



PLANNING COMMISSION

Brandon M. Scott
Mayor

Jon Laria, Chair; Eric Stephenson, Vice Chair



STAFF REPORT

Tim Keane
Director

February 5, 2026

REQUEST: Street Closing/ Closing of Two Air Rights Portions of the 1900-Block of McElderry Street – Johns Hopkins University

RECOMMENDATION: Approval with Conditions

STAFF: Antoine Heath

PETITIONER: Department of Transportation, c/o Caroline Hecker, Esq.

OWNER: The Johns Hopkins University

SITE/GENERAL AREA

Site Conditions: This request involves the closing of air rights for two portions of McElderry Street to allow construction of two bridges, which will connect the existing John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to the proposed Public Housing Health Building. The road surface, sidewalk, and other portions of the grade level right-of-way will remain open for traffic (apart from necessary and proper closures to facilitate construction).

General Area: This site is located in the Dunbar-Broadway neighborhood, just east of Johns Hopkins Hospital. Single-family rowhomes are located east of the site across North Washington Street.

HISTORY

The abutting Chapel Street right-of-way located west of the site and three 10-foot alleys formerly on this site were approved for closure by the Planning Commission on November 30, 2023.

CONFORMITY TO PLANS

The 2024 Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Baltimore was enacted by Ordinance #24-426, dated December 2, 2024. The subject properties surrounding the air rights to be closed are designated in the "Mixed Use: Hospital and Education Campus" group in the General Land Use Plan. This proposed closure of certain rights within the right-of-way conforms to that designation and will allow the existing property owner to enhance campus operations as new needs emerge.

ANALYSIS

Background: The air rights area requested to be closed is developed with utilities. Two standard options exist when rights-of-way containing utilities are requested to be closed.

1. The applicant/property owner may move any and all impacted utilities (at their cost) to a different, acceptable portion of public right-of-way or property.

2. If the applicant/property owner does not desire to move the utilities, the City will instead maintain a Utility Easement on the released property. This ensures that all necessary and proper utility maintenance, upgrades, expansions, and all other similar work can continue within the impacted property.

In this case, the City requests a Utility Easement for utilities not abandoned or relocated.

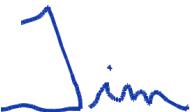
McElderry Street will remain open to vehicle and pedestrian traffic after necessary and proper closures to facilitate construction. The current design proposes a clearance of approximately 26ft 8in for the lowest the bridge, and a maximum height of 73ft 5in for the highest bridge. McElderry Street will still be accessible to personal and emergency vehicles, as well as pedestrians and cyclists.

Equity: There are no expected equity impacts to the adjacent neighborhoods, nor will there be any impact to any existing patterns of inequity that persist in this immediate area or Baltimore in general. Staff does not expect any significant impact to time or resources outside of routine development review.

Notification: Posting requirements have been met by staff and the petitioner. Notifications of Planning Commission agendas provided via the GovDelivery system as well.

CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL:

1. A utility easement shall be provided for all utilities not abandoned or relocated as a result of the closure of air rights for McElderry Street.
2. Any and all relocation expenses shall be the responsibility of the applicant, property owner, or their designee.
3. Any relocation work shall conform with all applicable and necessary construction/reconstruction standards.



Tim Keane
Director