



SB4/HB258

West North Avenue Development Authority - Alterations

Chad Williams
Executive Director

Senate
Finance Committee

SB 4

Wednesday, January 22, 2025 – 3:45 PM

House of Delegates

Ways and Means Committee

HB 258

Thursday, January 30, 2025 – 1:00 PM

West North Avenue Development Authority

The Maryland General Assembly established the West North Avenue Development Authority (WNADA) on October 1, 2021, to create a comprehensive plan for housing, economic, transportation, and neighborhood development along the West North Avenue corridor in Baltimore City between the 600 - 3200 block, defined as the Target Area, and 250 yards surrounding the Target Area, defined as the Buffer Zone.

SB4/HB258 will provide the necessary powers and authorities, as intended by the General Assembly, for the agency to support legislative priorities of housing affordability, economic opportunity through career readiness (which is a component of the Maryland Blueprint for Education), reliable public transportation that connects workers to regional jobs and creates transit-oriented development destination sites and improves public safety for neighborhoods to thrive with open green space and culture engagement.

The bill will provide the West North Avenue Development Authority with the powers and authorities to improve property, sales, and income tax revenue for the State of Maryland and Baltimore City and increase sales tax revenue for the surrounding jurisdictions of Anne Arundel, Howard, Fredrick, Carroll, Baltimore, and Harford counties.

This bill does not mandate funding for the Authority. Therefore, no funds have been included in our agency's proposed operating or capital budget in "specific" anticipation of this legislation. For example, Article 12-703 (D), in the bill reads, THE GOVERNOR MAY INCLUDE EACH YEAR IN THE STATE BUDGET BILL AN APPROPRIATION TO THE WEST NORTH AVENUE DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY IN BALTIMORE CITY. (SB4/HB0258, Page 3. Lines 25 – 27.). Also, the agency has not submitted a supplemental budget for funds in anticipation of this legislation.

The bill also protects homeowners from displacement, a core objective of the Authority written into our comprehensive plan. As the bill states, "*THE AUTHORITY SHOULD NOT OWN AND OPERATE A PROJECT, UNLESS THE BOARD DETERMINES BY RESOLUTION THAT THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAS NOT DEMONSTRATED SERIOUS AND SIGNIFICANT INTEREST AND DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY TO OWN AND OPERATE THE PROJECT; OR A REPRESENTATIVE OF A GOVERNMENTAL UNIT REQUESTS IN WRITING THAT THE AUTHORITY OWN AND OPERATE THE PROJECT.*"

As stated in the Fiscal Note, "these expanded powers and authorities will allow WNADA to generate revenue (for the State and Baltimore City), which may eventually lead to the authority being self-supporting." In essence, this bill codifies the intent of the General Assembly as recommended by the Office of the Attorney General, representing the country's first holistic planning and economic development entity to address the negative effects of "Redlining".

These policies created devastating long-term economic, housing, transportation, and neighborhood neglect in the historic old West Baltimore communities, where **56% of the vacant residential and commercial properties in Baltimore City are located within the catchment area of the West North Avenue Development.** These conditions hinder the State and City from fully realizing its economic growth potential through revenue derived from property, sales, and income taxes.

The West North Avenue Development Authority's investments will make the State of Maryland and Baltimore City safer, more affordable, and more competitive.

Therefore, on behalf of the citizens of West Baltimore, who work in many counties of this state, and the career-long Maryland state employees who joined this mission, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB4/HB258 to continue strengthening Maryland. Thank you.