

[Search/Archive](#) [Site Map](#) [About Us](#) [Contact Us](#) [Home Delivery](#) [Advertise](#)

SunSpot.net
Maryland's Online Community

Maryland



NEWS

BUSINESS

SPORTS

ARTS/LIFE

OPINION

MARKETPLACE

Talk about it

Discuss this story

E-mail it

Send this story to a friend

Print it

Printer-friendly version

Maryland

Anne Arundel
Carroll
Harford
Howard
Middle Atlantic

Columnists

Gregory Kane
Michael Olesker
Dan Rodricks

Weekly features

Education Beat
On the Bay
Political Game

News

Maryland
Nation/World
Education
Health
Obituaries
Traffic
Weather
Lottery
AP News

Business

Sports

Arts/Life

Opinion

Marketplace

Welcome, gparksjr

- [Member services](#)

OTHER SERVICES

- [Registration](#)
- [Print Edition](#)
- [Wireless Edition](#)
- [Corrections](#)
- [SunSource Store](#)
- [Search/Archive](#)
- [Site Map](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Contact Us](#)
- [Home Delivery](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Map/directions](#)
- [SunDial](#)
- [FAQs](#)

Put SunSpot on your site

We make it easy.

Quick search

Type search term(s) for articles, places or events, then hit enter

City plans to fight blight

Charles St.-North Ave. area property would be acquired; 22 commercial sites targeted; Developers would buy land; proposal drawing support

By **Jamie Stiehm**
Sun Staff

Originally published January 20, 2003

Baltimore leaders plan a facelift for the dilapidated properties around North Avenue and North Charles Street, a crossroads and a piece of city history considered by many to be badly in need of renewal.

More than 20 commercial properties, many of them vacant, would be acquired by the city if an urban-renewal plan is approved in the next few months, according to Baltimore Development Corp., the city's economic development agency. City officials then would package the acquired properties and offer three parcels for sale to redevelopers this year.

Andrew B. Frank, BDC executive vice president, called the North Avenue revitalization effort a "tactical intervention" for two of the city's signature streets in the midtown district. The area is considered especially prone to decay, its blight made all the more noticeable by rejuvenation projects in the downtown business district and [Charles Village](#).

"Charles Street is Baltimore's main street and a major gateway out of town," Frank said. "The [proposed] acquisition sites are vacant, blighted or underutilized."

The plan is moving ahead on an unusually fast timetable, officials said. In March, a city project to resurface the portion of North Avenue between Howard Street and Greenmount Avenue is scheduled to be the first public sign of progress in the area.

North Avenue's round "lollipop" streetlights -- once a city hallmark -- also will be replaced. The avenue's sidewalks from Howard Street to Guilford Avenue will be repaired.

The Rev. Dale Dusman, a Lutheran pastor and neighborhood leader, said the announcement about the city plan caused some distress among those whose properties would be affected. But, he said, he believes the action will spark positive change to spur private investment.

Also see

In Depth

General

[Assembly coverage](#)

Coverage of the 2003 legislative session.

More news

Education news

This section features news on K-12 schools, colleges and continuing education, as well as the Education Beat column and test score databases.

College Guide

[On Campus: Live & Learn](#)



Our new guide features profiles of Maryland's colleges and universities, campus photo galleries, event listings, student survival tips and more.

Top Stories

[Ehrlich aims for 13,500 slots](#)

Governor to propose far more machines than estimated in campaign

[Lawmakers considering higher taxes](#)

Increased levies proposed on gas, incomes, alcohol; 'You can't just beg, borrow, steal'; Number of slot machines in budget concerns some

[Balto. Co. judge agrees to execution of Oken](#)

White Marsh killer's case 1st to move under Ehrlich

[400 rally for more attention to city schools from officials](#)

O'Malley's effort criticized; Sharpton among speakers

Proposed tobacco effort cuts disputed
 Health advocates say Ehrlich plan would violate spending requirements

"If the City Council supports this, everyone stands to win and see our property values go up," Dusman said. "The city has to be the key player here. My hope is that folks who have been approached by the BDC can see the bigger picture. We need some entity to jumpstart economic development."

Dusman is president of the Charles North Community Association, a residential cluster in the blocks near [Pennsylvania Station](#). He described the area identified by city officials as "depressing and neglected."

Mayor Martin O'Malley said the area has shown hopeful signs of an upturn with the success of [The Charles Theatre](#) and its Tapas Teatro cafe.

"These are preliminary plans, but obviously there is a vibrant couple of blocks and an arts district beginning in that area," O'Malley said. "The bill will be heard in February and we're looking for approval in mid-March for this important, growing area. We'll do all we can to be kind and considerate to any merchants we may inconvenience in this progress."

Displaced businesses would be relocated once properties are acquired, officials said.

The most prominent entry on the target list of 22 commercial properties is the vacant Parkway Theatre, built in 1914. It was purchased a few months ago by Charles E. Dodson, a Baltimore resident who said he intended to restore its former "grande dame" grandeur.

Another well-known building on the list is the former Chesapeake Restaurant building, near [The Charles Theatre](#), which now sits idle. The west side of the 1900 block of N. Charles St. is also included in the city's plans.

On the northeast corner of North Avenue and Charles Street stands a former bank building now up for sale, but it is not among the proposed acquisitions, officials said.

Buzz Cusack, owner of [The Charles Theatre](#) in the 1700 block of Charles St., said he had mixed feelings about urban renewal coming to the streets near him. He said he was most concerned about the city's plans to acquire a nearby parking lot south of the Charles-North intersection, which his patrons use.

Among the buildings identified for city acquisition is one occupied by a New York Fried Chicken franchise store on the southwest corner of North Avenue and North Charles Street.

Rebecca Gagalis, executive director of the nonprofit Charles Street Development Corp., supports the proposal. "We would help market the sites if they want us to help find tenants and development teams,"

she said.

Second District Councilman Bernard C. "Jack" Young, who represents the area targeted by the redevelopment plan, said the stagnating midtown intersection badly needs a remedy.

"Look at it, it's been an eyesore lately. We need to do something, as long as the community supports it," he said. "There's vacant commercial properties sitting there doing nothing."


Dusman, a city resident since 1968, said he has never seen North Avenue as an inviting city destination.

"Some say it can never be something other than what it is," he said. "I refuse to believe that. Why can't North Avenue be something special?"

Copyright © 2003, *The Baltimore Sun*

sunspot.net

back to top

 **Talk about it**
Discuss this story

 **E-mail it**
Send this story to a friend

 **Print it**
Printer-friendly version

[Maryland](#) | [Nation/World](#) | [Education](#) | [Health](#) | [Obituaries](#) | [Traffic](#) | [Weather](#) | [Lottery](#) | [AP News](#)
[News](#) | [Business](#) | [Sports](#) | [Arts/Life](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Marketplace](#)

Contact us: Submit feedback, send a letter to the editor, submit a news tip, get subscription info, or place a classified ad.

[www.sunspot.net](#) (R) and [baltimoresun.com](#) (TM) are copyright © 2003 by The [Baltimore Sun](#).
[Terms of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)