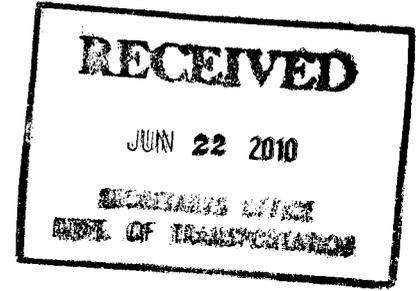


Planning



STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE
MAYOR

*100 Holliday Street, Room 250
Baltimore, Maryland 21202*

June 17, 2010

The Honorable Beverly Swaim-Staley
Secretary, Maryland Department of Transportation
7201 Corporate Center Drive
Hanover, MD 21076

Dear Secretary Swaim-Staley:

As a supplement to the City of Baltimore's "priority letter" for projects to be included in the Consolidated Transportation Plan, the City of Baltimore respectfully submits the following three station areas for designation as a Transit Oriented Development (TOD):

West Baltimore MARC

The West Baltimore MARC station presents a significant potential for TOD. The existing MARC commuter service between Washington, D.C. and Aberdeen, MD and the investment in the future Red Line, which would intersect at this location, will be a catalyst for redevelopment in West Baltimore. With this in mind, the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), together with Baltimore City and community stakeholders, worked collaboratively over a period of two years to develop a TOD vision around the MARC station. The resulting West Baltimore MARC Community-Centered Development Strategy, a local area master plan approved by the Planning Commission, envisions the area as having a range of housing choices, new economic investment and jobs, and a transportation system that both serves the area and draws visitors and commuters to it.

The strategy process also helped build capacity in the community, culminating in the creation of the West Baltimore Coalition and the West Baltimore MARC TOD Transportation, Inc. These organizations reflect the community's commitment to participate in community revitalization by addressing the unique opportunities and challenges in the area around the MARC train station. Furthermore, having the Red Line as an additional transit mode will transform West Baltimore into a true multi-modal transit hub. The West Baltimore MARC is identified as one of the stations along the Red Line corridor for which a Station Area Advisory Committee (SAAC) will be implemented to engage community representatives and transit riders to participate in designing and planning for the station. This process will span a fifteen-month period from September 2010 until December 2011.



Howard Street Corridor

The Howard Street corridor location along with its assets offers great prospects for TOD. The corridor provides a link between the Cultural Center and the Inner Harbor and Downtown through the emerging Westside district. With the existing Light Rail service and connections to Metro, bus, and MARC service and the future Red Line, it provides a historic and vital link from a regional perspective. Once one of the Baltimore region's most vibrant commercial corridors, Howard Street has been declining since the 1960's. Now, changing demographics and market demand for locations that combine a quality urban living area with great transit options position Howard Street as a desirable place for TOD.

As a result, in 2009, a steering committee was formed with members from the Baltimore City Departments of Transportation and Planning, BDC, MTA, MDOT, Downtown Partnership, University of Maryland Medical System and Westside Renaissance to oversee the development of the Strategic Plan to Enhance the Howard Street Corridor, to ensure that a comprehensive strategy would be addressed and to identify roles and responsibilities for all stakeholders. The Plan which was completed in April 2010 includes an assessment of the corridor and presents recommendations that outline short- and long-term strategies. Based on the existing inter-governmental commitment to improve the corridor, as well as the already committed grants for façade improvement and streetscaping totaling \$6.2 million in the short run, Howard Street becomes a desirable place for TOD investment. Furthermore, the proximity to the State Center TOD project to the North of the site will create a synergy with the city's TOD policy which will reflect in revitalization and strengthening of the communities along the transit corridor.

Penn Station

Penn Station and the surrounding area with its multitude of transit options and cultural, business and institutional amenities as well as its diverse and multi-cultural communities provides great opportunities for TOD which will be reflected in high-density residential and commercial infill development. Penn Station is Maryland's most important passenger rail hub and the largest potential generator of pedestrian traffic in the neighborhood. The existence of the Light Rail service which connects Penn Station to downtown and BWI, coupled with numerous commuter bus lines and proposed tracked trolley service between Penn Station to both the Inner Harbor and the Johns Hopkins campus makes it one of the premier TOD sites in the State of Maryland.

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Over the past few years, several initiatives have demonstrated commitment and support for the area by numerous stakeholders and government entities. The Charles North Vision plan foresees the development of a mix of retail, commercial and residential space divided into four different areas spreading north from the station while preserving the historic fabric of the neighborhoods. This plan was endorsed by the previous administration and supports TOD zoning in this area through the TransForm Baltimore comprehensive rezoning initiative. Greenmount West Master Plan is pending finalization for the area immediately to the east of the station. Streetscaping for North Avenue unit through 400 blocks was proposed as part of DOT's CIP this year. Furthermore, AMTRAK which owns the historic Penn Station building has expressed its commitment to station area improvements and the development of the Lanvale parking lot. In the first phase, it has committed \$10 million in investment for the addition of a boutique hotel to the top three floors of Penn Station in conjunction with a renovation/expansion of the train station and concourse. In this regard AMTRAK has been including BDC as part of the work group to plan for the station area improvements.

Should you have any questions regarding these proposed designations, please contact Mr. Tom Stosur, Director, Baltimore City Planning Department at 410-396-7526. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Stephanie Rawlings-Blake

Mayor

Baltimore City

SRB:cd

cc: Ms. Kaliopé Parthemos, Deputy Mayor, Economic & Neighborhood Development
Mr. Alfred H. Foxx, Director, Department of Transportation
Mr. Tom Stosur, Director, Department of Planning
Mr. M.J. Brodie, President, Baltimore Development Corporation