

Robin Carter
Chairperson, Board of Commissioners

Janet Abrahams
President | Chief Executive Officer



Memorandum

To: Members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

From: Janet Abrahams, Chief Executive Officer

Date: January 31, 2024

Subject: SB 356 Land Use - Expedited Development Review Processes for Affordable Housing - Requirements

Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee, the Housing Authority of Baltimore City (HABC) supports SB 356 Land Use - Expedited Development Review Processes for Affordable Housing – Requirements.

SB 356 requires local jurisdictions to establish and implement an expedited development review process for certain proposed affordable housing developments seeking to develop affordable housing on their land. It creates a good-faith waiver for local jurisdictions that cannot implement an expedited development review process.

HABC is Baltimore’s largest provider of affordable housing opportunities, serving over 20,000 households (nearly 44,000 individuals) through our Public Housing and Housing Choice Voucher programs. HABC serves low- to extremely low-income families and individuals that consist of some of the city’s most vulnerable populations, including those at risk of homelessness, the elderly, persons with disabilities, veterans, and children. Historically, in Baltimore, public housing sites were built in segregated areas of the city with high concentrations of poverty and neighborhood disinvestment. Generally, in these neighborhoods, there has been and continues to be limited access to quality schools, green space/recreation areas, grocery stores, healthcare facilities, financial institutions, transportation, etc. These areas also have high rates of unemployment and crime, high concentration of poverty and minority populations, and lower life-expectancy rates than in more affluent areas of the city.

HABC is working to transform its public housing developments into thriving mixed-income communities where residents have opportunities for economic mobility. Three of our current major redevelopment initiatives include the Perkins Somerset Oldtown (PSO) Transformation Plan, Transform Poe and the O’Donnell Heights revitalization plan.

The PSO Transformation Plan includes the demolition and redevelopment of Perkins Homes in East Baltimore into a vibrant mixed-income community with affordable and market-rate housing as well as

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other amenities and supportive services for residents. The housing plan includes the construction of 629 public housing replacement units, 424 low-income units serving households with an average of 60% AMI, and 307 unrestricted market-rate units spread across the Somerset and Perkins sites. Working with the City of Baltimore, private developers, and other partners, the PSO Plan will bring over \$1 billion in investment to this area of the city.

The O'Donnell Heights revitalization plan includes the redevelopment master plan for a mixed-income development of approximately 925 units, including mostly row homes, two-story walk-up flats, and a low-rise apartment building. O'Donnell Heights is being redeveloped in four main phases. The developer has completed the first phase, which consists of 144 affordable housing units and was renamed Key's Pointe. Construction on Key's Pointe Phase 2A is expected to begin in August 2024, contingent on HUD approval of the disposition application.

Transform Poe serves as a roadmap as HABC and its developer embark on redeveloping the Poe Homes public housing site and seeks to improve the quality of life in the surrounding Poppleton-Hollins Market area. Under the plan, 288 distressed public housing units at Poe Homes will be demolished and replaced as part of a new mixed-income community that will support existing and future residents. It also includes infrastructure improvements, public safety strategies, and support services designed to help our families increase economic self-sufficiency and improve educational outcomes.

HABC's portfolio consists of nine additional conventional public housing developments as well as scattered sites throughout the city. Long- and short-term plans for the preservation and/or redevelopment of these remaining sites are currently under review. HABC works with private nonprofit and for-profit developers in all its current redevelopment efforts, as well as in the repositioning of public housing under the Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD). Therefore, we recommend an amendment to SB 356 that would allow for certain for-profit entities to apply for an expedited review process when working with a public housing authority or charitable organization to produce affordable housing on their land. The review process can at times be quite lengthy and, in some cases, causes significant delay in the implementation of affordable housing development. HABC's current and future redevelopment would greatly benefit from an expedited process that allows for housing authorities, charitable organizations and affordable housing developers to provide affordable housing, especially given that there is presently an urgent need for it throughout the State.

We respectfully request a **favorable vote with amendments as described above** on Senate Bill 356.

Respectfully submitted:

Janet Abrahams, HABC President & CEO