



## MEMORANDUM

To: The Honorable President and Members of the Baltimore City Council  
c/o Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary

From: Alice Kennedy, Housing Commissioner

Date: September 21, 2022

### **Re: City Council Resolution 22-0117R Informational Hearing - Baltimore Public Sanitation - Homeless Encampments**

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has reviewed City Council Resolution 22-0117R for the purpose of inviting representatives from the Department of Public Works, the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Baltimore City Health Department, the Baltimore City Police Department, and the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services to brief the City Council on potential strategies for mitigating waste left by homeless encampments, including a discussion regarding the procurement of a contracted service to clear hazardous waste from such encampments.

DHCD is pleased to participate in an informational hearing on the sanitation of homeless encampments; while we do not directly clear refuse left by homeless encampments, we work closely with the Department of Public Works (DPW) to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of vacant lots and spaces in the public right of way by routing work orders to the agency for cleaning services.

DHCD's Code Enforcement Division, either in response to 311 calls for service, during routine inspections, or while patrolling districts, is charged with identifying properties that are needing maintenance attention. Code Enforcement conducts over 200,000 Property Maintenance Code Enforcement inspections annually and responds to over 50,000 Code Enforcement Service Requests. In FY22, 98% of those SRs were completed on time with a closing time rate averaging 3 days. In addition, inspectors submit work orders for DPW for cleaning and mowing to perform the required maintenance of City-owned and privately owned vacant lots, which are sometimes utilized by individuals experiencing homelessness.

DHCD also makes referrals to the Baltimore City Health Department and the Mayor's Office of Homeless Services (MOHS) to connect individuals experiencing homelessness to the appropriate services. MOHS's Outreach Team actively attempts to work with inhabitants at these locations in partnership with People Encouraging People (PEP) and other city-funded homeless outreach organizations to conduct engagement efforts by offering immediate access to shelter and other resources to aid individuals willing to engage. Outreach Teams work hard to try and create trusting relationships with those in encampments. Despite ongoing efforts, sometimes inhabitants of these encampments remain service resistant.

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### **DHCD Analysis**

The Resolution suggests procuring a contracted service to clear hazardous waste from such encampments. DHCD is not equipped to clear refuse left by homeless encampments which may include bio-hazardous materials such as human and animal waste, non-regulated trash, and drug paraphernalia. While it may be difficult to coordinate individual agency capacities, workflows, and timelines into one centralized system capable of managing the wide variety of sites within the public and private realm, DHCD is committed to working with partner agencies to improve coordination. We are eager and willing to work on potential strategies for mitigating waste left by homeless encampments and connecting individuals to sustainable & stable housing, mental & physical health services and provider connections for those residing in encampments.

### **Conclusion**

DHCD is supportive of discussions to improve the efficiency of the upkeep and maintenance of homeless encampments and if a 3<sup>rd</sup> party contracted service would be appropriate to alleviate the burden and potential health risks to residents.

DHCD defers to MOHS in providing further details on the status of neighbors residing in homeless encampments. DHCD does not provide long-term housing, assistance to provide permanent supportive housing comes from MOHS and HABC.

The Department of Housing and Community Development respectfully **defers to MOHS** on City Council Resolution 22-0117R.

*AK/sm*

*cc: Ms. Nina Themelis, Mayor's Office of Government Relations*

*Ms. Natawna Austin, Executive Secretary of the City Council*

**Brandon M. Scott**, Mayor • **Alice Kennedy**, Housing Commissioner

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