



*Catherine E. Pugh*  
Mayor

**COMMISSION FOR  
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL  
PRESERVATION**

*Tom Liebel, Chairman*

**STAFF REPORT**



*Thomas J. Stosur*  
Director

**January 9, 2018**

**REQUEST:** Final Review – Construct Five-Story Apartment building reusing facades of 425 North Howard Street

**ADDRESS:** 211 W. Franklin Street (City-Owned Properties)  
AKA 423-425 North Howard Street and 217, 221, and 223-225 West Franklin Street

**RECOMMENDATION:** Approval with conditions.

**STAFF:** Stacy Montgomery

**APPLICANT:** The AZ Group

**OWNERS:** Mayor and City Council of Baltimore

**SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Market Center and Proposed Howard Street Historic Districts:

The Market Center National Register historic district is a nearly 24-block area that was home to Baltimore's retail activity from the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The district encompasses a wide variety of architecture from modest 19<sup>th</sup> century rowhouses to grand department store palaces, as well as banks, theaters and restaurants. The blocks encompassing the proposed demolition, which are part of the proposed Howard Street (Westside) local historic district, include a cohesive group of modestly scaled commercial structures at the northern end of Baltimore's historic retail district. The boundaries of the Mount Vernon and Seton Hill Baltimore City Historic Districts begin 1 block north of the site.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description:

The site is located at the northeast corner of North Howard and West Franklin Street. The building at 425 North Howard Street is a three-story commercial brick building that wraps the corner of Franklin and Howard Streets. The building features a large cornice, paired windows on the street facing elevations, and single windows over the corner entry. There are several vacant lots north of the site, on the north side of Franklin Street and a new six-story residential building to the northeast of the site. The buildings south of the site are 2-4 stories. There is a five-story building across North Howard Street.

**BACKGROUND**

- These properties are owned by the Mayor and City Council of Baltimore.

- These properties were offered in an RFP for redevelopment by the Baltimore Development Corporation. The developer is currently under an LDA with the City to purchase the properties.
- These properties are included within the boundaries of the Howard Street (Westside) local historic district, which CHAP reviewed for its second designation hearing on July 11, 2017.
- At the August 8, 2017 CHAP hearing, the Commission determined that the properties at 423 North Howard Street and 223-225 West Franklin Street were significant and contributing to the historic district. The Commission also determined that the properties at 217-219 and 221 W. Franklin Street had lost their historic significance and no longer contributed to the district and therefore could be demolished.
- At the September 12, 2017 CHAP hearing the Commission determined that the applicant presented an economic hardship and approved the demolition of the buildings at 423 North Howard Street and 223-225 West Franklin Street.
- At the October 10, 2017 CHAP hearing, the Commission granted concept approval for height, scale and massing with the condition that the project return to the full Commission for final design review of the materials and detailing, addressing the previous Commission motion to incorporate design features of the historic buildings to be demolished into the design of the new construction.

## **PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES**

The applicant proposes to demolish 423 North Howard Street, 217-219, 221, and 223-225 West Franklin Street and replace with a new market-rate apartment building that will incorporate the building facades at 425 North Howard Street. The corner building at 425 N Howard Street will be rehabbed with the installation of new wooden storefronts in the historic storefront openings and new wood windows to fit the historic masonry openings. The wood cornice will be reconstructed.

The applicant proposes to construct a five-story building that covers the entire lot from Tyson Street to Howard Street and runs along West Franklin Street. The facades of 425 North Howard Street along North Howard Street and West Franklin Street will be retained and small roof decks will be located on the roof, set back from the front elevation. The new construction will be five stories, wrapping around the three-story historic building.

The four-bay, five-story building on West Franklin Street will be composed of red brick with a zinc siding cap. Storefront windows run along the 1<sup>st</sup> story with a cast stone cornice running above the windows. The 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> stories are brick with paired, irregular windows. There are two squared two-story bay windows with irregular windows. A panel separates the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> story windows. A metal cornice runs below the top story that is clad in zinc siding. The bays, large cornice and zinc sided top story are meant to reflect the historic features of the existing Second Empire building.

A five-story, single bay clad in horizontal wave panel siding serves as the entry to the apartment building and a transition from the new construction on West Franklin Street and the historic building at the corner of Howard and Franklin. Double leaf aluminum storefront doors are proposed for the entry at the 1<sup>st</sup> story, with 3-pane windows proposed for the upper stories.

The two-bay, five-story elevation facing Howard Street is constructed of red brick with a large, plain cornice at the top of the building. Storefront windows on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor are capped by a cast stone cornice. The upper stories are brick with paired, irregular windows. A panel separates the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> story windows. The windows on the top story are shorter than the others and do not have the sill and lintel used at the windows on the lower stories. The building is topped with a simple metal cornice. The side elevation is clad in fiber cement panels with a small brick return from the façade.

Staff applied *Chapter 2 of the Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*, specifically *2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design, 2.2 Site Design, and 2.3 Scale and Form, 2.4 Building Features, and 2.5 Materials and Detailing*.

## **ANALYSIS**

The proposed new construction *meets Design Guideline 2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design*, which states:

- *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 area 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 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 the historic buildings.*

While the building is contemporary in design, it takes queues from the neighboring buildings and the buildings currently on the site through the use of the red brick, location of cornices and storefront windows, and the use of projecting bay windows.

The proposed new construction meets *Design Guideline 2.2 Site Design*, which states:

- *Incorporate character-defining site design features of the historic district into the designs of new construction projects.*
- *New construction at corners or abutting public spaces require special consideration in the design of entrances and multiple, publicly visible facades.*

The building wraps the corner of North Howard Street and West Franklin Street. The new construction is different on the two street elevations. The new construction takes design queues from the buildings in the surrounding district but is also deferential to the historic corner building that is being rehabbed.

The proposed new construction meets Design Guideline 2.3 Scale and Form, which states:

- *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.*

The new construction closely matches the floor-to-floor heights of the existing building, as do the rooflines. The proposed windows are slightly larger in scale than the windows on the historic building and the proportion of solids to voids is slightly larger on the historic building than the new construction.

The proposed new construction partially meets Design Guideline 2.4 Building Features, which states:

#### 2.4.2 BAY WINDOWS

- *Design new bay windows to be compatible with the length, height, and style of bay windows on surrounding buildings.*
- *Do not design new bay windows in neighborhoods where there is no historic precedent.*

#### 2.4.5 ROOFS

- *Design new roofs to complement the orientation, pitch, complexity, and scale of roofs on surrounding buildings.*
- *Locate and screen rooftop features to minimize their visibility from the street.*
- *Design cornices to be compatible with the height, scale, and articulation of existing cornice lines on surrounding buildings.*

Multi-story “Chicago Style” bay windows are common to the surrounding commercial areas, and the bays on the new construction are compatible in height. The bay window configuration on the Franklin Street elevation is irregular, which is not compatible with the character of the surrounding buildings. The lower cornices are in line with and similar in size to the historic cornices on 425 North Howard Street; however, greater attention is needed on the new Howard Street cornice at the top of the building. A bolder cornice is called for here.

The proposed new construction partially meets Design Guideline 2.5 Building Features, which states:

#### 2.5.1 DOORS AND WINDOWS

- *Design doors and windows to be compatible with the placement, scale, type, and operation of doors and window and their openings in surrounding buildings.*
- *Design doors and windows to be compatible with the architectural character of the new facade and the surrounding buildings.*

#### 2.5.2 MATERIALS

- *Choose building materials that are compatible with the color, size, texture, scale, and quality of building materials used in surrounding buildings. Where a particular material is dominant within an area, utilize that material in the new design.*
- *Cover and finish exterior walls with quality materials that are compatible with surrounding buildings. Traditional materials existing within the historic district, such as wood, brick, and stone, are preferred.*

The window proportions on Howard Street are out of scale with the window proportions of the surrounding buildings. Providing greater emphasis to the apartment entrance door in the transitional bay on Franklin Street would help the design better meet the Guidelines. The current design uses four different materials, including red brick, zinc siding, horizontal wave panel and fiber cement panels.

### **NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS**

There is no neighborhood Architectural Review Committee in this area. Notice has been sent to Baltimore Heritage, Inc., Preservation Maryland, AIA Baltimore, the Baltimore National Heritage Area, the Mount Vernon Belvedere Association, and the Market Center Merchants Association.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends approval of the final design with the following conditions:

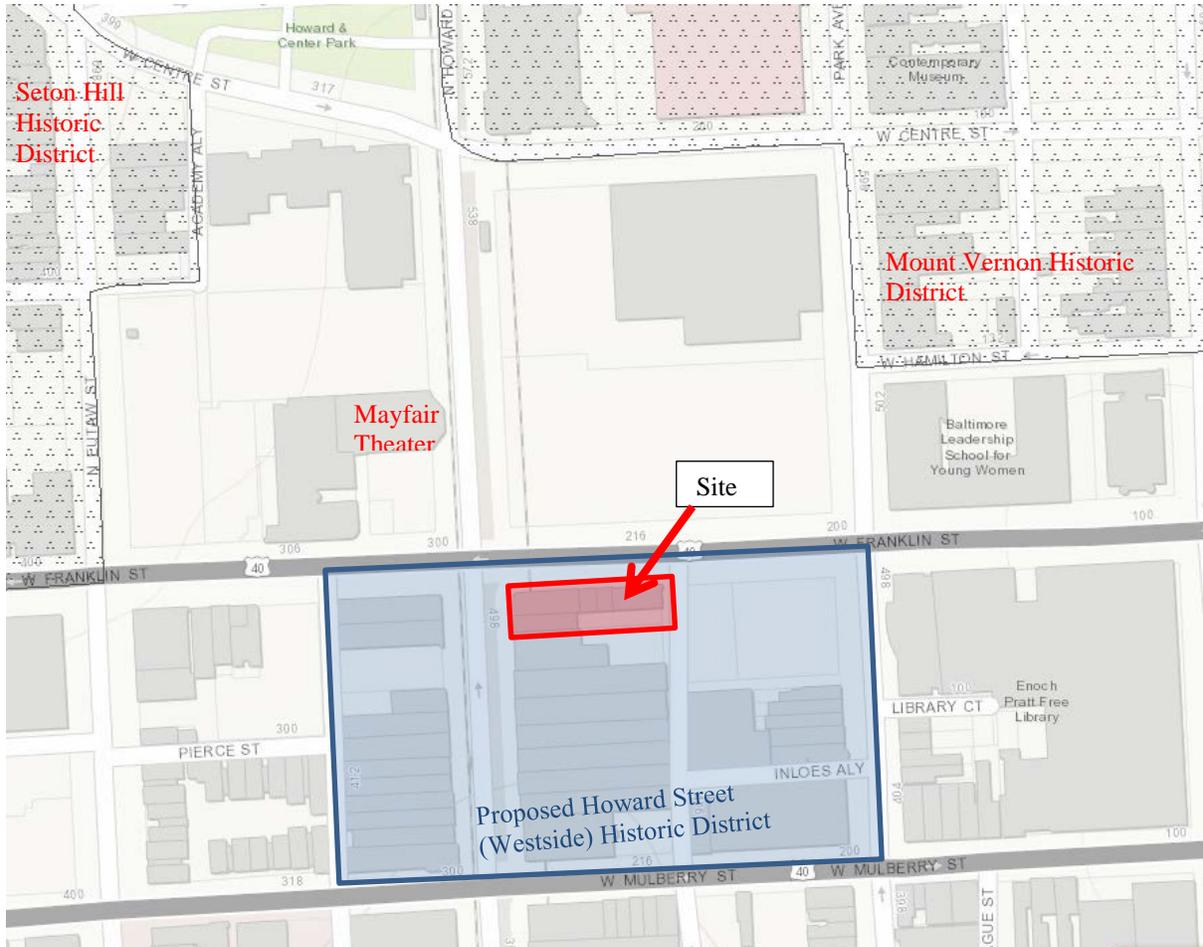
- Revisit window proportions on Howard Street elevation.
- Strengthen the design of the cornice on Howard Street elevation.
- Regularize window configuration on the bay windows on W Franklin Street.
- Provide more emphasis on the entrance to the apartment building in the transitional bay on West Franklin Street.

Staff recommends that the final details be reviewed by staff. With these modifications, the design will meet *Chapter 2 of the Design Guidelines for Additions, New Construction, and Non-Contributing Buildings*, specifically *2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design, 2.2 Site Design, and 2.3 Scale and Form, 2.4 Building Features, and 2.5 Materials and Detailing.*

E. S. M. L.

**Eric Holcomb**  
**Director**

**MAP AND IMAGES**



Site Map



Intersection of Howard and Franklin Streets, Facing East; showing 425 N Howard Street



400 Block of North Howard Street, Facing South



2016 Aerial View of the Properties



423-425 North Howard Street



West Franklin Street facing east