



*Brandon M. Scott*  
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR  
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION**

*Tom Liebel, Chairman*

**STAFF REPORT**



*Chris Ryer*  
Director, Planning

**July 13, 2021**

**REQUEST:** Install new painted signage at the north and south elevations

**ADDRESS:** Eubie Blake Cultural Center at 847 N. Howard (Mount Vernon Historic District)

**RECOMMENDATION: Approval**

**STAFF:** Caitlin Audette

**APPLICANT/OWNER:** Derek Price, Chair of Eubie Blake Cultural Center Board of Directors

**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 proposed site is the Eubie Blake Cultural Center, an important community institution. The building is located mid-block in the 800 block on North Howard Street, also known as Antique Row, between E. Madison Street to the south and W. Read Street to the north. The east side of the block retains historic buildings, while the west side of the block is the University of Maryland Medical Center Midtown Campus. This stately building is the largest on the block at a tall four stories and the upper portions of the north and south elevations are easily visible from further up and down N. Howard Street. The building extends to Tyson Street at the rear where a modern addition and parking lot are sited.

**BACKGROUND**

- Over the past year the property, like many others in the neighborhood, has been tagged with graffiti at both the north and south elevations near the roof line.

**PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES**

The applicant is proposing to address the areas of tagging by over-painting them with new signage that will give the Eubie Blake Cultural Center a larger presence on the block. The

proposed signage will be simple in design pulling from historic signage precedents found throughout the city and Mount Vernon.

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

### **1.12 Signage and Awnings**

#### **6.3 Signs**

### **1.12 Signage and Awnings**

- Signs on commercial buildings should respect the existing architectural features and be compatible in scale, color, material, and design with the building. Generally, neon and flashing signs are discouraged.
- Place signs on areas of the building that were historically intended to receive signage, such as large plate glass windows, transoms, awnings, broad plain fascias in a storefront cornice, blank wall areas above a storefront cornice, spandrels, and other flat, unadorned surfaces of the facade. Signs flush with the building's façade are preferred.
- Do not cover, or obscure, architectural details when installing new signage and awnings.
- Keep signage simple and easy to read. Orient storefront signage and awnings to the pedestrian. Signs and awnings should not generally project more than three to four feet from the façade.
- New signs painted on existing brick surfaces may be permitted. Painted signage is more appropriate on buildings with minimal architectural detailing. Select locations that do not obscure or detract from the historic architecture of the building. The blank sidewalls of buildings are particularly good locations for painted signage.

#### Application of Guidelines

The majority of the sidewall location proposed for the painted signs are already painted due to graffiti. These areas are composed of masonry and do not include any unique architectural features. The proposed signage locations have historically been ideal locations for historic painted signs and both new and historic signs can be found in similar locations throughout the city.

#### **6.3 Signs**

- CHAP will review signs as artistic features and allow a greater degree of flexibility in use of Chapter 6: Design Guidelines for Artistic Expression 76 Baltimore City Historic Preservation Design Guidelines materials, color, and lighting.
- CHAP will allow for painted signs on buildings; when the masonry has previously been painted; they are located on flat surfaces that historically have received painted signs, and when painting of unpainted surfaces will not cause damage.

#### Application of Guidelines

The proposed locations for the painted signage have largely been previously painted, are located on flat surfaces that would have historically received painted signs, and will not cause additional damage to the historic building.

**NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS**

The proposal has been shared with the Mount Vernon ARC as well as a group of concerned neighbors. Five neighbors have written back to staff in support of the proposal. Staff received an email from the MVBA ARC at 10am on Tuesday, July 13<sup>th</sup> in opposition to the proposal.

**SUMMARY ANALYSIS**

The proposed painted signage meets the guidelines as it is located on a side location that has already been painted and where historic signs would have been painted historically.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Approval of proposed painted signage.



**Eric Holcomb**  
**Director**

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## MAP AND IMAGES

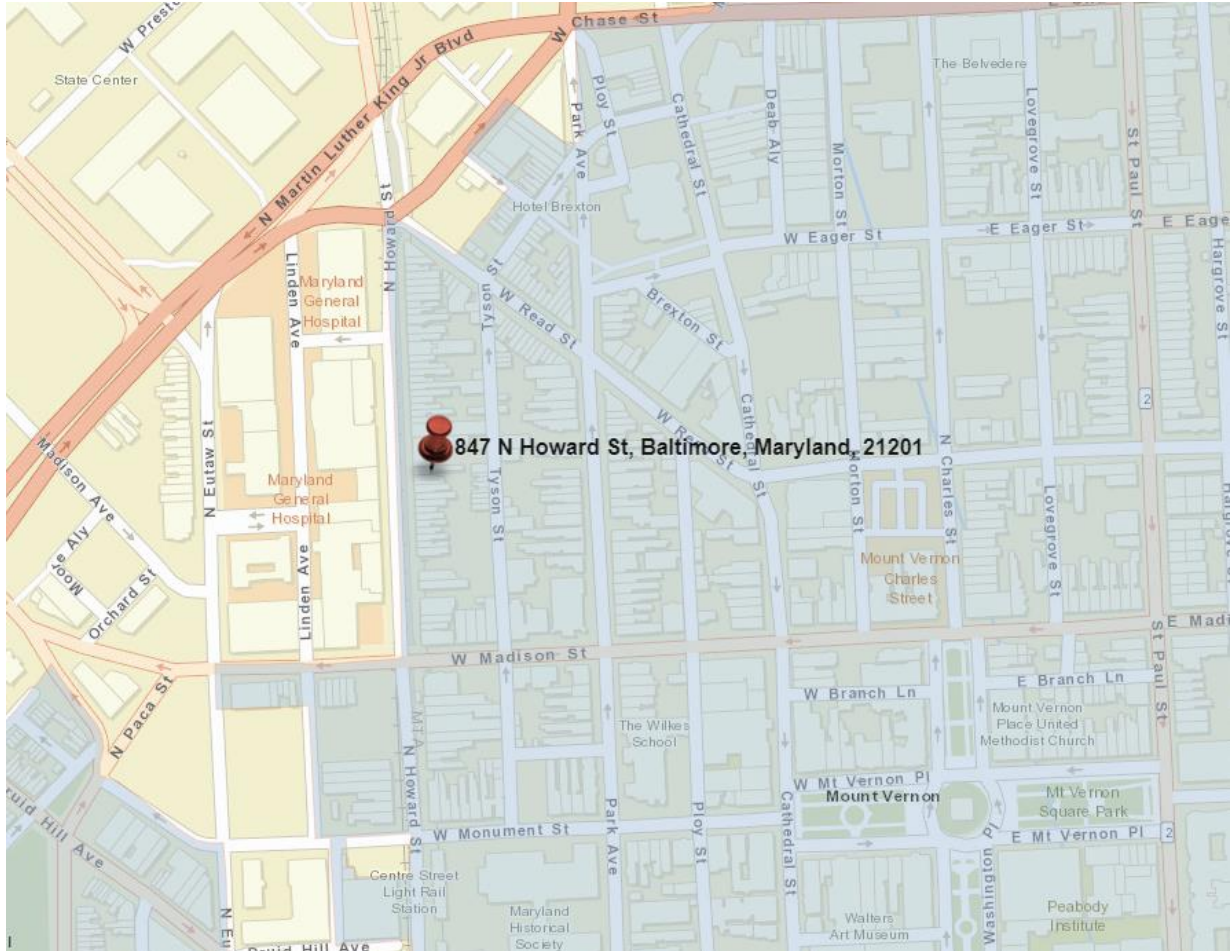


Image 1– 847 N. Howard Street in the Mount Vernon Historic District (blue shaded area)

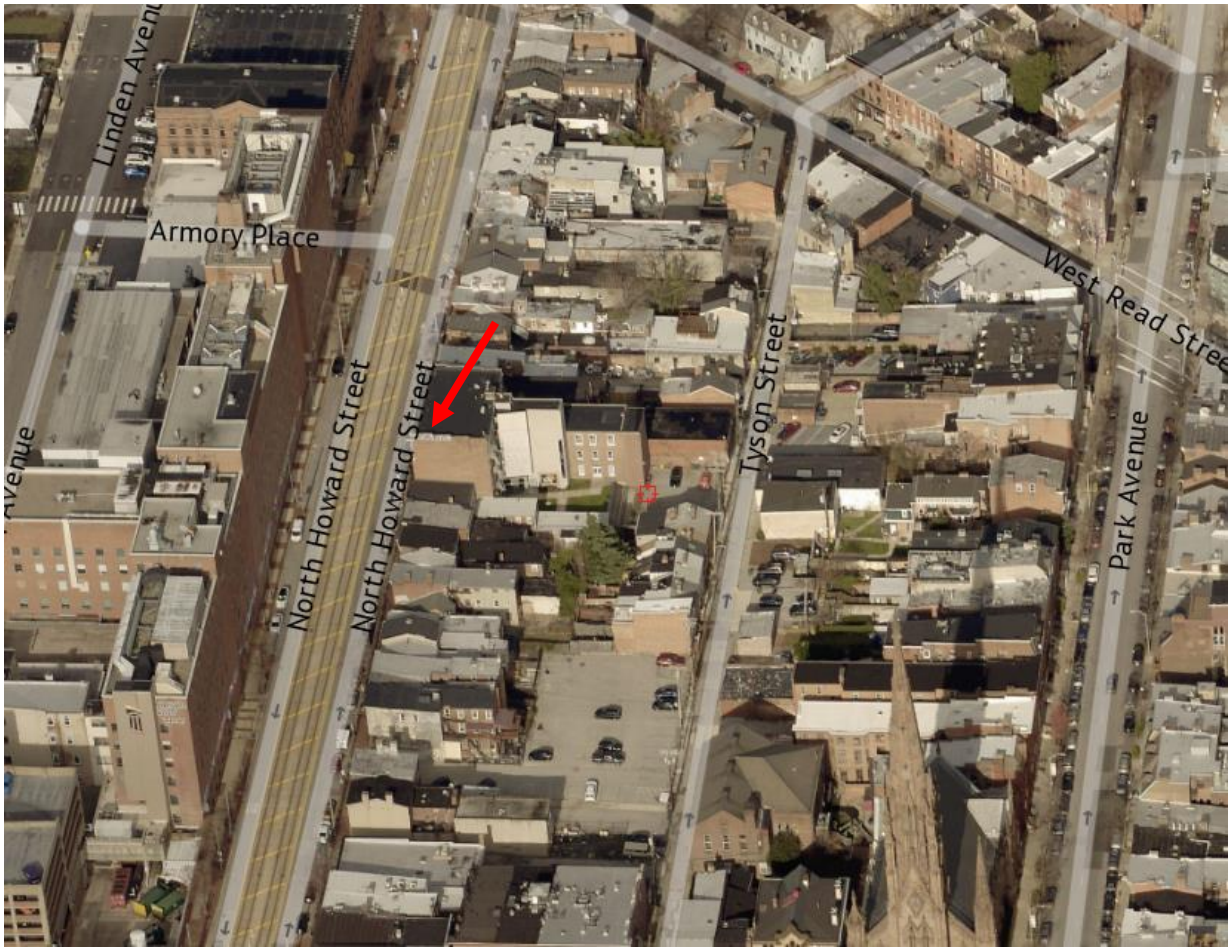


Image 2: 847 N. Howard Street – Aerial image looking north of property in question at red arrow.





*Image 3: 847 N. Howard Street – Aerial image looking south of property in question at red arrow.*



Image 4: 3605 Clipper Road – Aerial view looking directly down on the site.





*Image 5: 847 N. Howard St. – Google Street view looking north of location of proposed signage on south elevation.*





*Image 6:* 847 N. Howard St. – Google Street view looking south of location of proposed signage on north elevation.