

MALCOLM AUGUSTINE  
*Legislative District 47*  
Prince George's County

PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

Executive Nominations Committee

Education, Energy and the  
Environment Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

March 29, 2024

**Senate Bill 906 - Housing and Community Development – Vacant Office Space – Report and Plan**

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to present **Senate Bill 906 - Housing and Community Development – Vacant Office Space – Report and Plan**, a pivotal legislative initiative that marks the first stride in our strategic endeavor to promote the adaptive reuse of underutilized commercial spaces within our state. This bill is not only an investment in revitalizing our communities but is a crucial step towards addressing the pressing issue of housing shortage.

The core objective of Senate Bill 906 is to establish a comprehensive inventory of underutilized commercial properties. This inventory will serve as a valuable resource, empowering developers, non-profit organizations, and government agencies to precisely target properties for redevelopment. By identifying and repurposing these spaces, we aim to breathe new life into our communities and simultaneously alleviate the strain on our housing market. The Biden administration, recognizing the potential in converting commercial properties to residential use, has proposed incentives to encourage such transformations. The proposed legislation aligns with these federal efforts, positioning our state advantageously to harness these incentives and effectively address our housing needs.

The proposed legislation places a considerable emphasis on initiating the process with a comprehensive inventory. This strategic planning will help us identify properties that make the most sense for conversion, considering factors such as proximity to amenities, transit-oriented development (TOD), and feasibility of structural modifications. Several areas within our state are already taking steps to track vacant properties. The City of Takoma Park, for instance, has a commendable Vacant and Blighted Property Initiative that monitors both residential and commercial properties. Additionally, Baltimore County has taken strides by establishing a user-friendly Vacant Properties Portal that is accessible to anyone interested.

The amendments to the bill broaden its scope from "each county and Baltimore City" to encompass all political subdivisions within the state, indicating a more inclusive mandate that extends to municipalities, towns, and administrative divisions. Furthermore, the revised version specifies criteria for converting "certain vacant commercial buildings" for residential use, suggesting a more targeted approach to redevelopment. Additionally, the updated text introduces a requirement for political subdivisions to make specific determinations regarding the feasibility of conversion, adding a crucial step to the process. Moreover, the amendments include provisions for the Department of Housing and Community Development to offer technical assistance, indicating enhanced support for political subdivisions in developing their conversion plans. These updates refine and clarify the requirements, expanding its applicability, introducing new considerations, and providing additional support mechanisms to facilitate its implementation.

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Senate Bill 906 represents a critical milestone in our collective efforts to revitalize our communities and address the pressing housing needs of our residents. By establishing an inventory of underutilized commercial properties, we lay the groundwork for targeted redevelopment efforts that will not only benefit our economy but also enhance the quality of life for all Marylanders.

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter. I urge the committee to give a **favorable** report for **Senate Bill 906 - Housing and Community Development – Vacant Office Space – Report and Plan.**

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Malcolm Augustine".

Senator Malcolm Augustine