

E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission



Project Name: E21 Boone Row

Project Location: 516-530 E 21st Street, Baltimore, MD

Project Completion: May 2021

Owner: DDB Workshop and Maryland Custom Builders

Architectural Design Team: DDB Workshop LLC | Tamir Ezzat

General Contractor: Maryland Custom Builders Inc. | Mautaz Ezzat and Tamir Ezzat

Civil Engineer: Kimley Horn | Nick Leffner

Applicant and Point of Contact:

Tamir Ezzat, ddbWorkshop

12230 Clarksville Pike, Suite K, Clarksville, MD 21029

tamir@ddbworkshop.com | 301-580-1441

Project Overview

E21 Boone Row is a newly developed collection of 8 rowhomes located on a formerly vacant, city-owned corner in the community of East Baltimore Midway. The central idea behind the development was to inject new life into a promising yet disinvested block to catalyze reinvestment. Led by a Builder and Architect (Father and Son) development duo, this project utilized place-making strategies, sustainable off-site prefabricated construction, and a vertically integrated team to transform the community and deliver low cost, market rate housing.

Completeness

This project was entirely focused on good design creating both a business opportunity and making a transformational impact on a community. This parcel of land was deemed by the city as financially infeasible. As the Architect and Developer, we were able to unburden front-end costs by spearheading entitlements, community engagement, design, infrastructure assessment, and permitting in ways a traditional development team wouldn't be able to afford. We studied multiple housing typologies and determined that homeownership would stabilize the block much faster than a rental model.

There was inherent risk that appraisal values would not support the project cost and profit, so that's where superior design and construction would have to fill the gap. The innovative prefab construction model truncated the construction timeline and helped control construction costs, especially as the market saw historic highs in material costs. This translated to a below-market average cost of new homes in Baltimore City at a price point unheard of for the region. Amenities such as quality material choices like brick masonry, cementitious panel and lap siding, iron railings, quartz countertops, porcelain flooring and oak hardwood flooring helped to boost the value of the homes.

The garage and mudroom component of the homes, not common in Baltimore City, created a unique value to these homes relative to the market.

To further enable new buyers to consider homeownership in this neighborhood, our development team paired them with mortgage brokers and City incentives to reduce purchase costs. We created access to high quality housing with incentives at a price point unheard of for Baltimore City, without any subsidies or AMI cap.

From the onset of the project, we informed the community that we believed the homes would sell in the \$280k range. All 8 homes were sold with the lowest sale at \$289k and the highest at \$350k. The design quality, place-making with the Boone Street Commons, and amenities were able to command a higher-than-anticipated value in the marketplace and illustrated the quantifiable impact of Architect-led development.

A Sense of Place and Quality

The facade of the rowhomes was designed to relate to the contextual urban rhythm of the three-story row home but break down the repetitive 3 ½ story solid masonry condition. Utilizing an A/B floor plan enabled the blending of units together. We sculpted the massing at the 3rd floor façade plane to create a new rhythm and scale. The shadow lines and softer materiality of the receded cementitious planes with playful batten pattern which wraps the corner of the block to softly break down scale.

While appealing design was important, the key to this project was place-making. Our goal was not to simply build homes but focus on creating a sense of place and identity. In tandem with the home development, the team transformed a former dumping ground on the alley side of the development into a public community space. The juxtaposition of the new home development against blight and homes in disrepair could have created social friction with legacy residents, but the design team partnered with the community

association to transform that dumping ground into an amenity for all residents. This transformed space, called Boone Street Commons, is now home to welcoming landscaping, picnic tables with shading structures, community garden boxes, and a farm stand. This space is now managed and programmed by a resident of E21 Boone Row and serves as an anchor and unifying space for the community. Since the project's completion, the block has seen renovations of existing homes soar in the community, planned community events in the Commons space, and more outside visitors taking notice of the community than ever before.

Sustainability

The development utilized off-site, prefabricated modular construction which minimized construction waste, prevented job site theft, and provided an expedited construction timeline. Foundation and site prep were completed while the prefab units were constructed. The homes were built two at a time, where modules were delivered and assembled in 4 hours. The reduction of on-site waste in prefab design is an enormous contributor to sustainable development. This infill project completed a long neglected block acting as a catalyst for reinvestment in the community. During construction, the entire block saw continual private investment and vacant home stabilization from third party investors, creating more homeownership and investment. Further, the development was focused on place-making and nesting itself into the community. The intent was to not simply construct houses, but rather look larger at establishing a community integration and sense of place. The team partnered with the community association to secure a Central Baltimore Partnership "Spruce-up" grant to fund the transformation of the vacant lot directly North into a public amenity for the community. This amenity serves as a pocket park with vegetation, plots for community gardening, and event space all while reducing heat island effect for the block. We integrated farm stands for communal food sharing from excess harvest with the entire amenity space now operated and managed by new and legacy community members.

Visionary and Emulation

This project is an example of looking at the built environment holistically and beyond design excellence alone. Good design can enhance living conditions, yes; but Architects have an immense responsibility to utilize our skillset to enrich the built environment and affect change more directly. In this instance, to transform a community's outlook for the future and its living condition. This project dared to push the boundaries of what is traditionally accepted by the role of Architect. Traditionally, infill rowhome development is slow and costly with the majority of new construction of this typology happening in more stable communities. The prefab approach helped to maintain security at the site with minimal loose materials while also generating great excitement within the community with this unique building methodology. However, the key to this project was the integration with the existing community to invest without displacement, while providing communal amenity space for all to enjoy. It was a priority for the development team to find ways to provide a sense of place and pride for all to feel welcome and seen in East Baltimore Midway. This project now serves as a unique model for sparking urban revitalization in Baltimore neighborhoods through tactical urban analysis and the investment demonstrated at E 21 Boone Row.

A Need

This area of East Baltimore Midway had not seen new home development in over 25 years, with an average home sale price of \$15k. Many homes were vacant and there was little appeal for new residents. There was great potential for this community to transform rapidly: the Greenmount Avenue and North Ave corridor had soon-to-be implemented East/West bike lanes planned, the direct adjacency to a transit hub in Penn Station, and the recent retail, entertainment, and food destinations in nearby Remington and Arts District. The framework for success of a sustainable, modern urban

living experience existed in this community, but the affordable, quality housing with a safe sense of place did not. To attract new residents, the design had to be unique in Baltimore City while being more affordable to justify a leap of faith investment.

Historically, new housing developments came to neighborhoods just like this but through displacement. To ease worries of the past, we had a saying that illustrated our intent: “The smile of your community is beautiful; we are simply replacing some missing teeth.” The existing community urban grid structure was strong, the intent was to simply build on existing vacant parcels and work with the community to create an amenity space for all residents alike to utilize. Through various community association meetings and presentations, we collected ideas to better design the community space that would pair with the new home development. The team applied for grants to fund the community park on behalf of the community association and organized community workdays in conjunction with the Johns Hopkins President’s Day of Service program. Volunteer community members, JHU students, architects, developers, builders, and politicians all coordinated to help clear the vacant dumping ground garden space to create the new Boone Street Commons. This grass roots approach to development created an acceptance of the new residents of the development and bonds with legacy residents.

E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission

Project Photographs



E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission



E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission

Area Map



AMENITIES MAP

E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission

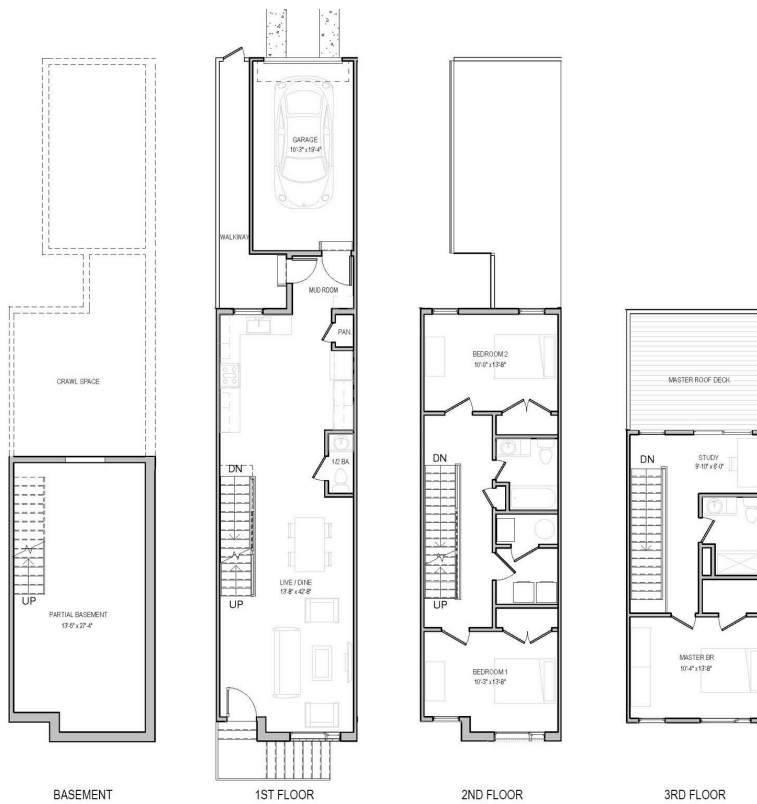
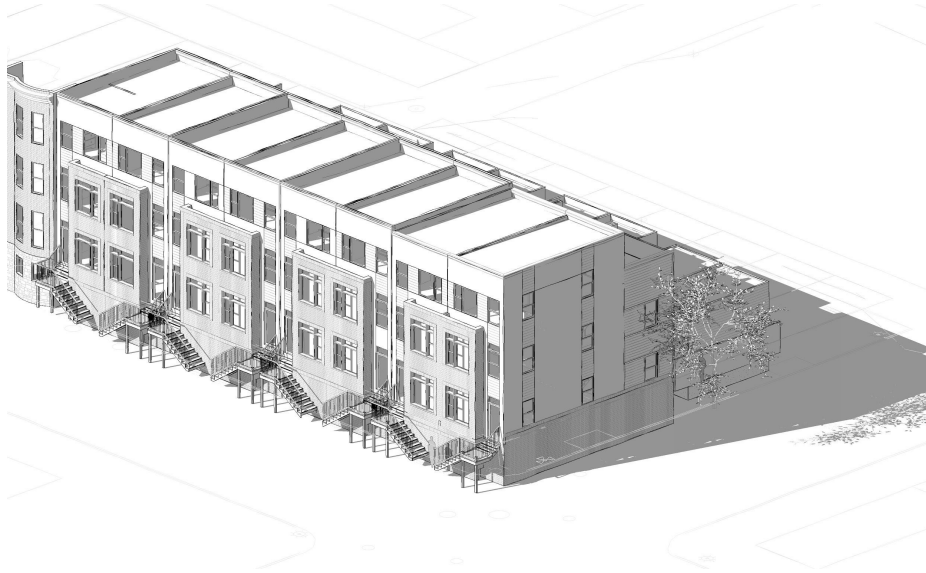
Site Plan



E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission

Digital Design Model and Typical Unit Plan



Previous Condition of the Block



View from Boone Street facing West and East



E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission

Modular Construction Process



E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission



E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission



E21 Boone Row

2022 ULI Baltimore WaveMaker Award Submission

