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MAYOR

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HB 0239

February 12, 2026

TO: Members of the Economic Matters Committee

FROM: Nina Themelis, Director of Mayor's Office of Government Relations

RE: House Bill HB 0239 Land Use - Zoning - Limitations (Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026)

POSITION: Support with Amendments

Chair Valderrama, Vice Chair Charkoudian members of the committee, please be advised that the Baltimore City Administration (BCA) **supports with amendments** House Bill (HB) 039.

In its current form HB 239, Starter and Silver Homes Act of 2026, would prohibit local jurisdictions from issuing minimum lot size requirements over 5,000 sq. ft., having lot coverage maximums for single family dwellings (SFD) and any accessory structures; having front and rear yard setbacks more than 10' or side yard setbacks more than 5' and prohibits design, architectural, or aesthetic elements for a single-family homes. The bill requires jurisdictions to allow townhomes anywhere that is zoned for single-family dwellings and jurisdictions will no longer be able to enforce subdivision regulations for subdivisions into three or fewer lots.

Although this bill was not designed with Baltimore City specifically in mind, the BCA supports the idea of increasing density and allowing developers to create smaller properties which may lead to the production of additional affordable housing units that serve as starter homes. Baltimore is already moving in this direction, the City Council is currently considering City Council Bill 25-0066 *Zoning – Housing Options and Opportunity* which seeks to increase the supply of affordable housing in Baltimore City by ending single-family zoning and permitting the conversion of single-family homes into multi-family homes of up to 4 units in residential zoning districts R-1-A through R-8.

We have several major redevelopment initiatives underway in Baltimore City which include single family dwelling units, that are in the planning/predevelopment phase and where the developer has identified and/or entered into a purchase agreement with a specified homebuilder. We want to ensure that the proposed additional single-family language will NOT impact any current projects in Uplands, Park Heights, Tivoly Eco-village or Broadway East.

We support an amendment being put forth by the Maryland Association of Counties to remove setbacks and design requirements. We believe that each jurisdiction is capable of determining appropriate lot size requirements, what homes should look like (aesthetic design review) and how we divide (subdivision). If these requirements move forward as a part of the statewide legislation, this could potentially disrupt work already in progress.

The BCA supports the idea of creating more additional affordable housing units and starter housing through increased density. For these reasons, the BCA respectfully requests a **support with amendments** report on HB 0239.