Catherine E. Pugh
Mayor

COMMISSION FOR
HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL
PRESERVATION

Tom Liebel, Chairman

STAFF REPORT

Chris Ryer
Director

April 9, 2019

REQUEST: Concept Review - Construct Five-Story Apartment Building

ADDRESS: 115 W. Hamburg Street (Sharp Leadenhall Historic District)

RECOMMENDATION: Approval of Height, Massing, and Scale

STAFF: Walter W. Gallas, AICP

APPLICANT: Alex Mandel

OWNER: Hamburg Street Apartments LLC

SITE/HISTORIC DISTRICT

Sharp Leadenhall Historic District: Sharp Leadenhall is associated with 200 years of African American and immigrant history in South Baltimore. By the 1790s, an African American neighborhood was centered on Sharp and Pratt streets, where some of Baltimore's most important African American intellectuals resided, including Daniel Coker, William Watkins, and Francis Helen Watkins Harper, among others. The community grew in all directions including southward along Sharp Street. Otterbein, Little Montgomery Street, and Sharp Leadenhall are the remnants of this once thriving community. In addition, Sharp Leadenhall represents the German immigrant community which lived side by side with African Americans in the neighborhood.

Site Conditions/Architectural Description: The proposed site is located in the southern part of the district on the block bounded by W. Hamburg Street to the north, Hanover Street to the east, W. Cross Street to the south and Creek Street to the west (*Images 1-4*). It is currently occupied by a masonry and CMU warehouse structure.

BACKGROUND

March 12, 2019—The Commission determined that the existing building is not a contributing building in the Sharp Leadenhall historic district at Demolition Hearing One - Determination of Architectural Significance.

PROPOSAL & APPLICATION OF GUIDELINES

This is a proposal for the construction of a five-story apartment building (*Images 5-9*).

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

2.1 Guiding Principles for New Design
2.2 Site Design
2.3 Scale and Form
2.4.1 Building Entrances
2.4.3 Garages
2.4.5 Roofs
2.5.1 Doors and Windows
2.5.2 Materials

In addition, because the new building may have a mural on a portion of the east elevation, staff reviewed the proposal in light of recently approved **Chapter 6: Design Guidelines for Artistic Expression.**

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 but do not imitate existing buildings.
- 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 historic buildings in materials, form, massing, and architectural features are accepted as long as the new buildings can be distinguished from historic buildings.

The proposed new construction will replace a warehouse building determined to be non-contributing to the historic district. The new design is one story taller at Hamburg Street than its adjacent historic neighbors, yet horizontal lines of the four-story section of the new building manage to relate to the historic row to the west. More attention should be paid to how the new building connects to its immediate rowhouse neighbor, especially given the bend that Hamburg Street makes at this point. This could provide an interesting design opportunity.

2.2 Site Design

- 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 at corners or abutting public spaces require special consideration in the design of entrances and multiple, publicly visible facades.

The proposed building fronts Hamburg Street, completing the streetscape. The primary entrance will be on Hamburg Street. Ground floor garage parking will be accessed from the rear at Race Street.

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.

The building is one story higher than its historic neighbors. It measures 44'-0" feet in height to the parapet. It then sets back at the fifth floor. It serves as a bookend to the historic rowhouses. The bend in the street makes for an interesting design opportunity in terms of how the new contraction will relate to the historic row. The floor-to-ceiling heights are proportional to the existing historic buildings. The simple form with flat roof complements the historic buildings as well.

2.4.1 Building Entrances

- Respect the existing pattern of building entrances when locating new entrances.
- Design new porches and stoops that are compatible with the form, scale, and detailing of these features on surrounding buildings.

The building's entrance is directly on the street at grade. It doesn't require steps or a ramp.

2.4.3 Garages

- Design and place garage entrances and doors to be compatible with surrounding buildings.
- Do not place garage entrances on front facades where there is no historic precedent.

The garage entry is at the rear, leaving the front of the building for pedestrian access.

2.4.5 Roofs

- Design cornices to be compatible with the height, scale, and articulation of existing cornice lines on surrounding buildings.

The building does not have a cornice, nor does it need one, as the surrounding rowhouses do not feature cornices; however, the design should include detailing for flashing or coping.

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.

This being a contemporary building, the windows and doors can be of contemporary design. The final designs for the elevations should provide detailing for windows and doors.

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.

The applicant has discussed possible cladding materials for the building and staff has made some recommendations about alternatives. Staff will continue to work with the applicant to determine the materials as the design is finalized.

Chapter 6: Design Guidelines for Artistic Expression
6.2 Paint

- In most cases masonry elevations that were not historically painted should not be painted.
- CHAP shall consider paint colors and schemes to be reversible. A broad range of colors and schemes may be permissible as long the paint scheme does not overwhelm the historic character of the immediate surrounding area.
- In most cases do not place murals on primary facades of historic buildings. Side facades of buildings are appropriate for murals as long as they do not conceal historically significant architectural details such as cornices, bay windows, or decorative terracotta. CHAP review is limited to the location of murals; content of proposed murals are not within CHAP purview.
- Murals should be painted on previously painted surfaces to avoid damage to historic brickwork. Murals should be painted using materials that can be removed without using destructive methods such as sandblasting.
- When painting masonry is approved, appropriate vapor-permeable masonry paint must be used. Examples of appropriate paint include lime wash paint, silicate mineral paint, or acrylic latex paint.

The idea to add a mural to this building was raised by the neighborhood association in light of the mural that was lost when across the street 116 W. Hamburg Street was constructed on a vacant lot (*Image 10*). The mural will not be placed on the primary façade. As the project is developed, staff will work with the applicant and artist to ensure that an appropriate surface is prepared for the mural and that the paint and application method result in a durable piece of art.

NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS

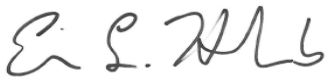
The Sharp Leadenhall neighborhood association has provided a letter of support for the project as have the Leadenhall Baptist Church and the owner of the 7-Eleven business at 1000 S. Hanover Street, the adjoining commercial property to the east of the site.

ANALYSIS

CHAP staff finds that the proposed new construction meets the guidelines.

CHAP staff recommends a finding of concept approval for height, massing, and scale with the applicant to return to the Commission for approval of final design and details. In the final plans, the applicant should:

- **Continue to work on the design of the connecting point between the historic rowhouses and the new construction;**
- **Refine the materials;**
- **Work with the neighborhood and BOPA on the mural concept for a portion of the east elevation;**
- **Ensure that floor plans, elevations, and perspectives are congruent; and**
- **Include in final plans the locations of mechanical equipment including the elevator penthouse.**



Eric Holcomb
Director

MAP AND IMAGES

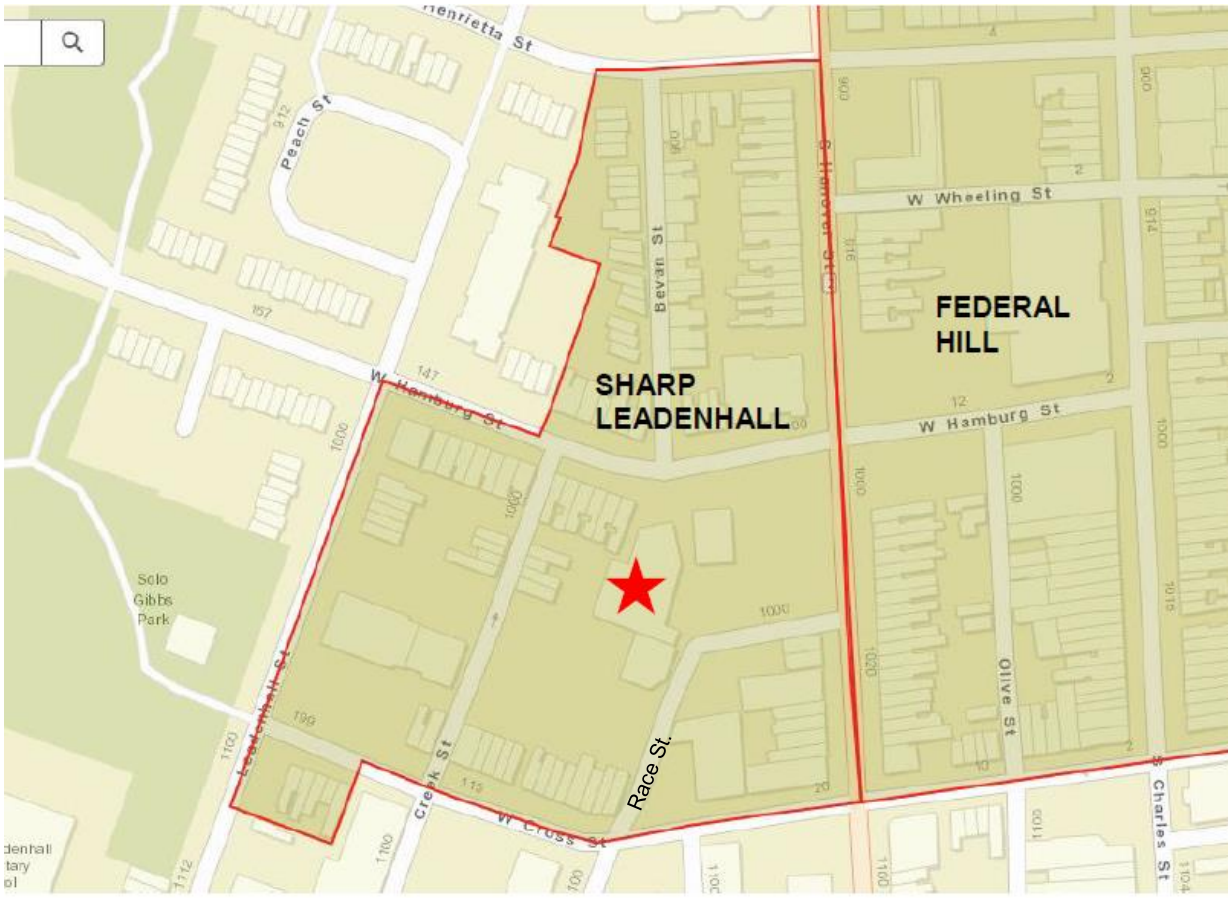


Image 1: 115 W. Hamburg Street in the Sharp Leadenhall Historic District

Image 2: 115 W. Hamburg Street from Hanover Street, Google Street View, July 2018

Image 3: 115 W. Hamburg Street, Google Street View, July 2018

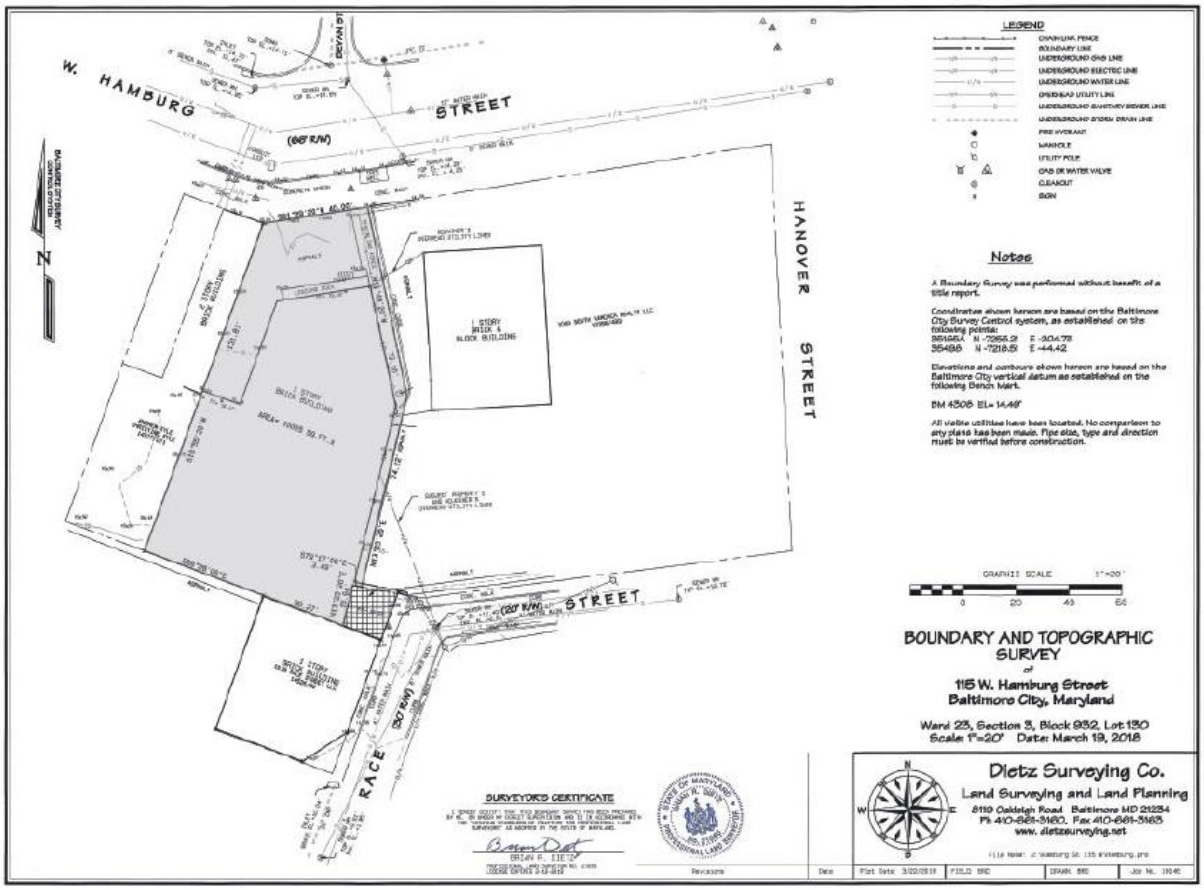


Image 4: 115 W. Hamburg Street – Property Survey in gray shaded area, with hatched encroachment on roadbed.

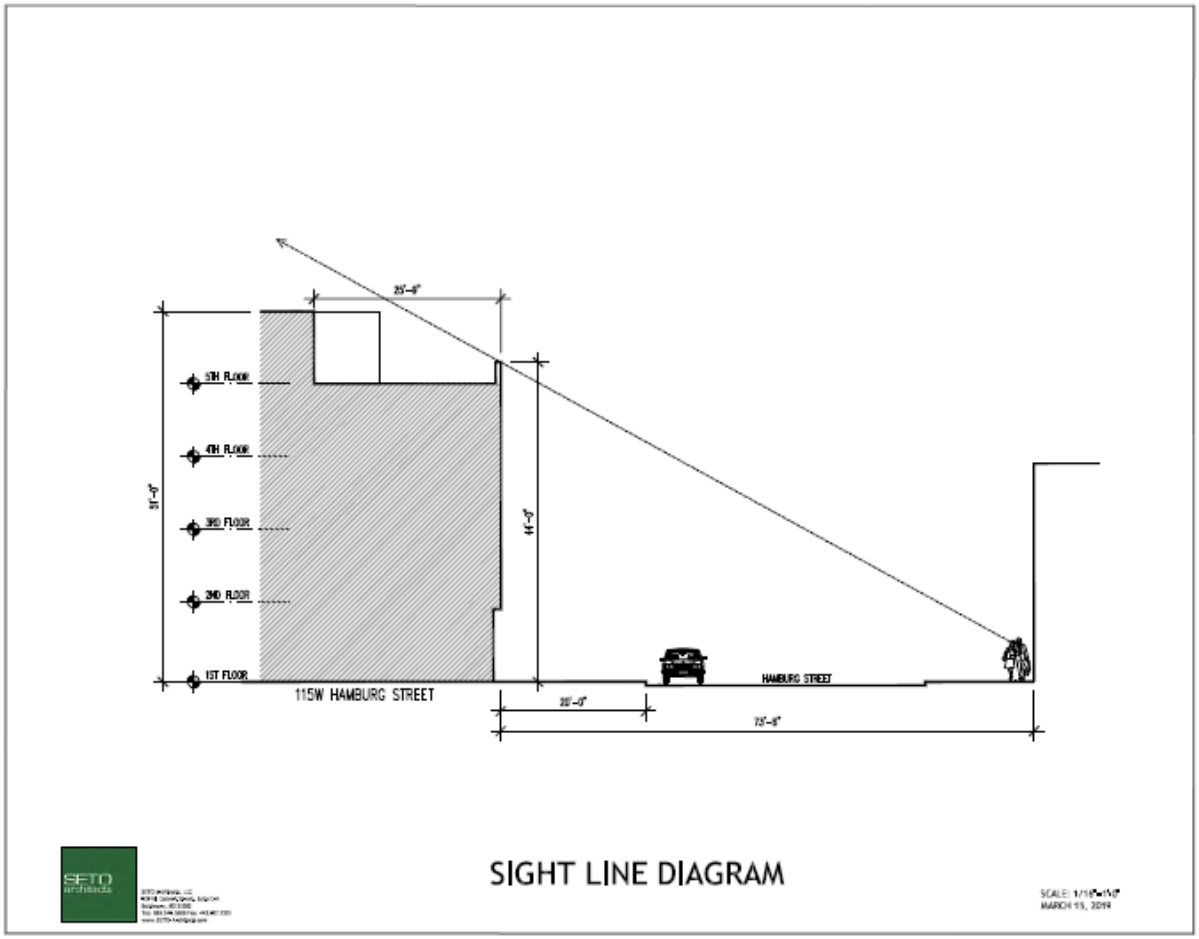


Image 5: 115 W. Hamburg Street, sight line diagram

Image 6: 115 W. Hamburg Street, perspective looking west at Bevan Street

Image 7: 115 W. Hamburg Street, perspective looking east from Creek Street toward Hanover Street

Image 8: 115 W. Hamburg Street, perspective looking west from Hanover Street

Image 9: 115 W. Hamburg Street, rear elevation perspective looking north on Race Street

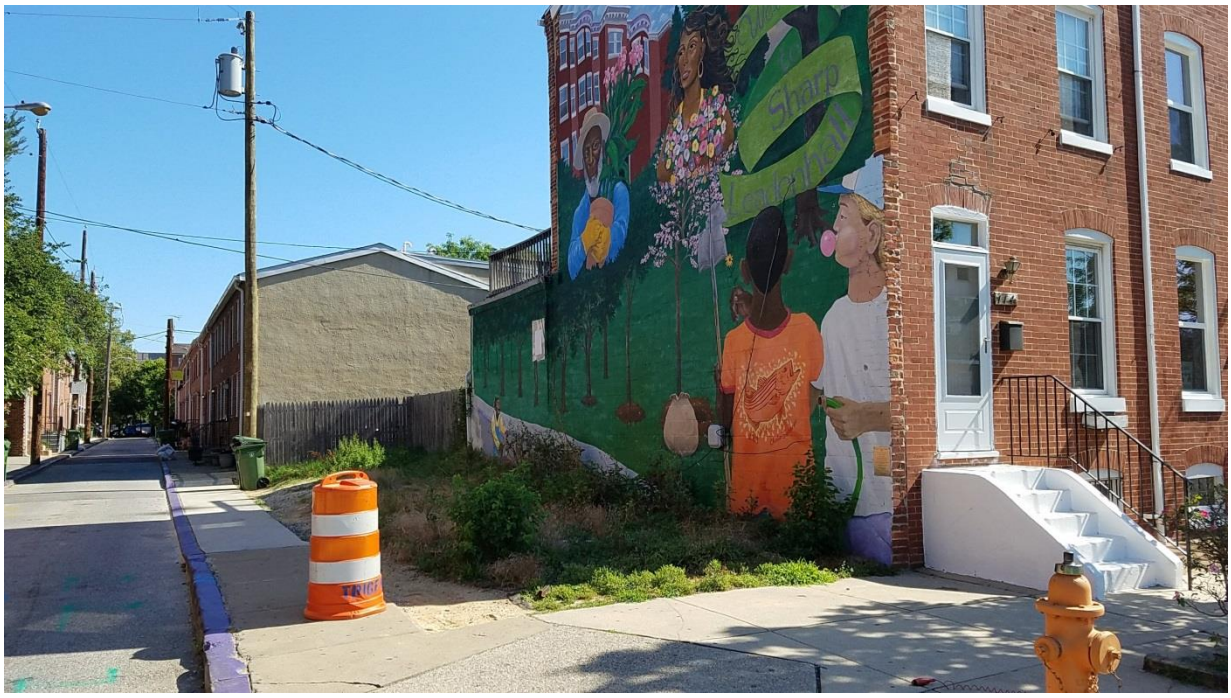


Image 10: Mural across street from 115 W. Hamburg Street prior to construction of 116 W. Hamburg Street