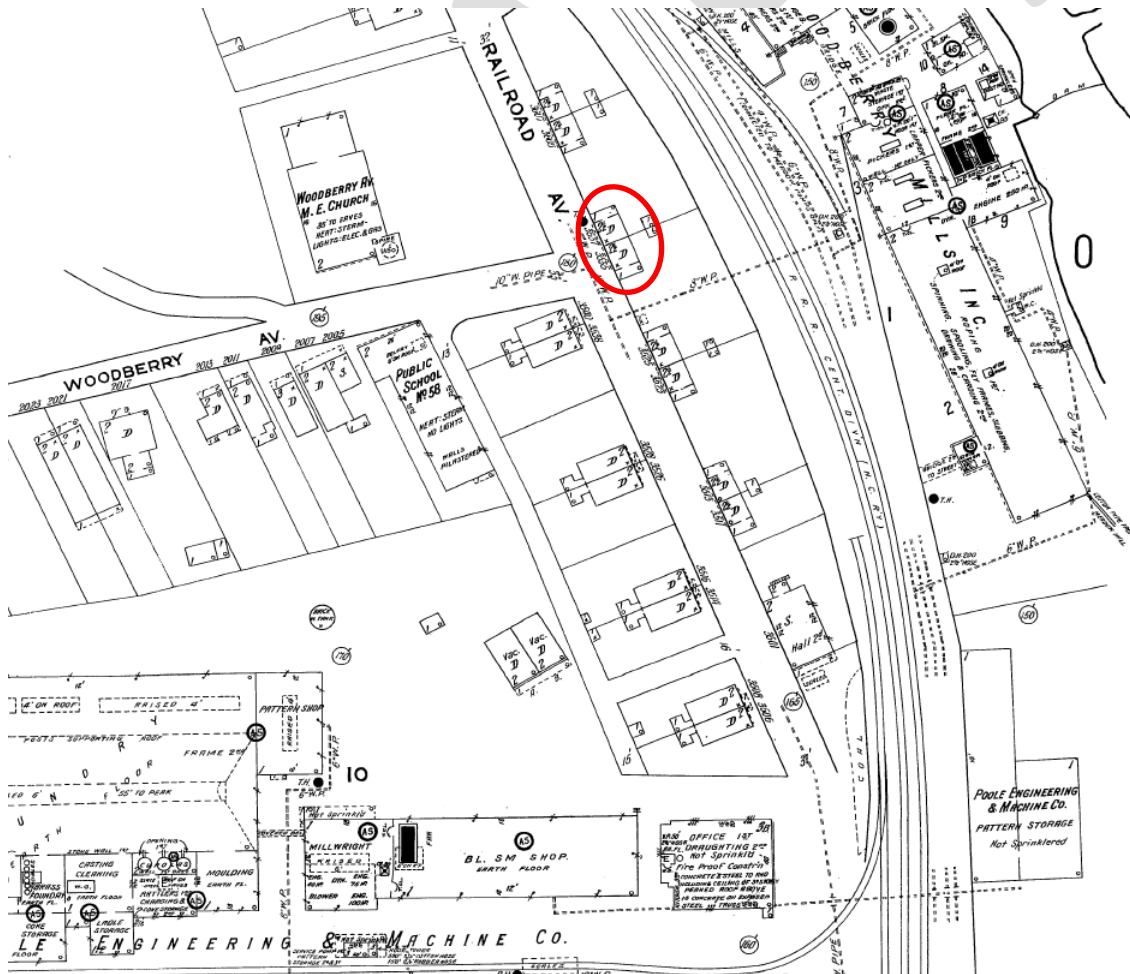


Image 4: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1914-1915 Sanborn Map

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

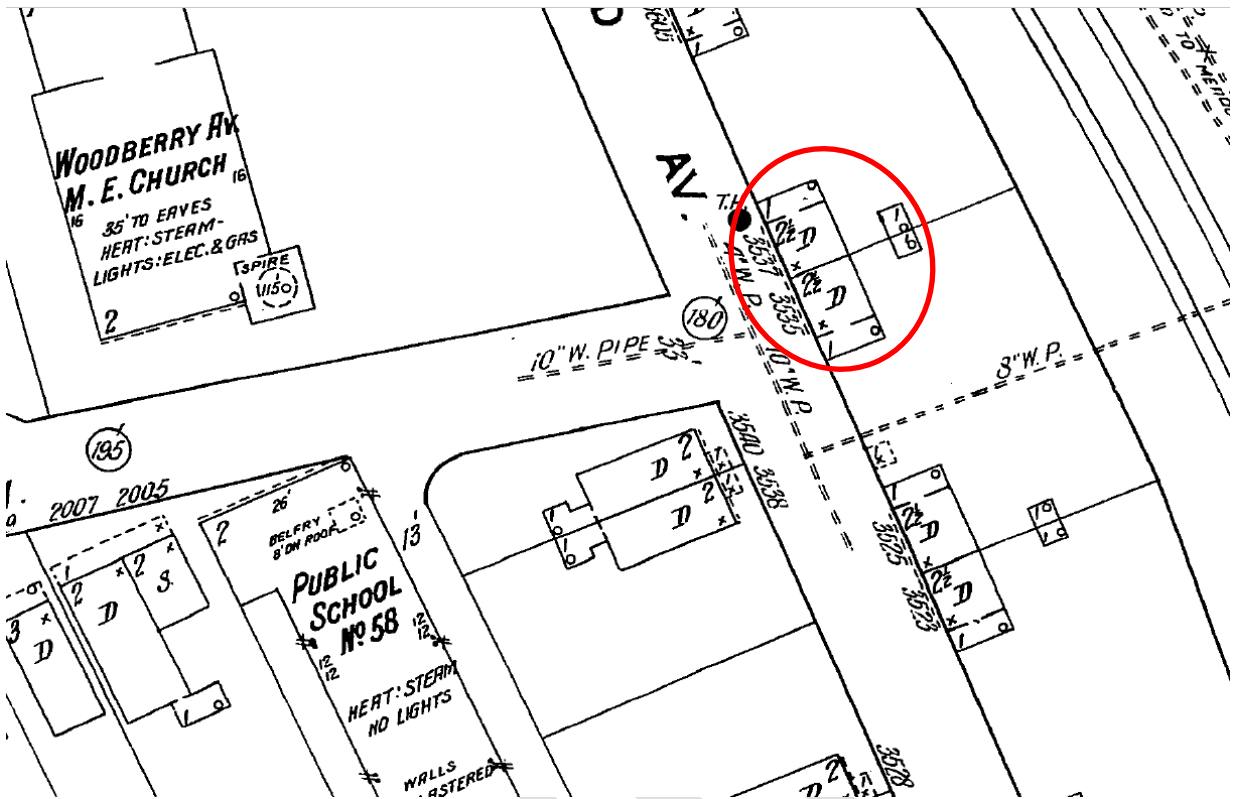


Image 5: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1914-1915 Sanborn Map, detail

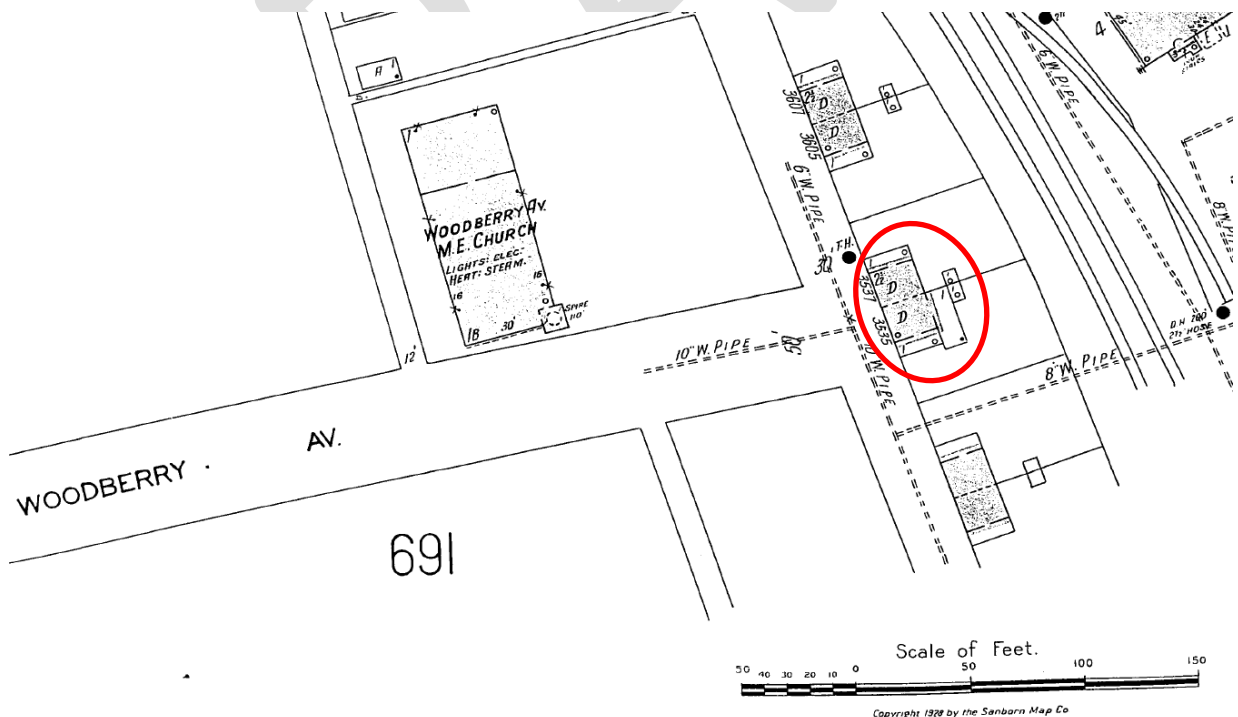


Image 6: 3535 Clipper Road (Railroad Avenue), 1928 Sanborn Map, detail

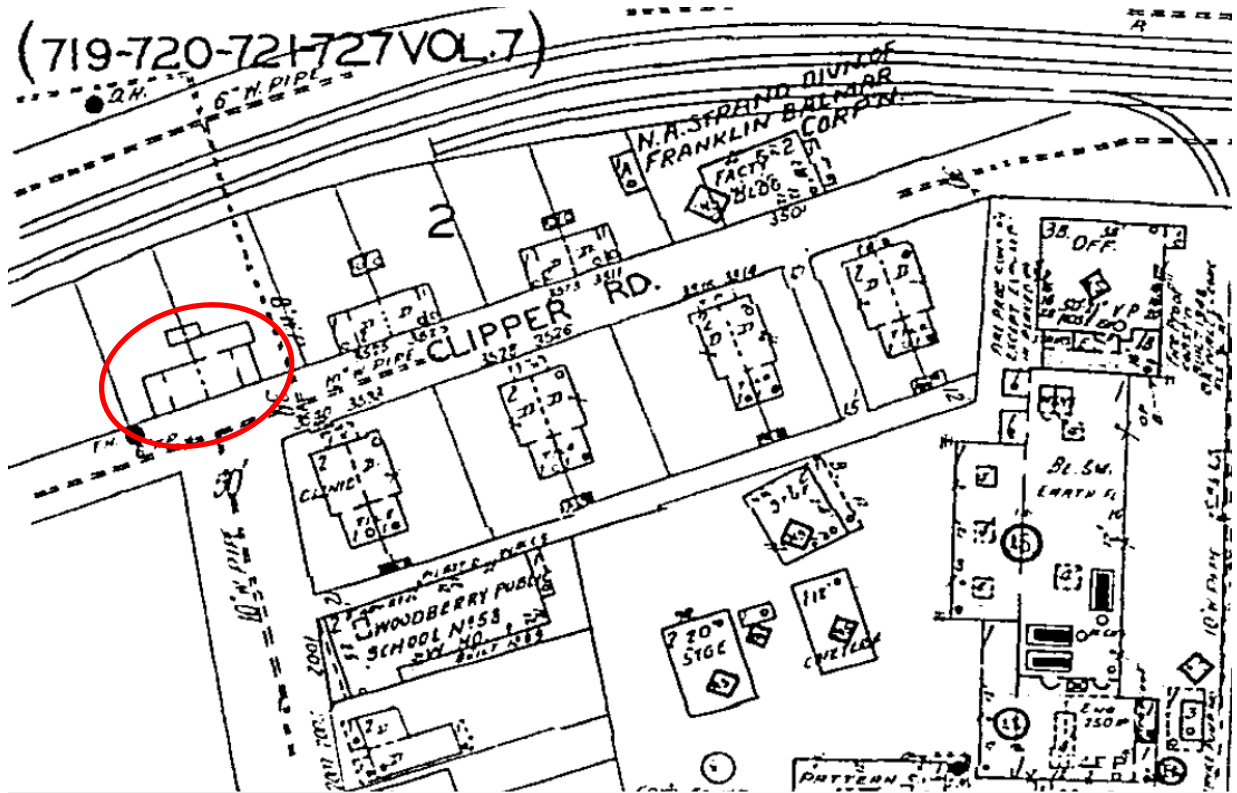


Image 7: 3535 Clipper Road, 1953 Sanborn Map, detail



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

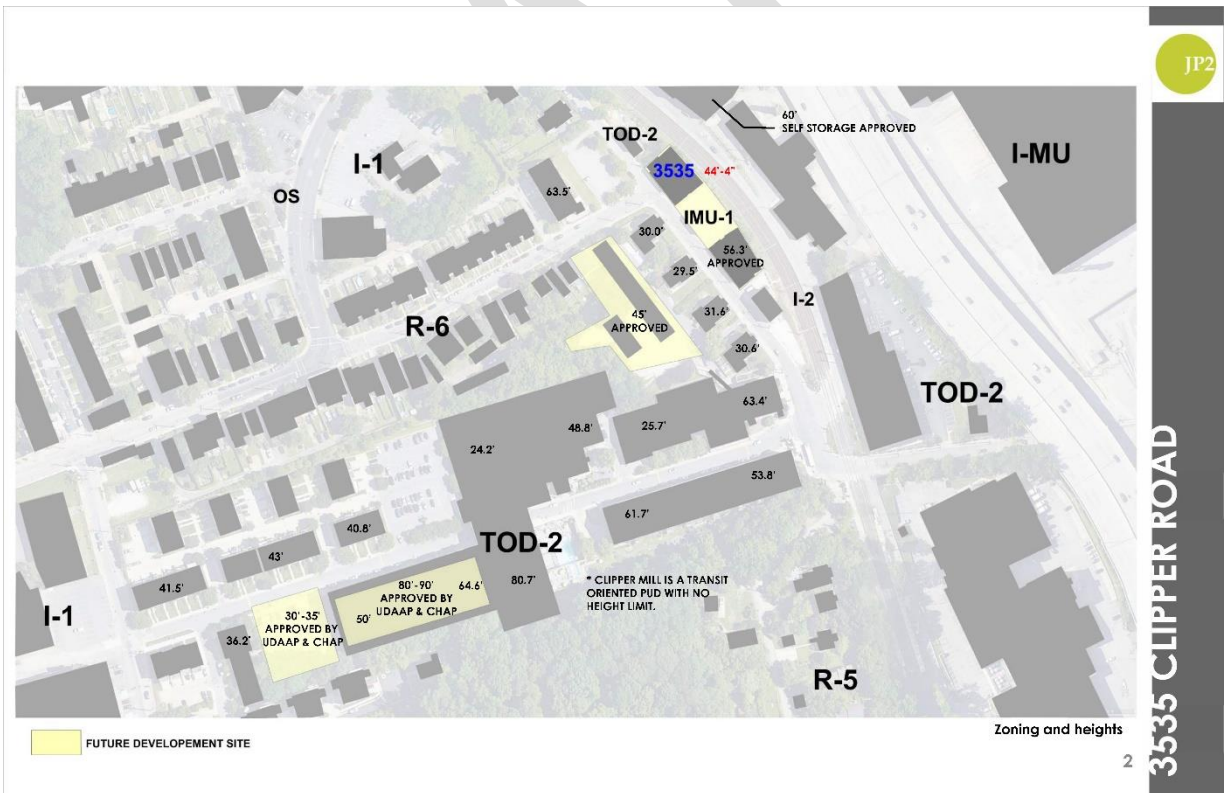
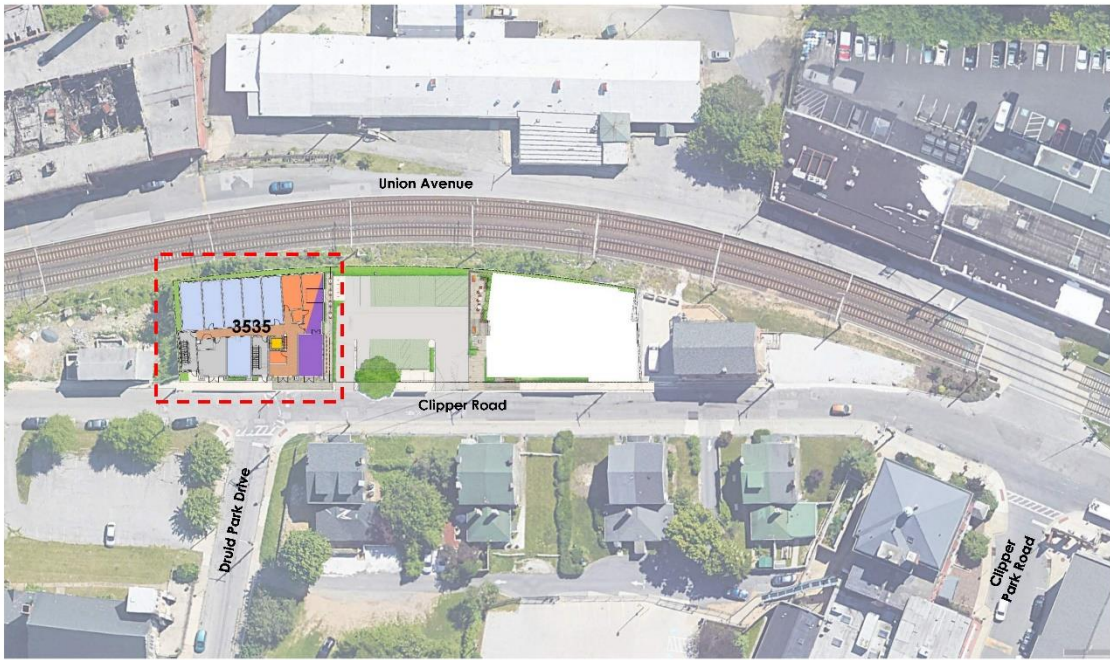


Image 18: Future development – zoning and heights



Context

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Image 19: Overall Site Plan – 3535 Clipper Road



view from south on Clipper Rd

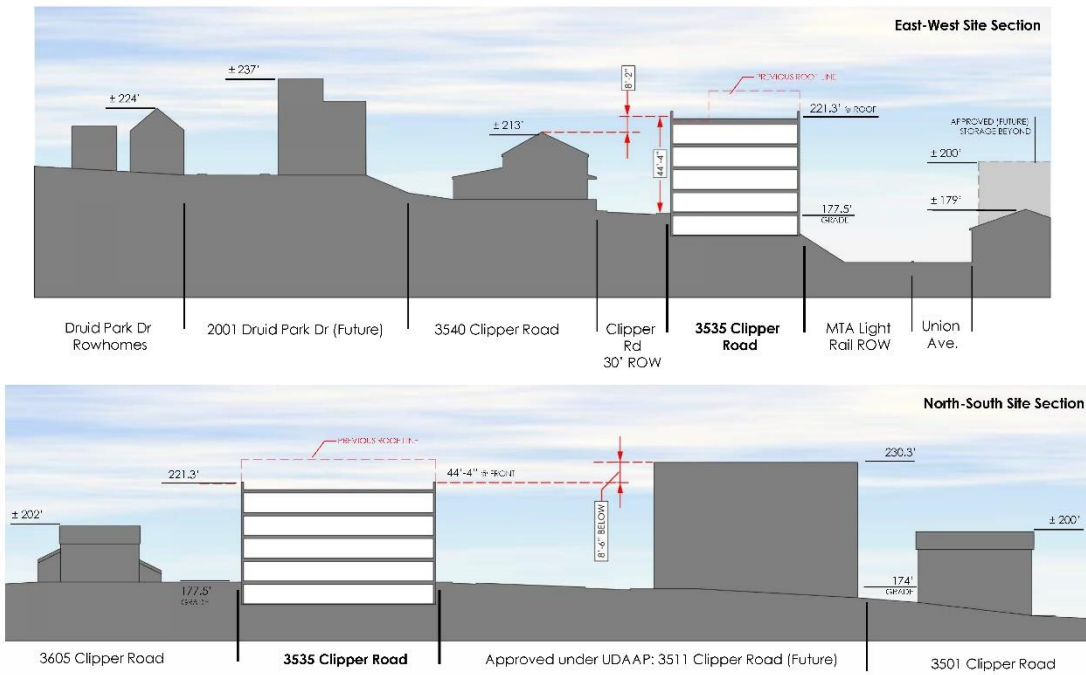
view from north on Clipper Rd

view from Druid Park Dr

Existing site w/ Proposed Building

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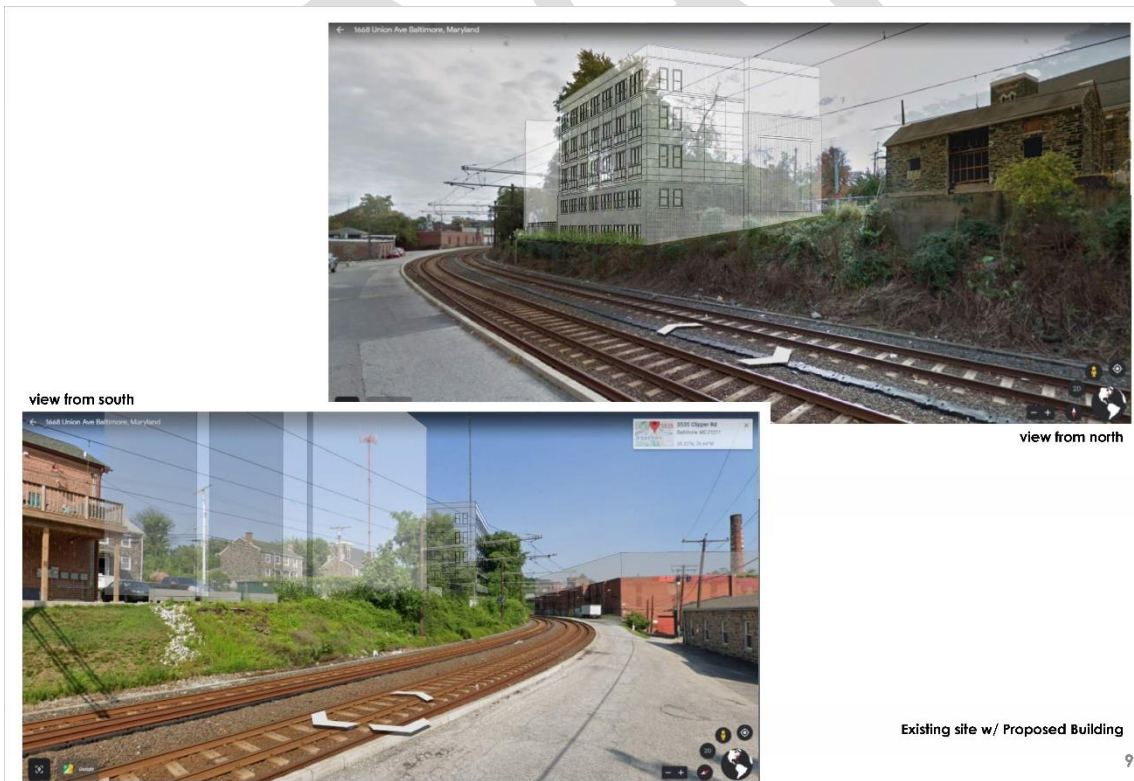
Image 20: 3535 Clipper Road, proposed plan superimposed over existing streetscape



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3535 CLIPPER ROAD

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



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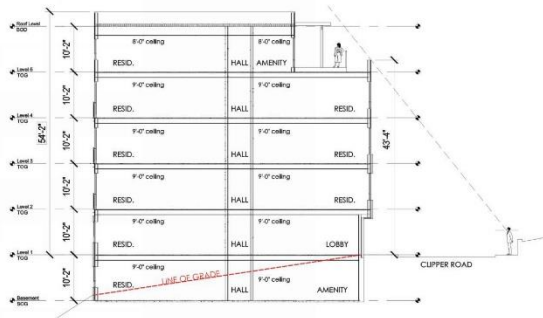
3535 CLIPPER ROAD

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

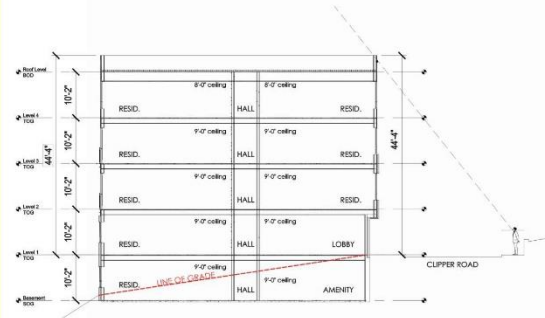
CHAP MOTION HEARING: Approve staff recommendation of disapproval and return to Commission with revised proposal to address massing and scale by a variety of treatments [such as]: reducing the height by at least one story; reducing the width ("thin-up") of the building by increasing setback from property line for whole of portion of building; playing with step-backs of floors; and breaking up east façade.

DESIGN RESPONSE: The revised massing reduces the height of the building by one story, to 4 floors. The height of the building is 44'-4", along all sides.

The sidewalk is currently 5' along Clipper Road. The building is set back to create a 6' sidewalk along Clipper Road, and an additional 2' is provided at entrances and doors to allow for greater circulation at the street level. The northeast stair tower is set back 6' from the face of the building.



PREVIOUS SUBMISSION



PROPOSED

3

3535 CLIPPER ROAD

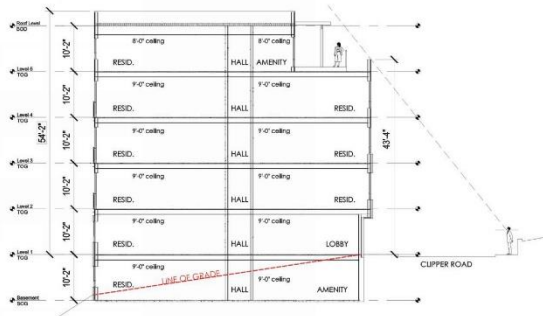
JP2

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

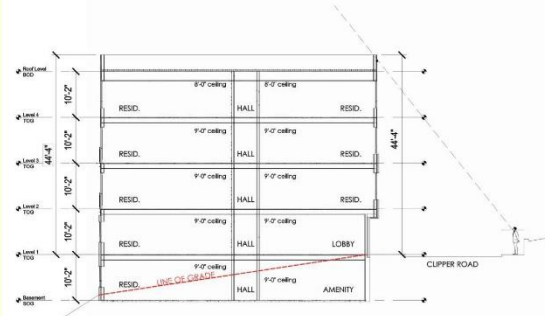
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PREVIOUS SUBMISSION



PROPOSED

3

3535 CLIPPER ROAD

JP2

Image 24: 3535 Clipper Road section – Current proposal



Previous Submission



Proposed

JP2

3535 CLIPPER ROAD

Massing

19

Image 25: 3535 Clipper Rod – Previous and Proposed Massing



Context View – Looking North East on Clipper Road

JP2

3535 CLIPPER ROAD

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Image 26: Context View 1- Looking North East on Clipper Road (edge of 3511 Clipper Road at right)

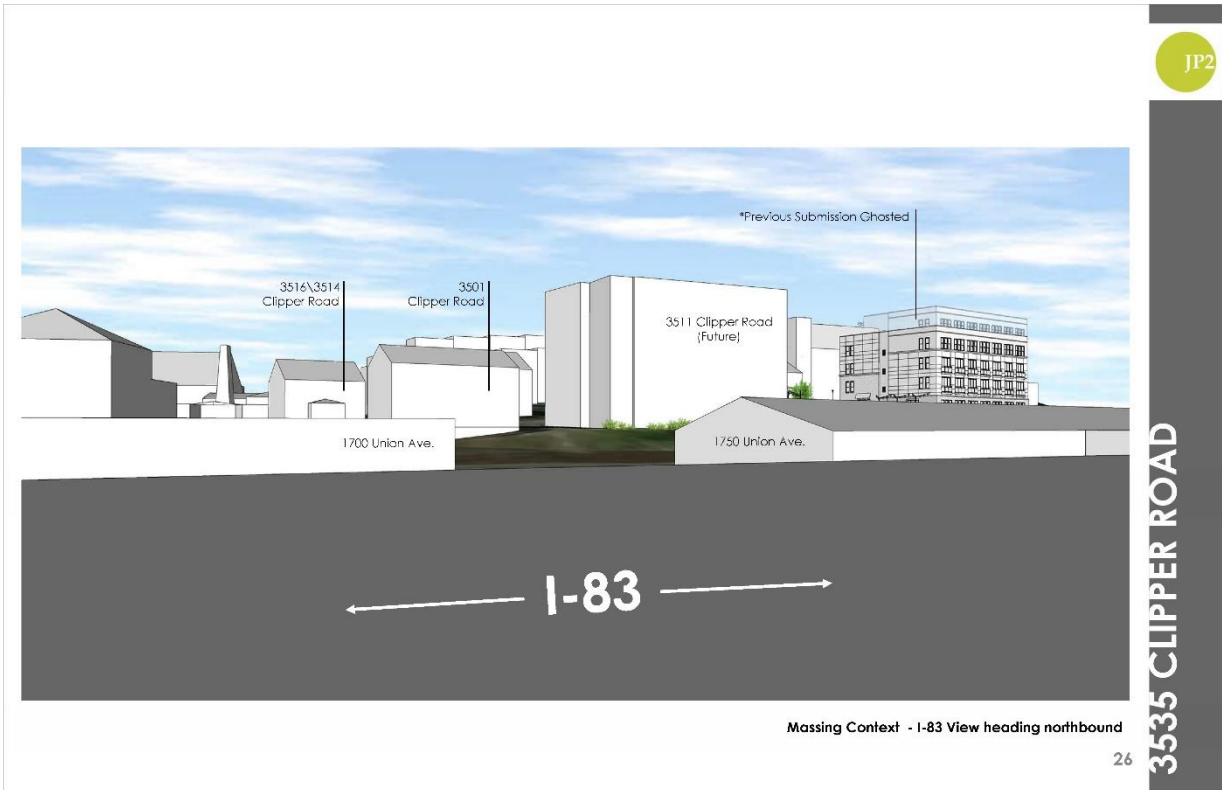


Image 27: Massing Context – View 3, looking west, 3535 Clipper Road at arrow



Image 28: Massing Context – Street level view looking south on Clipper Road (3535 at arrow)



Image 29: Massing Context – Street Level View looking north on Clipper Road

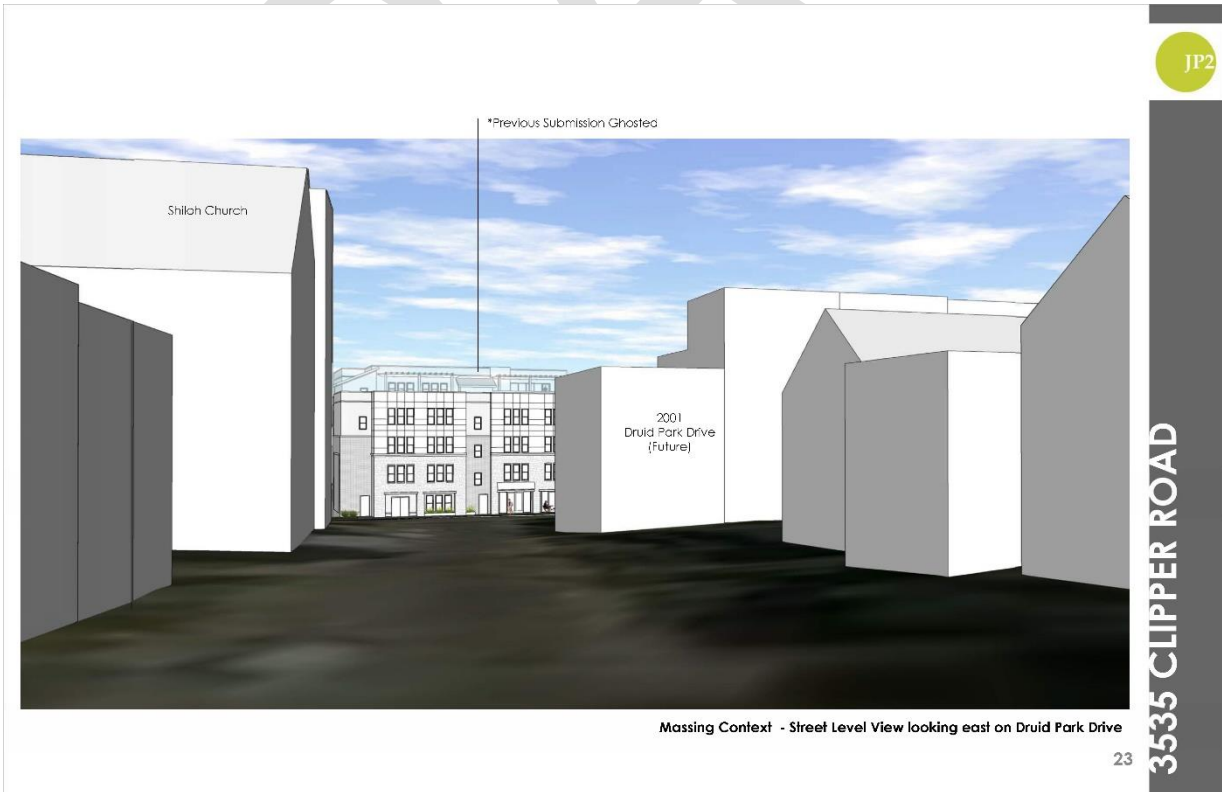


Image 30: Massing context – Street Level View – looking east on Druid Park Drive